

An underwater photograph of a woman with blonde hair, wearing a blue swimsuit, surrounded by a dense cloud of white bubbles. She is looking towards the camera with a slight smile. The water is a deep, clear blue, and the lighting creates a soft, ethereal atmosphere. The woman's right hand is raised, and her legs are visible, also surrounded by bubbles.

# the bluff

*Spring / Summer 2020*

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Known for putting fans first (with baseball a close second), the Savannah Bananas brought life back to Grayson Stadium, winning the hearts of fans, young and old, all across the Lowcountry.

{ CREATED BY  FOR THOSE WHO LOVE THIS SPECIAL LOWCOUNTRY IDYLL }

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Written by: **Lydia Moore**  
Photography by: **Allen Kennedy**  
Illustrated by: **Amanda Davis**

# A MIDSUMMER DAY'S **DILEMMA**

---

A beautiful summer day along the May River:  
when the hot, sultry days of summer arrive in  
the Lowcountry, the water beckons.

---

It's one o'clock on a balmy July day, and I'm thinking about how comfortable the temperature is.

Just kidding.

This is July in South Carolina after all. And heat is no stranger.

For centuries, long before humans figured out how to breathe cool air into enclosed spaces, the inhabitants of the Bluff have found ways to beat the summer heat. From just after dawn, until right before dusk, our animal friends slip, slide, hide, and burrow to stay cool. This bimodal activity pattern means that during the summer, most of our wildlife may go unnoticed. (And with 20,000 acres, it's quite the game of hide-and-seek!)

I typically try to time my field work so that I mimic the summer activity periods of wildlife: do what I need to do early in the morning or early evening and avoid vigorous outdoor activity during the middle of the day. Unfortunately, I experienced some delays today. I placed a transmitter on a bat last night and am tracking it through the woods to its roost, but it's proving more difficult to find than anticipated. I didn't start looking for the bat early enough and have become caught by the midday summer heat.

Early on in this foray, the beads of sweat forming on my brow collided, creating rivulets that occasionally trickle into my eyes, bringing with them sunscreen, insect repellent, and a sting I cannot ignore. My hat band is soaked with sweat and can no longer absorb the copious amount of perspiration flooding from my pores. When I lived in the New Mexican

**“Being primates, we are one of few animals on the planet that sweat as our primary method of lowering our body temperature.”**

desert, my sweat evaporated almost as soon as it touched my skin, leaving behind crystals of salt. South Carolina's humidity keeps my sweat from completely evaporating, but I do still feel the wondrous, cooling relief of sweating.

Being primates, we are one of few animals on the planet that sweat as our primary method of lowering our body temperature. Droplets of perspiration on our skin absorb body heat from our skin's surface. As these droplets evaporate, they take some of our heat with them, causing the skin to cool. This is the concept behind the process of evaporative cooling. While we have sweat glands throughout our bodies, other animals (including coyotes, foxes, and bobcats) have sweat glands restricted to their paws.

Coyote  
*Canis latrans*



Not pictured: animals in the Lowcountry have a bimodal activity pattern—meaning that during the summer, most of our wildlife may go unnoticed.



Beating the summer heat: live oaks draped in Spanish moss provide shade for many animals (as well as humans) at the Bluff.

**Yellow orb weaver**

*Argiope aurantia*

Evaporative cooling isn't limited to animals that sweat. Have you ever seen a dog pant after playing fetch? Panting provides the same cooling mechanism as sweating, and panting behavior can be seen in a variety of mammals and birds. Even American alligators have a form of "panting" where they bask with their mouth open to facilitate heat exchange.

As I'm avoiding running into the giant webs of orb weavers, I think wistfully of what I wish I was doing at this time of day. What is better on a blistering summer day than slowly rocking on my front porch, sipping a glass of cool iced tea—its condensation running under my fingers as I hold the cold glass to my forehead? Absently watching passersby while thinking about... well, not much really. Mostly just trying not to overheat. I used to laugh at my parents and grandparents for being lazily inactive during the crux of summer days, but now I understand; oppressive heat necessitates a change in daily routines.

It's unnervingly still at this time of day. Quiet.



Not a rustle underfoot or overhead. The only sound is that of cicadas pounding their rhythmic whine through the air, persistently declaring the sweltering temperature.

Just like Southerners rocking on their front porch at midday, Southern wildlife finds a cool spot to hide and rest until temperatures abate. For larger mammals, including deer, this may mean simply lying down in the shade. Many reptiles—which are cold-blooded and cannot regulate their body temperature—hide under logs, burrow under leaf litter, or, like mud turtles, bury themselves under the mud. Rodents and shrews live in underground tunnels that remain consistently cool throughout the day. Birds of all sizes—from osprey to bluebirds—will perch while holding their folded wings slightly away from their bodies, increasing the surface area for heat to escape. Wood storks, which can often be seen standing on the banks of ponds in Moreland, follow suit with a different tactic: they hold their wings outstretched to keep cool. This still, midday inactivity prevents these animals from being able to feed, but the trade-off is worth it if it means they avoid overheating.

**Eastern mud turtle**

*Kinosternon subrubrum*



As I trudge over downed limbs and between palmetto trees, I kick up mosquitoes that make a beeline for any bit of exposed skin. "Why can't mosquitoes take a break during the hottest part of the day?!" I mumble, irritated while swatting absently at my neck. I hope I find the bat soon before I overheat. I check to make sure I am still sweating. (I am. The back of my shirt is plastered to my skin.) I know to be concerned when my body can no longer produce moisture to cool itself down. As of now, there is no fear of that. I promise myself that next time I am going to take a page out of nature's book and make sure I avoid being out during the middle of a South Carolina summer day. •

**Wood stork**

*Mycteria americana*





# WHERE THE SIDEWALK ENDS

THE STORYBOOK SHOPPE BRINGS THE  
MAGIC OF READING TO A NEW GENERATION.

WRITTEN BY: BARRY TAUFMAN

PHOTOGRAPHY BY: PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANNE, INC.

Once upon a time, in a sleepy little town nestled in the bend of a wide, beautiful river, there was a bookstore. Located at the end of the sidewalk and ringed by a vibrant garden with flowers in every color of the rainbow, this shop was just as colorful inside as it was outside. Across every shelf, tucked into every corner, were books upon books arrayed in jubilant rows that told tales of happy bunnies, scary pirates, valiant heroes, and everything in between.

And the children of that sleepy little town loved their little bookstore. Books in hand, they read happily ever after...

A voracious reader, Sally Sue Lavigne loves wordplay. She'll pepper her conversations with turns of phrase and subtle puns that reflect the literary soul behind them. It's appropriate, then, that the name of her store embodies subtly brilliant wordplay. The Storybook Shoppe can be taken two ways, after all. The first, and most direct, being that it's a shop that sells storybooks.

The second meaning comes from the dreamy sense of storybook charm that surrounds the place. You enter on a pathway cut between beds of beautiful flowers where fairies and gnomes would happily call home, approaching the quaint frontage of a store you could swear holds at least seven dwarfs.

And then you step inside something you thought had gone the way of knights and dragons—a small community bookstore. Long thought replaced by the mammoth big-box chains (which were themselves replaced by the online juggernauts), this bookstore makes you can feel as if you're stepping into the sort of fantasy worlds that fill the store's pages. To see so many books, and the precocious young readers who lose themselves in their pages, it seems like something out of a story.

In fact, The Storybook Shoppe is just one volume in the story of the resurging local bookstore. "Amazingly, I look at my newsletter from the American Booksellers Association, and there are new bookstores opening every week," Lavigne said. "A lot of it is young families—they want their children to have that experience of picking up a book, feeling it, and responding to it. You can't get that online."

That tactile experience is central to the shop's appeal. Tell the staff what you're looking for, and you'll be guided from shelf to shelf as your arms fill with books. Or, bring along a young reader and watch as they pick up a book, flip through its pages, and forget all about the tablet screens and video games that make up their general media consumption.

### "THAT'S ONE OF MY RULES FOR KIDS—TOUGH EVERYTHING," LAVIGNE SAID.

For Lavigne, the point is to get children reading by any means necessary. Even if it means they're reading, say, *The Adventures of Captain Underpants* by Dav Pilkey. "Captain Underpants, you can put that in the hands of a reluctant reader," Lavigne said (although she notes Pilkey's much cleaner Dog Man series is now his most popular among young boys). "At the end of the day, the most important part is convincing parents and grandparents that reading, whether it's a newspaper, billboard, comic book, or *War & Peace*, is reading."

And while The Storybook Shoppe is one of just a handful of independent bookstores within 200 miles, it has carved out its niche with its beautiful location amid the reinvigorated finery of Calhoun Street in Old Town Bluffton as well as its laser focus on children's books. Beyond the picture books for the younger readers lining the walls around the shop's lower half, there is an elevated loft where the young adult readership will find their next great read.



"SOMETIMES, I'VE BELIEVED AS MANY AS SIX IMPOSSIBLE THINGS BEFORE BREAKFAST." —LEWIS CARROLL

"DON'T YOU KNOW THAT EVERYBODY'S GOT A FAIRYLAND OF THEIR OWN?" —MARY POPPINS



Even 20 years after he was first published, a certain boy wizard still casts a long shadow over the demographic. “Since Harry Potter, there’s been an acknowledgment that there’s a different reading group in that 9–12 age range. Even for 6- to 8-year-olds, there are so many more options now,” Lavigne said.

## AND SHE READS THEM ALL.

“I’m usually reading 12–17 picture books a week. With novels, I’m a slow reader, so I may only get through one,” she said. “But what I’m reading in December is what’s going to be on our shelves in March.”

If she’s on the fence about a book, she has an excellent set of backup readers for a second opinion. Everyone on her staff is either a former teacher or a librarian, and each is a wealth of knowledge when it comes to children’s literature. When one customer came in during a recent visit looking for a new book for a young reader obsessed with survival stories, Wendy at the front desk had four titles that fit what seems like a very narrow genre.

“The heart and soul of this business are the lovely women that work with me. Not for me, with me. They take as much ownership as I do,” Lavigne said. “They know the books. You can come in, and they’ll get

little bits of information and be able to pull 12 books where your kid will love at least one.”

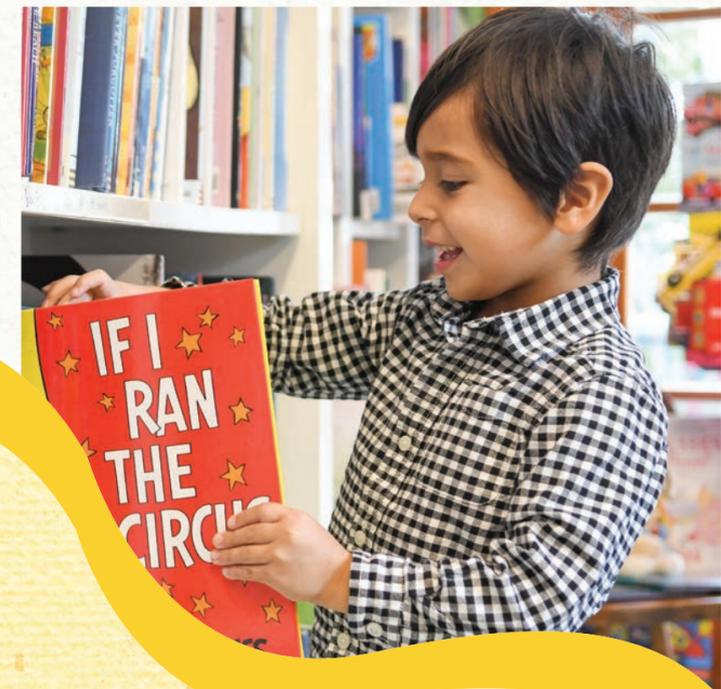
Throughout the year, The Storybook Shoppe hosts a slew of special events. Mondays are for story time, with occasional visits from local authors, while regular special events run the gamut from the “Where the Wild Things Are” wild rumpus to charity drives. In November, for example, they do the “Llama Llama Red Pajama” party where they collect pajamas and books to be donated to CAPA.

“It’s really important for us to give back to our community. We have fabulous visitors who come from as far away as Australia, but my community is a place I need to be a part of,” Lavigne said. The annual Local Heroes Storytime brings out members of Bluffton Township Fire District and the Bluffton Police Department for a day of reading alongside kids in Dubois Park. At this year’s event being held on May 4, recognized as Star Wars day, Lavigne couldn’t help but sneak in one more bit of wordplay. “The police will be there, so the force will be with us.”

The Storybook Shoppe is located at 41 Calhoun Street in Old Town Bluffton. Visit [thestorybookshoppe.com](http://thestorybookshoppe.com) for more details. 📖

“ALL READY TO PUT UP THE TENTS FOR MY CIRCUS. I THINK I WILL CALL IT THE ‘CIRCUS MCGURKUS.’”

—DR. SEUSS





# SALLY SUE LOVES TO READ!

## NOW HOW ABOUT YOU?

Asking Sally to choose her favorite books is a little like asking her to choose her favorite child. However, we managed to get her to list a few of her favorites....

### BOARD BOOK

- *Who Can?* by Charles Ghigna

### PICTURE BOOKS

- *Bark, George* by Jules Feiffer
- *Mother Bruce* by Ryan T. Higgins
- *Ocean Meets Sky* by The Fan Brothers
- *Grumpy Monkey* by Suzanne Lang
- *Operation Photobomb* by Becky Cattie and Tara Luebbe
- *Beautiful* by Stacy McAnulty

### CHAPTER BOOKS

- *Lola Levine Is Not Mean!* by Monica Brown
- *The Mouse and the Motorcycle* by Beverly Cleary

### YOUNG ADULT

- *Roar* by Cora Carmack

And her favorite children's book of all time?  
*The Paper Bag Princess* by Robert Munsch

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Charlie Muncaster and Gary Stanton, better known as Muscadine Bloodline, take on the Wild West of the music business.

WRITTEN BY: BARRY KAUFMAN

PHOTO: Courtesy of Muscadine Bloodline



PHOTO: Courtesy of Muscadine Bloodline

As far as performance venues go, there's a world of difference between the genteel stage at Music to Your Mouth and the sawdust-on-the-floor honky-tonks that Muscadine Bloodline usually calls home. With names like The Blind Horse Saloon, Knuckleheads, and Coyote Joe's, these are the beer- and tobacco-scented music halls where country music's legacy of hard living still thrives. It's among these rough-and-tumble joints that Charlie Muncaster and Gary Stanton are putting their own stamp on country.

There may be a world of difference between these stages, but for these good old boys from Alabama, it's just another crowd looking for a good time.

"It's definitely not something we're used to doing," Charlie said. "But they were a rowdy crowd."

"They enjoyed having us, and the food was incredible," Gary added. "I like playing in a place where people don't know who we are. It lets us see if we can catch an ear. Lets us see if the average Joe would be able to get down with what we're doing, instead of showing up at place where 500 people are there just to see your show. It's kind of cool to watch people and jam and see what they're feeling."

"It's kind of the Wild West—there's really no right way to do these things," Gary said. "What we've learned is if you put out music and you're active on social and respond and go play shows, they'll keep coming back. . . . We've found fans as far away as Australia. It's amazing to see the analytics."

"It's kind of funny. Every year, there comes a new platform you have to learn and stay on top of to stay relevant," Charlie said. The payoff for all of this hard work—touring, liking, and sharing—comes in the form of a deeply dedicated fan base. One need only look at a recent post on the band's Instagram page to see that—an entire photo gallery of tattoos from fans who have inked the band's lyrics into their skin.



"It's surreal. It's something in a million years you'd never dream of," Charlie said. "Just the fact that you can impact someone so heavily, that your music moved them enough to tattoo it on their body. . . ."

"Some of the tattoo placements were definitely interesting," Gary added with a laugh. "We had a couple people who had our autographs tattooed on them."

It's been a long road for Muscadine Bloodline. While they celebrate four years together as a band this year, their

*"What we've learned is if you put out music and you're active on social and respond and go play shows, they'll keep coming back."*

**-GARY STANTON**

The pair opened for the surprise main act, Daughtry. It was a return to form for a band that has only recently made the leap from opening act to headliner. Formed just four years ago, Muscadine Bloodline occupies that space in the trajectory toward fame where stardom seems just around the corner. With their rabid fan base, viral videos, and growing spot in country radio rotations, you are running out of time to be able to say you saw them before they blew up.

For the time being, though, they are a band on the cusp, still driven to tour relentlessly and build their legacy.

Music to Your Mouth was one of many stops for Muscadine Bloodline, launching a swing through the Carolinas before winging their way up to the border territories and into the Midwest. But that's just the nature of the beast when you're a young country music act trying to make a name for yourself. In country music especially, putting in the hours on stage at the honky-tonks is just as important as keeping your Instagram feed current in the era of streaming services and social media likes.

story together goes back to their roots in Mobile, Alabama, where they went to separate high schools and only knew of each other by reputation. "We didn't cross paths. Mobile's not a huge town, but it's big enough that you don't meet everybody. We'd heard of each other, but we never met up," Gary said.

In fact, but for one moment of serendipity, these two guys from the same town may not have ever crossed paths, had Charlie not needed an opening act. He'd gone off to school at Auburn, and his band was playing a hometown show without a warm-up. Through mutual friends, he tapped Gary, and the rest is history. "We just said, 'Let's give this a try,' and four years later, we haven't looked back," Gary said.

Their move from Alabama to Nashville served as the christening for a band that embraces a kind of sound that many thought was gone for good. Country music is in an odd place right now in terms of its identity. Its biggest stars like Chris Stapleton and Kane Brown have enjoyed huge collaborations with the likes of pop icon Justin Timberlake and electronic artist Marshmallow.



PHOTO: Bonjwing Lee



In artist bios, you're less likely to see cowboy hats than you are to see designer sunglasses. Perhaps strangest of all, this past year saw Nine Inch Nails front man Trent Reznor win his first country music award for his work on "Old Town Road," a country song with as much pop appeal as anything MTV ever played.

Contrasted with this watering down of the genre, Muscadine Bloodline is a refreshing blast of 90s country. To listen to their music is to be reminded of what first pulled country music out of the dive bars and into the spotlight—odes to lost loves and lost pickup trucks, ballads about dirt roads, and even tongue-in-cheek love letters to the enduring wonders of duct tape and WD-40. There's an authenticity behind their lyrics, a product of their energy together as songwriters.

When asked what their typical process was, Gary put it simply: there isn't one. "There's no rhyme or reason to how it finishes. It could be where Charlie has lyrics, and I have a riff. It could be we start from square one. Sometimes when you come up with an idea, the final product will be something completely different."

"It's really experimenting all the time," Charlie said. Although he'll admit the results are sometimes mixed. "You gotta write a lot of crappy songs to get to the good ones."

That said, the band nailed its closer right out of the gate. The first song that Charlie and Gary wrote as a band, "Ginny," still closes every show. That's as true in the honky-tonks of backwoods America as it is on stage at Music to Your Mouth. ★

*"It's really experimenting all the time. You gotta write a lot of crappy songs to get to the good ones."*

—CHARLIE MUNCASTER



PHOTO: Courtesy of Muscadine Bloodline



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*Joe's great-great-grandfather, great-great-grandmother, grandmother, and great-grandmother. Joe's mother is the young girl who is standing. Photo taken at Palmetto Bluff.*



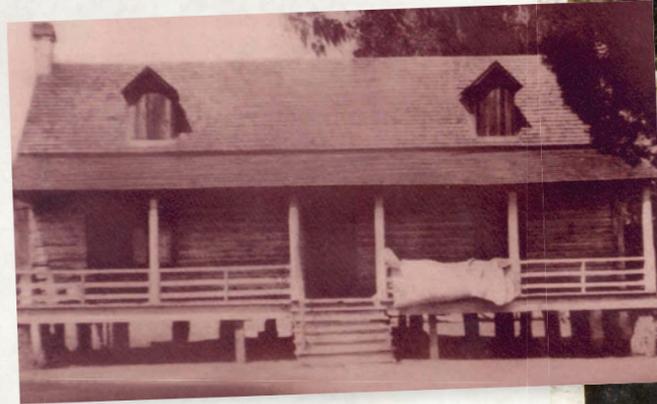
*PAPA + MAMA BAILEY, Boy Wadston, S.C.*

## RETURN TO PALMETTO BLUFF

Written by: DR. MARY SOCCI  
Photography courtesy of: THE BRACKIN FAMILY

WHEN ROBERTA MARGANTONIO SPENT A FEW DAYS in the spring of 2011 helping her sister house hunt in Bluffton, she found herself charmed by an old house in the town's quirky historic district. Back home in Atlanta, she told her husband, Joe Brackin, that a little coastal town in South Carolina might be the perfect place to live. Joe was happy to make the trip to check it out. He and Roberta had been thinking about where to settle when they retired and deciding on a location early would give them plenty of time to plan. A few months later, they drove to Bluffton to investigate.

We're going down 46 and suddenly I recognized where I was and said, "The cemetery is right down here on the right and that's where my great-great-grandparents are buried." Then I saw the Church of the Cross and I remembered being there when I was a 10- or 12-year-old.



The family house at Palmetto Bluff (front)



Bertha

Joe's grandmother, Bertha, at the Wilsons' mansion



Joe's great-grandparents, Dan + Shellie Crosby with Bertha standing between them. Photo taken at Palmetto Bluff.



Joe's grandmother, Bertha



Joe's great-uncle with one of the Wilsons' maids



The family house (back)



Joe and Jay Walea trying to locate the house site in 2012.

**WHAT JOE AND ROBERTA DIDN'T UNDERSTAND YET** was that they were already a part of Beaufort County history. As they approached Bluffton, realization began to dawn on Joe. As he describes it, "We're going down 46 and suddenly I recognized where I was and I said, 'The cemetery is right down here on the right and that's where my great-great-grandparents are buried.' Then I saw the Church of the Cross and I remembered being there when I was a 10- or 12-year-old."

The family connection made Bluffton an even more enticing destination. The property that first interested Roberta turned out to be too big to tackle, but there were other possibilities within walking distance of the town's center. As they discussed the options, they remembered a coffee-table book in Joe's mom's house, *A History of Palmetto Bluff, South Carolina* by Patty Kennedy.

Joe had heard stories about his great-grandparents raising their family at Palmetto Bluff in a small house called

"Box" overlooking the May River in what is known as the Headwaters section. Finding out that Palmetto Bluff was now a residential community gave them a perfect reason to "ride out there and see what it is like."

Like so many of us, Joe and Roberta started to fall in love with Palmetto Bluff on their first drive to Wilson Village. By the time they crossed the inland waterway, they were taken in by the beauty and Lowcountry atmosphere. Joe now wanted to know more about his family's connection to the Bluff. A map in the History Center illustrated where the antebellum plantations had been located on the property. Near the entrance was one owned by Esther Box. Joe was stunned. He and his siblings had grown up thinking their grandparents' house was called "Box" because it was small and rectangular and looked like a box. Now he knew it was named after the family who had owned it before and during the Civil War. The next step was to visit the site. Jay Walea, director of the Palmetto Bluff Conservancy, took Joe and Roberta out to where the little house once stood.

The house was gone, but with a sketch drawn by Joe's great-uncle and a description by phone from another uncle, Jay was able to lead Joe and Roberta to the old family homestead.

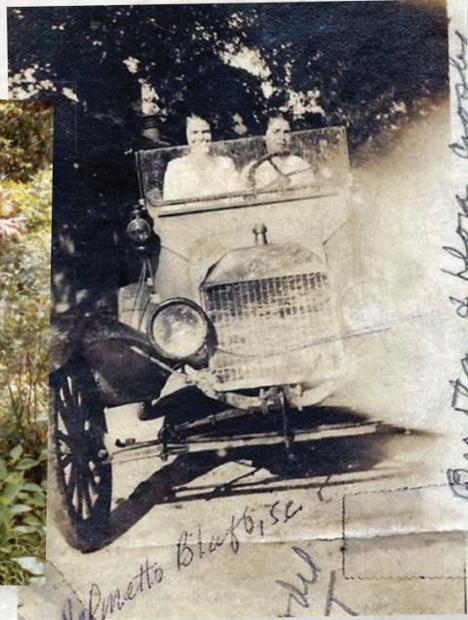
Standing where his great-grandparents had stood a century earlier, Joe started on a mission to uncover the details of his family's life at the Bluff. (In the meantime, he and Roberta purchased a lot and built their own home there.) Joe learned that his great-great-grandparents and great-grandparents had lived at Palmetto Bluff. His great-grandfather Dan Crosby had worked for R.T. Wilson Jr., the wealthy New York banker who owned Palmetto Bluff from 1902 to 1926. Dan had started working for the Wilsons as a carpenter but eventually became general manager of the estate. He and his wife had nine children, several of whom were born at Palmetto Bluff in the house that Dan rented.

Dan Crosby's oldest daughter, Bertha (Joe's grandmother), was born in 1901. She began working for the Wilsons as a teenager, helping her father with the bookkeeping and

housework in the mansion. Joe's research has revealed the nature of the Crosbys' relationship with the Wilsons. "It's my understanding that the Crosbys took care of the place when the Wilsons were away, sometimes even staying in the house," Joe says. "And I think they pretty much had the run of the place when the Wilsons were up north." Eventually, Dan Crosby's father-in-law (Joe's great-great-grandfather) also began to work for R.T. Wilson, as a farmer.

Photos of Joe's grandmother Bertha and her siblings at the Bluff are often whimsical—Bertha striking a model-like pose, her brother flirting with one of the maids working at the mansion, her sister sitting at the wheel of a Model T. But the photos belie the hardships the family faced. One of Bertha's younger sisters died in 1920 at age four, and her father died the following year. Joe recounts that when Dan Crosby died, Mrs. Wilson stopped by the house and made it clear that she expected the family to relocate. While the Crosbys moved on to resettle in Savannah, Joe's great-great-grandparents remained.

Family visit to the homestead in 1995.  
Joe's mother is wearing the turquoise shirt.



Joe's grandmother and great-aunt  
at Palmetto Bluff.

PALMETTO BLUFF  
BLUFFTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

After Bertha had married and begun her own family, she started taking her children (Joe's mother and siblings) to visit her grandparents (their great-grandparents) at Palmetto Bluff. Joe's uncle tells about staying at Palmetto Bluff as a child. He recalls his grandmother taking him one morning to look at the vegetable garden and seeing deer there. She "...always had an apron on, and she would do it like this [wave it up and down] to scare the deer away."

Visits to Palmetto Bluff stopped in 1935 when Joe's great-great-grandfather died and his wife moved in with their daughter in Savannah. Nonetheless, the Bluff held a place in the hearts of those who had memories or family ties there. In 1985, while at a family reunion in Savannah, Joe's great-uncle, two of his great-aunts (all of them Bertha's siblings), and his mother stopped by Palmetto Bluff. They went out to the site of the family home with Charlie Bales, land manager for the paper company that owned Palmetto Bluff at that time. It was the first time since 1935 that any family had been back. Though the house was gone, the group easily recognized the place where they had grown up.

Today, only a few people still have firsthand recollections of Palmetto Bluff in the 1930s. Joe has made it a priority to record and preserve his family's history since he and Roberta moved here in 2014. Incidentally, many of the Crosby family photos had been graciously shared by Joe's family and are included in the history book written by Patty Kennedy that once sat on Joe's mom's coffee table.

One of the Palmetto Bluff stories that Joe treasures is from an uncle. "In the fall, the creek [next to the house] produced some of the finest oysters . . . a fire would be built close to the house, and a steel plate placed on some rocks was used to roast the oysters. Everyone would stand close to the fire to keep warm and eat this delicacy." Now Joe and Roberta host their own oyster roasts. Joe says he can't help thinking about those past feasts and how his family savored not only the May River bounty but also their time together. Joe recently introduced another generation of his family to May River oysters. "This is what makes life at the Bluff so special, sharing experiences with family and friends that connect us to our past and to each other," Joe explains. *This is home.*



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great white egret

a fine  
  
*Feathered*  
 nest 

written by:  
 Aaron Palmieri ✦  
 Kristen Constantineau

photography by:  
 Elizabeth Angelone



*brown-headed  
nuthatch*



**M**arch in Beaufort County is the time when people start putting away their winter jackets, cleaning the grill, prepping the garden, or maybe planning for their summer vacation. *Birds, however, are thinking about laying eggs.*

American robins, yellow-rumped warblers, ruby-crowned kinglets, and other species that spend the winter with us head north to raise their young for the summer. Those that overwintered in the Southern Hemisphere, such as barn swallows, yellow-billed cuckoos, and swallow-tailed kites, will migrate to North America for the nesting season. Meanwhile, northern cardinals, brown-headed nuthatches, eastern bluebirds, and other year-round species do not have to worry about traveling and have already begun finding their mates, building their nests, and producing eggs. While all birds share this behavior of building nests for their eggs, each species has a unique design for these summer abodes.

Before we delve into the more stylish nests, let's talk about the basics first. The most common type of nest that many species of songbird utilize is the cup-shaped nest, which is built within shrubs and trees. Pine warblers build their nests in pine needle clusters (a big surprise for many people I'm sure!). Meanwhile, summer tanagers are slightly more versatile and build grass-and-twig nests

along horizontal limbs of pines and oaks. The tanager's cousin, the cardinal, prefers being lower to the ground and forms leaf-and-twig nests within dense shrubs. An example of a shrub that many songbirds enjoy is a hawthorn (*Crataegus*), as the thorny branches deter predators from entering. However, hummingbirds use an alternative defense by building their tiny cup nests close to hawk nests. While hummingbirds are not a good meal source for hawks, animals that would raid a hummingbird nest are the perfect size.

Woodpeckers, bluebirds, chickadees, screech owls, and many others can be found nesting in natural or artificial (e.g., birdhouse) tree cavities. These tree cavities may sound like a drab affair, but cavity-nesting birds have a variety of nest types that make each hole distinct. Bluebirds build bowls for their eggs out of pine straw and grass, while great crested flycatchers take it a step further by adding snake skins and raptor feathers to act as a predator deterrent. Chickadees, on the other hand, prefer using soft materials such as plant fiber and sphagnum moss. Eastern screech owls skip the design and build process altogether and choose pre-built nests made by other birds. Among the woodpeckers, red-cockaded woodpeckers are the only species in the Southeast to create a nest in living trees, specifically longleaf pines. (Hint: If you see any of the other woodpecker species starting a nest in the cavity in a tree, that tree may not be as alive as it looks.)

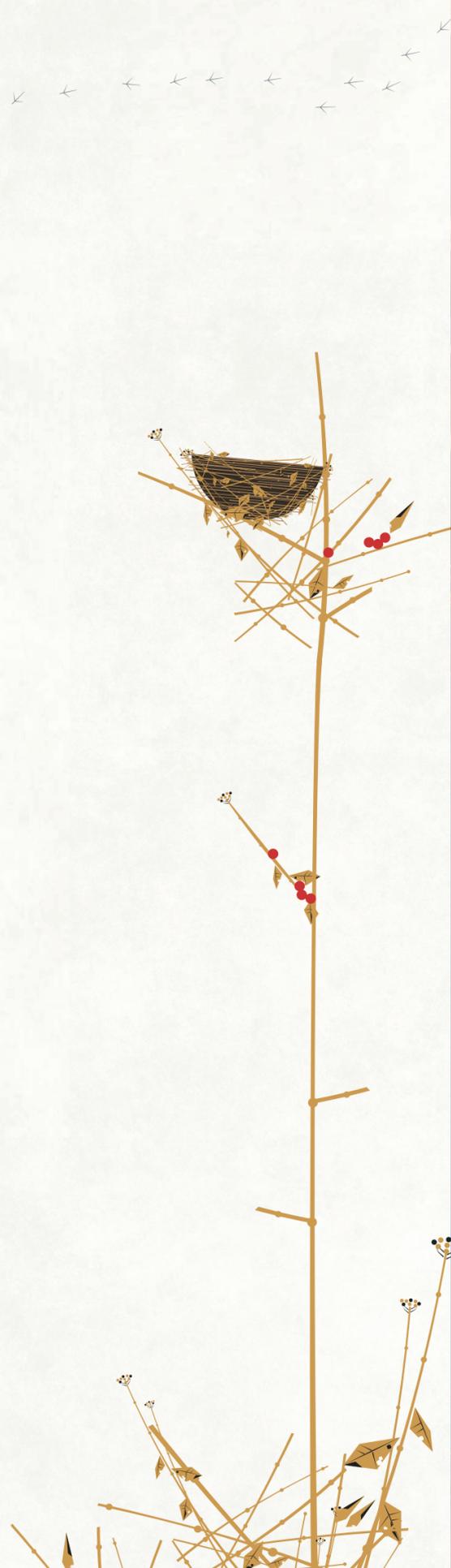
Delving into the realm of exaggerated and unique nests, bald eagles build their homes in the forks of living pine trees. New material is added every year, which eventually results in a nest that is large enough for a person to occupy. The largest eagle nest recorded was 10 feet wide, 20 feet deep, and weighed roughly 2 tons! Red-winged blackbirds modify the cup nest by weaving grasses between cattails to create nests suspended over water. Ovenbirds, unlike other warblers, use dead leaves to build domed nests on the ground. Herons and egrets build platform nests in large communal rookeries usually above and surrounded by water. While a platform of sticks may not seem unusual, the location is what makes this nest distinctive. Raccoons, snakes, and other predators would prey on wading bird eggs if they did not have to risk their own lives by swimming through the water and possibly becoming lunch for an alligator.

While it might not be possible to attract these more unique nesting birds to your yard, you can still provide habitat for a multitude of bird species by adding shrubs and trees. Native plants such as eastern red cedar, yaupon holly, wax myrtle, and wild olive can provide shelter throughout the year as they never drop their leaves, while deciduous plants such as spicebush, native viburnums, toothache tree, and dogwood are additional nesting sites during the summer. The mature oaks and pines in your yard are used by birds that prefer to nest higher than other species. Even dead trees are important nest sites. If you have a few in your yard, and they are not a threat to your own nest, I would leave them standing for the birds.

“The Palmetto Bluff Conservancy plays a large part in providing habitat for many bird species.”

These native plants will help attract birds by not only offering shelter, but also by providing a steady food source in the form of fruit and insects.

The Palmetto Bluff Conservancy plays a large part in providing habitat for many bird species by building and placing multiple types of nest boxes throughout the Bluff. Among these, you'll find 30 cavity nest boxes located on trees in five different habitats; these are used by screech owls and great crested flycatchers. There are also 20 barn owl boxes that were erected in 2019 with the goal of attracting barn owls to the property. Finally, there are roughly 70 bluebird boxes that have been at the Bluff for over a decade. The diversity of these nesting boxes accommodates different cavity nesting birds, allowing the Conservancy to form research initiatives based around them.



tips for attracting eastern bluebirds

- 1 Place your bluebird house near a garden to help control insects and other pests.
- 2 Your birdhouse for eastern bluebirds should have an entry hole measuring about 1 1/2", while western and mountain bluebird house entries should be 1 9/16".
- 3 Don't let your bluebird house entry directly face the sun. This prevents overheating and keeps the birdhouse temperature comfortable.
- 4 Bluebirds don't often come to feeders so consider adding mealworms to your feeder and a heated birdbath nearby to encourage roosting.
- 5 Use light colors for your birdhouse and make sure to keep it in a shady location.
- 6 Consider putting up a nest box as it may attract a breeding pair.
- 7 Make sure you construct your bluebird house out of wood, particularly cedar or plywood.
- 8 Face the opening of your bluebird house toward a tree or bush so that young bluebirds learning to fly have a place to land.
- 9 Keep in mind, you may need housing for sparrows nearby. Otherwise, they might pester the bluebirds.
- 10 Clean your bluebird house at the end of the summer to make it a more inviting and healthy space for next year's bluebird family.

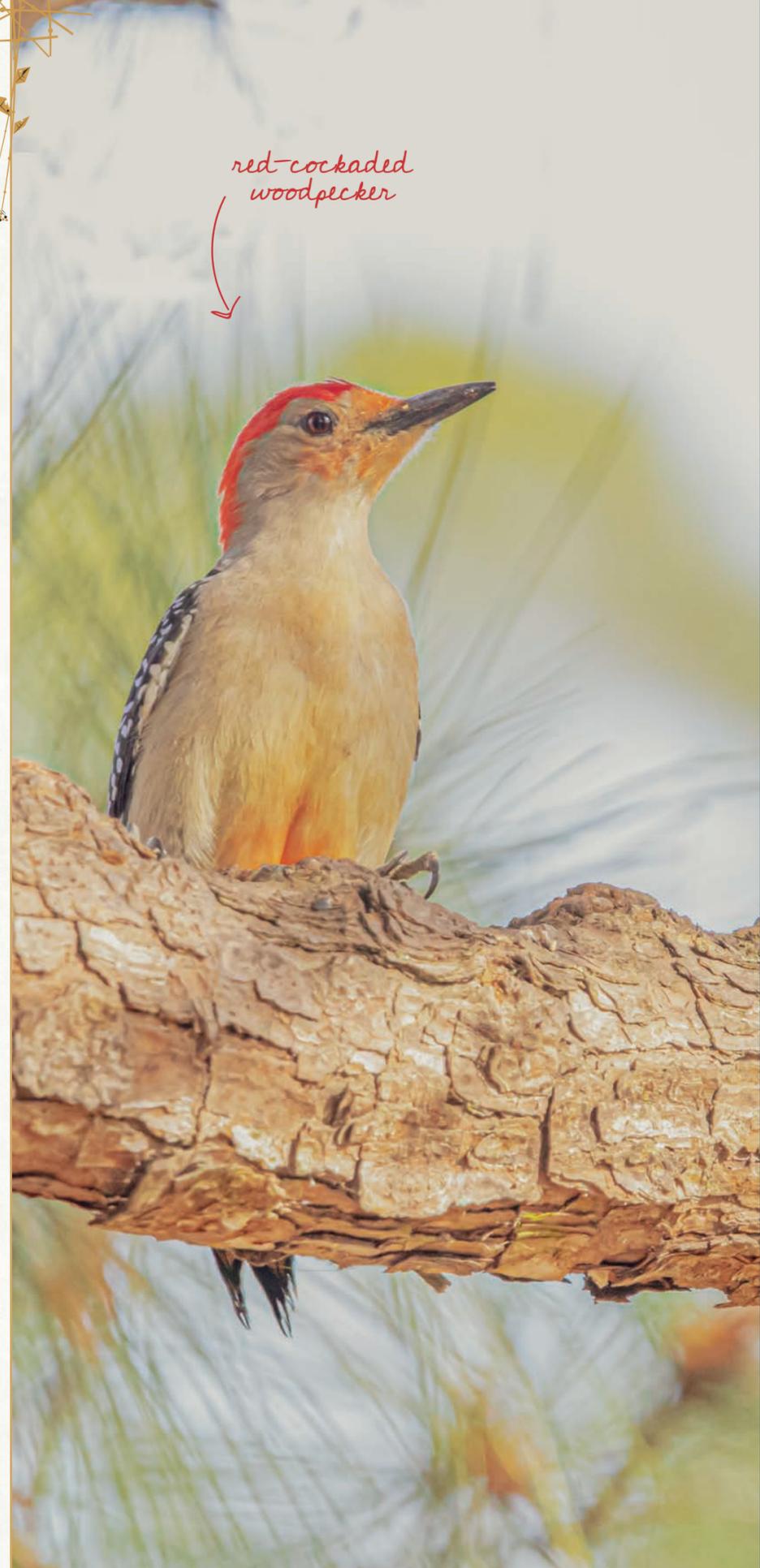


I challenge everyone to get outdoors this spring and start transforming your yard into a bird haven. Add native plants to your landscaping, hang a birdhouse, put out bird feeders and bird baths, and then prepare a big batch of sweet tea. While the new plants may be too young and fragile during the first nesting season, eventually you will be able to kick back on your porch, sip some sweet tea, and enjoy a bounty of beautiful birds nesting in your yard.

If a yard makeover isn't in your future, you can also help native birds by sponsoring a Palmetto Bluff Conservancy bluebird box. For more than a decade, the Palmetto Bluff Conservancy has been building, maintaining, and monitoring nest boxes designed for eastern bluebirds. These boxes provide important data on the behavior and success of these beautiful birds. By adopting a box, you can ensure that a bluebird family has a home for years to come and help the Conservancy in their mission to conserve the natural and cultural resources of Palmetto Bluff. 🐦



**For more information on sponsoring a bluebird box, please contact the Palmetto Bluff Conservancy at [info@pbconservancy.com](mailto:info@pbconservancy.com) or stop by the Conservancy office in Moreland Village.**



red-cockaded woodpecker

# bird's-eye View

written by:  
Kristen Constantineau



bird box

I recently had the chance to join the Conservancy team in the field as a part of my PB201 class. It happened to be a particularly chilly day here in the Lowcountry (39 degrees. Borderline frostbite for us Southerners.), but we set off into the field nonetheless. Our task for the day? To check on the aforementioned bird boxes! (Kismet, it's definitely a thing.)

While December isn't traditionally the time for birds to be building their nests, the Conservancy team still checks on the bird boxes once per month—to ensure that everything is just ducky in the woods. And this lucky gal got to tag along. Scattered through the wilderness of Palmetto Bluff, these cavity bird boxes resemble the more traditional birdhouses you might see in a backyard. Made of wood, more tall than wide, and with a hole for the birds to come and go as they please, these particular bird boxes are located approximately 11 feet from the ground. (Why 11, you say? Well, because the ladder they use to install the bird boxes is 10 feet tall. True story.)

Most of the bird boxes we checked were empty—with the exception of some leftover pine needles and leaves. Aaron Palmieri, the educator for the

Conservancy, asked us each to gather up some more pine needles to help “fluff up” the box—giving birds a head start with their nest building.

Now, I said MOST were empty. After some initial tapping on one of the bird boxes, we discovered that it was acting as a winter retreat for a flying squirrel. Lucky for us, the tapping scared him away, and he scurried up the tree.

But let's forget the flying squirrel. The real find was much quieter, much calmer, and much, much cuter.

Yes, y'all. We discovered an eastern screech owl. This sleeping brown beauty was nestled in the corner of the third bird box we checked, just “resting her eyes” as my mama used to say. I couldn't believe my luck. No bird nesting in December?! Call me crazy, but that was a bird. In a nest. In December. And my day was made.



eastern screech owl



Stephen Scott Young

*Tomato Lady*

29.75" x 22" Watercolor

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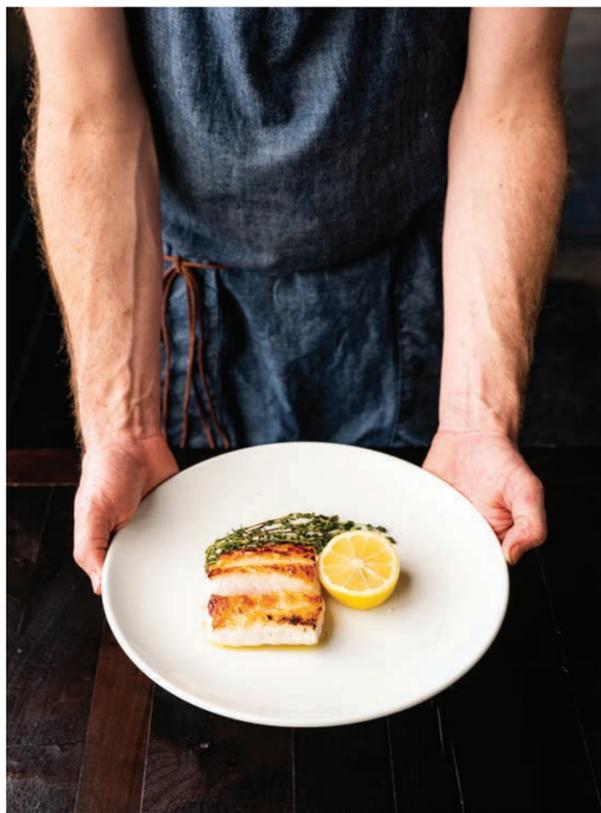


# life on the half shell

Written by: Courtney Hampson | Photography by: Caleb Chancey

Fish eyeballs. Chef Adam Evans thinks about them every day. Fish eyeballs aren't the sexiest ingredient. In fact, throw some in a blender, and you've got some good horror film fodder. But this is the path Evans chooses. In Evans's kitchen, every part of the fish is honored and utilized. Where most restaurants will see 60 percent waste from one fish, Evans is dedicated to utilizing the entire fish—the eyeballs, the skin, the head, the tail—and creating interesting dishes that tell a story and reduce his waste footprint on the world.

**And that** is what makes him different.



But different has always been his jam. Growing up in Muscle Shoals, Alabama, a town known for its music roots, a young man could easily be moved to make music. Not Evans. He was moved by the work his grandfather did outside and what his grandmother made of that work inside. “Like all good Southern kids, I learned how to cook at the knees of my mother and grandmother. But it was my grandfather’s garden—he was always working in it—that got me really involved in the idea of cooking.” Evans was getting his hands dirty at an early age in the garden—which he described as “an event in itself.”

## It was my grandfather’s garden that got me really involved in the idea of cooking.

Farming and gardening was the way of life for Evans’s grandfather, who was born in 1909. It was what he knew. His family grew their own vegetables, raised and slaughtered their own hogs, and smoked the bacon and ham in the smokehouse. Eventually, he passed on his knowledge, creating a window for Evans to see the whole process. “The idea that the seeds from last year can be planted this year, and in six to eight weeks, you have vegetables was interesting to me,” Evans said. His grandfather would watch for ripeness, then pick, wash, and place the vegetables on the back porch for Evans’s grandmother. She would start cooking while Evans’s grandfather would sit on the back porch and wait for dinner. But Evans—he followed his grandmother into the kitchen.

These childhood experiences ultimately led Evans to a career as a chef. While he cut his teeth in impressive kitchens in New York, Atlanta, and New Orleans, he dreamed of opening his own place and having something to call his own. “I had to try,” he said. He paid close attention to his mentors and took the time to learn everything he could so he didn’t make mistakes that would cost him money. Eventually, he got to the point where he thought he could limit his mistakes. After 15 years, he was ready. Evans returned home to Birmingham in 2017 to open his first restaurant with his wife, Suzanne Humphries Evans, who is co-owner and project designer of Automatic Seafood and Oysters.





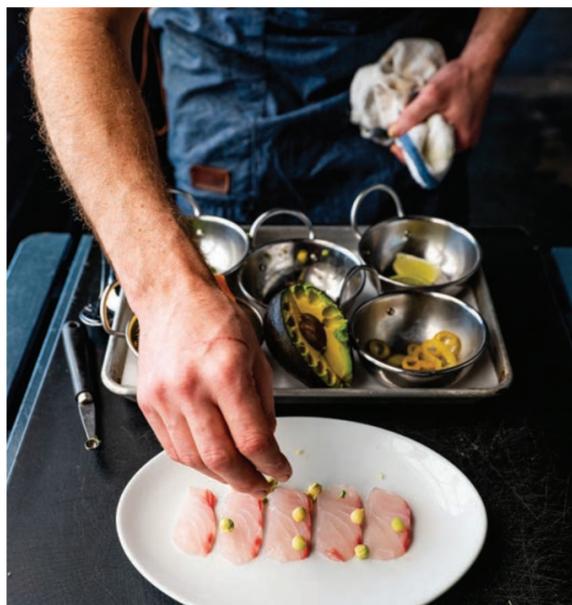
Birmingham, a landlocked city, is an interesting choice for a chef who wants to open a seafood-centric restaurant. So why seafood? “I really got to learn and appreciate seafood working in New York City. I worked the fish station at Tom Colicchio’s Craft for five years. I learned about fish and fish species that I had never heard of, and working for Colicchio, we worked with the best fisherman and purveyors. Pairing the fish with seasonal farm ingredients was simple and fresh, and it worked.”

## Pairing the fish with seasonal farm ingredients was simple and fresh, and it worked.

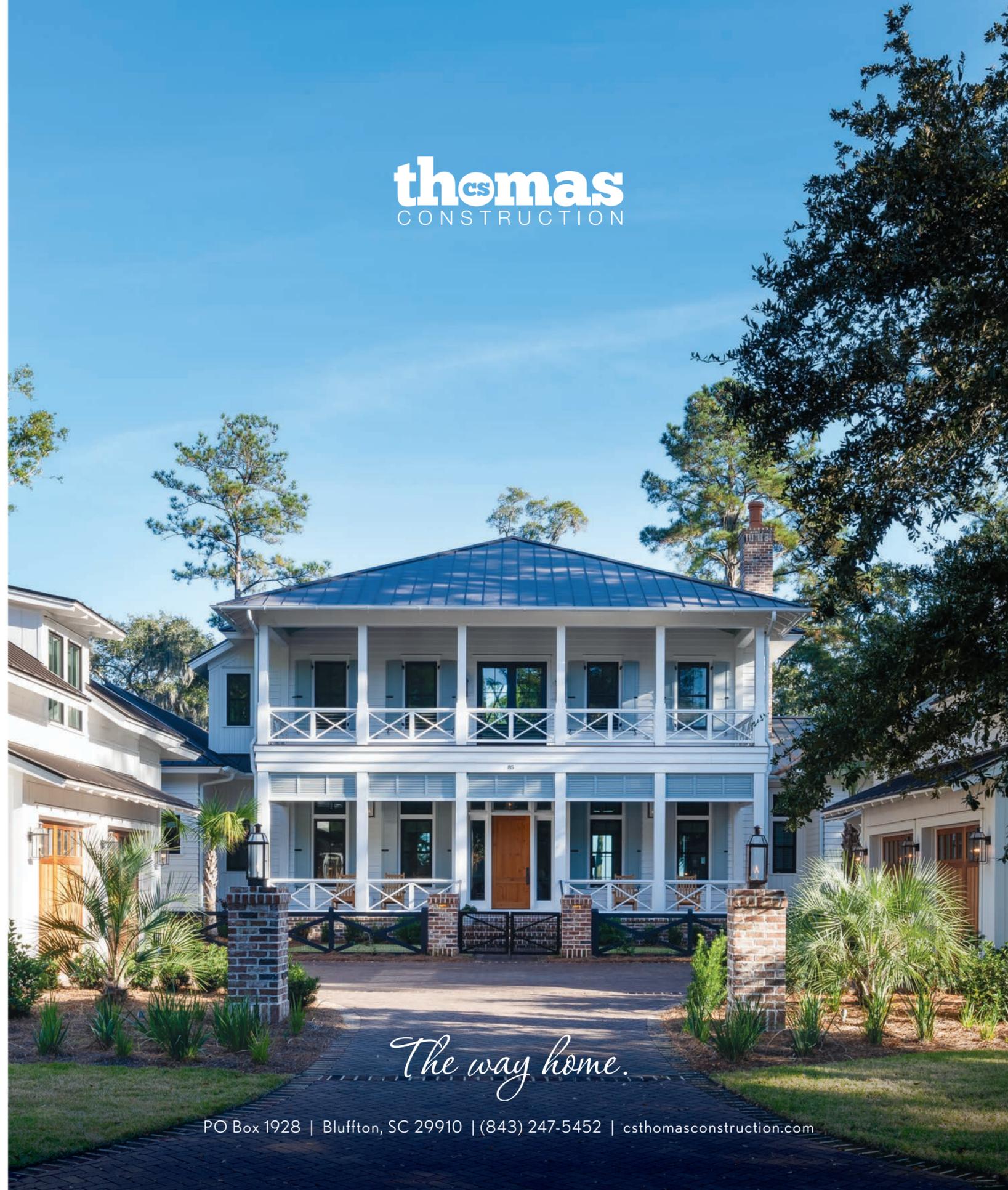
As Evans began to build his restaurant concept, he was inspired by Australian chef Josh Niland. At Niland’s restaurant St. Paddington, the focus is on sustainably sourcing seafood and utilizing the entire fish. And that brings us back to the eyeballs that Evans grinds into a liquid, mixes with tapioca starch, steams, and then dries, creating something closely resembling a pork skin, or cracklin’. Voilà! From fish eyeballs to a Southern staple. But it is not all eyeballs. “We have a chip and dip situation on the menu made of sushi-grade tuna. It is all about getting creative.” And going back to his roots. The seafood-forward menu also highlights seasonable vegetables, such as a grilled, pureed, and fried sweet potato dish and wok-roasted cabbage with Korean BBQ sauce.

But back to Birmingham—and the fish. Evans focuses first on the Gulf for sourcing his fish and will supplement the menu with other East Coast fish as they are in season. “But it has to start in the Gulf,” he says. His oyster bar features Gulf oysters, including wild Apalachicola oysters, which pop up “healthy and tasty,” as well as oysters from North Carolina, Virginia, and even Washington state.

Evans’s risk is reaping a great reward. Just a few months ago, Automatic Seafood and Oysters was named “Best New Restaurant” by both *Esquire* and *Thrillist*. To that Evans says, “What we’ve done . . . we have to keep it going. We appreciate the attention, and everyone deserves a pat on the back, but now we have to work harder to keep it going. It is the hard part and the fun of it,” Evans says. “It forces us to work together and be creative; it brings us together . . . kind of like being on the back porch.” 🍷



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AT PALMETTO BLUFF

## ARTIST in RESIDENCE

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chefs, jamming out to the sounds of Nashville, and brewing our own beer. We'll also taste wines from the Blue Ridge Mountains in Virginia, learn how to train our favorite furry friends, and try our hand at creating the perfect pair of blue jeans. And that's not all. Stop by the Artist Cottage in 2020 to meet these dedicated artisans and learn something new.

@palmettobluff



february

sam  
jones

Sam Jones BBQ | WINTERVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA

**SAM JONES** represents the third generation of his family to cook traditional whole-hog barbecue at Skylight Inn in Ayden, North Carolina. With humble beginnings, the Jones family opened Skylight Inn in 1947, and the restaurant has remained a standard-bearer for wood-cooked eastern North Carolina-style barbecue ever since. Over the years, Jones and Skylight Inn have been counted among the greats when it comes to the country's legendary barbecue joints and pit masters. As early as 1979, *National Geographic* proclaimed the Skylight Inn some of the best barbecue in the country. In 2003, the restaurant was honored with a James Beard Award for "America's Classics."

In the fall of 2015, Jones expanded the family's tradition with the opening of Sam Jones BBQ in Winterville, North Carolina. The new restaurant keeps the integrity of the region's traditional BBQ intact, with no freezers and a detached pit house turning out freshly smoked meats. In 2019, Jones' first cookbook, *Whole Hog BBQ: The Gospel of Carolina Barbecue*, was published, preserving the pit master's passion for the craft and the legacy of his home state's cuisine.

samjonesbbq.com  
@samjonesbbq





march

## amanda wilbanks

Southern Baked Pie Company  
GAINESVILLE, GEORGIA



southernbakedpie.com  
@southernbakedpie

Raised in the kitchens of her mother and grandmothers in rural Georgia, AMANDA DALTON WILBANKS' fondest childhood memories involve baking. In her early twenties, one recipe changed the trajectory of her life. After learning how to make her mother-in-law's buttermilk pie with its buttery pâte brisée crust, Wilbanks dove deeper into the family recipe box and began selling her pies at farmers' markets.

In 2012, Wilbanks founded Southern Baked Pie Company using family recipes and a signature all-butter crust. She opened her first pie shop in Gainesville, Georgia, followed by two more locations in Alpharetta and Buckhead. Today, her e-commerce site is also thriving, shipping pies to patrons all over the country and giving way to a budding wholesale division. The pies, still made by hand in Georgia, are now carried by the likes of Williams-Sonoma, Garden & Gun Fieldshop, and Dean & DeLuca.



april

## drew holcomb

Drew Holcomb and the Neighbors  
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE



drewholcomb.com  
@drewholcombmusic

For more than a decade, Nashville-based artist DREW HOLCOMB and his band THE NEIGHBORS have been making music that inspires listeners to think, feel, dance, and love. As a seasoned road warrior, Holcomb has spent much of his adulthood traveling the country with a catalog of vibrant, honest songs that explore the full range of American roots music. Drew Holcomb and the Neighbors have appeared at Bonnaroo, Hardly Strictly Bluegrass, Stagecoach, Austin City Limits, and other highly regarded festivals and events and have shared the stage with legendary artists such as Willie Nelson, Amos Lee, Don Henley, John Hiatt, Zac Brown Band, and The Avett Brothers. With several critically acclaimed albums under his belt, Holcomb has been featured by major outlets such as NPR, *Rolling Stone*, Entertainment Weekly, Billboard, and CMT, with music synced in over 75 of the most-watched shows on television.

Among Holcomb's projects are his highly anticipated Moon River Music Festival, an annual live music event benefiting various national and local non-profits, and the Magnolia Record Club, a monthly vinyl subscription service, which are both meticulously curated by Holcomb himself.

Holcomb's latest record, 2019's *Dragons*, is his most collaborative to date, featuring a collection of talented artists and songwriters including Lori McKenna, Natalie Hemby, Sean McConnell, The Lone Bellow, and his wife, fellow musician Ellie Holcomb.



may

## eric mckay patrick murtaugh

Hardywood Park Craft Brewery | RICHMOND, VIRGINIA

ERIC MCKAY and PATRICK MURTAUGH were introduced as kids through their parents' friendship, and it wasn't long before the two formed a strong connection of their own. Years down the road, a well-timed meet-up at a sheep station in Australia brought their shared passion for homebrewing and craft beer culture into focus. It was there at Hardywood Park that they shared their first glass of full-flavored, home-brewed beer, inspiring the next 10 years of hard work and planning. With Eric on the business side and Patrick helming the brewing, the duo finally brought their dream into reality with the launch of Richmond, Virginia's Hardywood Park Craft Brewery in 2011.

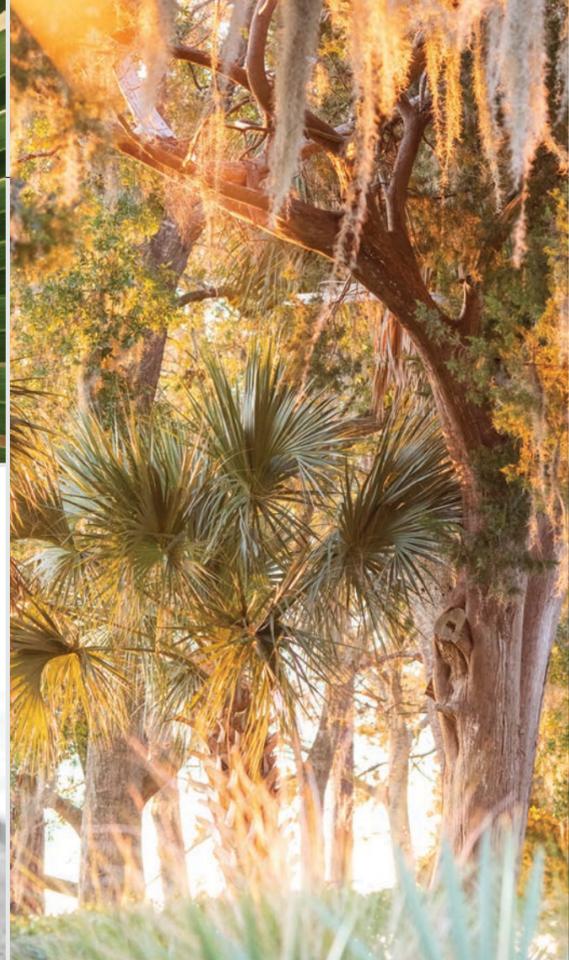
One of only two craft breweries in Richmond at the time, Hardywood later hosted the signing of SB 604, allowing craft breweries to sell beer from their taprooms directly to consumers, thus paving the way for Richmond to become one of the top craft beer destinations in the world. Today, Hardywood operates a 20-barrel brewhouse and taproom in the one-time German Brewing District and another 60-barrel brewhouse and destination in the West Creek area, continuing to deliver on its promise of quality brewing, local sourcing, environmental stewardship, and community engagement.

hardywood.com  
@hardywood





june



july



august

### nick weaver

Blue Delta Jeans  
OXFORD, MISSISSIPPI

### cassandra king conroy

Award-Winning Author  
BEAUFORT, SOUTH CAROLINA



## leigh webber

Leigh Webber Photography | CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

**LEIGH WEBBER** is an award-winning photographer based in Charleston, South Carolina, who specializes in fashion, travel, lifestyle, and underwater photography. Webber's underwater photos span the commercial and fine art worlds; the images have been exhibited throughout North America and are held in private collections across the globe. Webber is also a contributing photographer to various publications including *Garden & Gun*, *Coastal Living*, and *Charleston Magazine*, traveling regularly for commercial shoots (especially those where it's warm and sunny). Her mantra, "Dive In," permeates every aspect of her work. In her own words, "Dive In" is an invitation to the viewer and a command. It's a reminder to take risks, to go deep, and to get beneath the surface. It is a summons to seek uncertainty and possibility and to find the silver linings in the chaos."

leighwebber.com  
@leighwebber

PALMETTOBLUFF.COM



bluedeltajeans.com  
@bluedeltajeans

Raised in the Mississippi Delta, **NICK WEAVER** is the COO of Blue Delta Jeans. Weaver's roots run deep in the cotton industry—his parents are third-generation cotton pickers—so a career crafting blue jeans in Mississippi felt like second nature. After graduating from college, Weaver and his childhood friend Josh West came together to form Blue Delta Jeans, where Weaver's background in sales and a former role at a Fortune 500 company have contributed to the company's rapid growth. A true Southern entrepreneur, Weaver has continued to expand the business, always focused on the success of the Mississippi economy.

cassandrakingconroy.com

**CASSANDRA KING CONROY** is an award-winning author of five bestselling novels and two nonfiction books, in addition to numerous short stories, essays, and magazine articles. Her latest book, *Tell Me A Story* (William Morrow 2019), is a memoir about life with her late husband, author Pat Conroy. Born in lower Alabama, Cassandra now resides in Beaufort, South Carolina, where she is honorary chair of the Pat Conroy Literary Center.



september

# emily pelton

Veritas Vineyards & Winery | AFTON, VIRGINIA

Veritas Vineyard & Winery was started by Andrew and Patricia Hodson in 1999. Born out of their love of wine and commitment to producing quality wine, Veritas has grown into a 20-year-old family business that is on the leading edge of the Virginia wine industry. With over 50 acres of grapes in the Monticello wine region, Veritas produces a complex portfolio of wine ranging from sparkling to beautifully balanced reds. Winemaker **EMILY PELTON**, daughter of Andrew and Patricia, has been the winemaker at Veritas for over 15 harvests and continues to author the beginning chapters of a young and vibrant wine region. Her philosophy is simple: give each varietal natural, balanced expression by focusing on attention to detail and cultural practices. Her love and respect for the land where their grapes are grown comes through in each and every vintage she bottles. Her old-world principles of viticulture and vinification are met with her innovative take on winemaking using state-of-the-art technology and principles to capture the true essence and character of each varietal.

veritaswines.com  
@veritaswinery



october

# vishwesh bhatt

Snackbar  
OXFORD, MISSISSIPPI



citygroceryonline.com/snackbar  
@kissmybhatt1

**VISHWESH BHATT** was born and raised in Gujarat, India, and moved to the United States with his family when he was 17. Living in Austin, Texas, Bhatt discovered the many connections between Indian and American cuisines, and in 2001, he joined James Beard Award-winning chef John Currence's staff. Bhatt quickly put himself on the map as one of the South's most talented new chefs, and in 2009, he was named executive chef of Currence's Snackbar. Combining Southern and subcontinental influences, Bhatt's unique menus have gained him culinary fame; the chef is a six-time James Beard Award semifinalist, and in 2019, he received the highly coveted James Beard Award for Best Chef: South.



november

# mike stewart

Wildrose Kennels  
OXFORD, MISSISSIPPI



uklabs.com  
@wildrosekennels

**MIKE STEWART** is the president of Wildrose International, a collection of full-service kennels in Oxford, Mississippi; Dallas, Texas; and Hillsborough, North Carolina, with additional training facilities in Colorado and Arkansas. Stewart and his dogs have appeared in more than 75 national television programs on hunting and training gundogs and other sporting companions. A respected expert in the field, he conducts retriever training workshops throughout the United States and has released two comprehensive DVDs and a book on "The Wildrose Way," his signature training methodology. In addition, Stewart is publisher of the *Wildrose Journal*, the largest online magazine dedicated to the sporting dog lifestyle, and founder of the Wildrose Service Companion Foundation, a Mississippi-based non-profit providing therapy and service dogs to individuals with special needs. In 2018, he was inducted into the Mississippi Wildlife Hall of Fame.



december

# dorothy shain

Dorothy Shain Contemporary Art  
GREENVILLE, SOUTH CAROLINA



dorothyshain.com  
@dorothy\_shain

**DOROTHY SHAIN** is a Greenville, South Carolina-based artist and creative entrepreneur with a dynamic portfolio. Her work is an exploration of media reflective of the colors, textures, and patterns drawn from travels and adventures, revealing inspiration and influence from countless people, places, and cultures. After graduating from Southern Methodist University in 2012 with a Bachelor of Arts in studio art, Shain launched her brand in September 2014. The business has continued to grow ever since, now encompassing a number of collaborations, licensing, print sales, and, most recently, textiles and wallpapers. From a line of swimwear with Anthropologie to custom-designed products for SPANX, Shain is passionate about partnering with companies that share similar values and, most importantly, value philanthropy.



# MASTERS OF THE HUNT

HOW SPORTING DOGS BECAME POPULAR IN THE LOWCOUNTRY

*Written by: TIM WOOD / Photography by: ROBB SCHARETG*



# WITH THE INCREASED POPULARITY OF DUCK HUNTING OVER THE PAST DECADE,

## IT MAY SEEM TO THE CASUAL FAN

that man's best friend is more of an essential addition to creating the perfect hunt. The reality is that as long as man has pursued elusive fowl—first for survival, later for sport—dogs have been a vital part of the team.

Sporting dogs pop up in recorded history as early as 4000 BC with the **Norwegian elkhound**. **Pharaoh hounds** were favorites of the kings and elite of ancient Egypt. No matter what the popular breed of the day, even the earliest hunters realized the need to train canines to be the optimum sporting sidekick.

That's where heroes such as Brett Lawson come into the picture. Lawson, the owner of TBL Retrievers in Ridgeland, South Carolina, and an expert exhibitor at Palmetto Bluff's Field + Fire event for the past three years, has become one of the area's top sporting dog trainers at just 27 years old.

"Dog training isn't always butterflies and rainbows," Lawson said. "There is a starting point, a learning process, and it's not easy and it isn't going to happen overnight. But when you find that right partner that can be both your canine blanket in bed and your best buddy hunting partner, it can be magic."

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Agility, power, and endurance: one of the most versatile sporting breeds, the athletic and regal German shorthaired pointer is a superb hunting dog that also makes a wonderful companion.

# HUNTERS FIGURED OUT THAT DOGS WERE VITAL LONG BEFORE GUNS WERE INVENTED.



Alert, intelligent, and loving: with a keen nose and excellent trainability, the Brittany is considered by many to be the best pointer, ruling both the field and the hearts of his family at home.

Hunters figured out that dogs were vital long before guns were invented. Whether it was falconry, netting, trapping, or crossbows, dogs were synonymous with success. Count Gaston Phoebus was known as the medieval master of canine innovation. His treatise on the art of hunting, “Livre de la Chasse,” made the case for **spaniels** being the first breed that had the needed skill, patience, timing, and will to make the ideal helper. (The dogs were referred to as “spaniels” because Phoebus lived near the border of Spain.)

“At first there was no such thing as a breed. Any dog that did what a spaniel did was so named. It does not really matter to us who taught spaniels to crouch down so that men could drag the long net right over them,” said 19<sup>th</sup>-century historian Edward Ash in explaining the invent of sporting dogs. “They set about teaching them to do all that might be useful when hunting birds: firstly to show where the birds were, then to keep down whilst the net was in use, to swim and fetch birds after they were shot with a crossbow, to collect the arrow fired by the crossbow. Spaniels were also useful to start up hares when coursing. So, the spaniel became the maid of all work.”

While **pointers** are known to go back to Roman times, it took centuries for hunters to realize their elite scent skills in tracking game. British hunters took a shine to **setters** as they began looking for more traits than just speed and efficiency. They wanted substance and style, and that led to a flurry of more breeds and an era of specialization that found its way to America as the founding fathers made their way across the pond.

Hunters looking for the perfect canine became mad scientists of breeding, and breeds such as **Newfoundlands, Labradors, flatcoats, and curlies** became commonplace. Around that same time, hunters realized that these canines could do more than point and sniff out the game. These hunters wanted the dogs to retrieve their bounty as well, and they wanted breeds that were up for group hunts with other dogs.

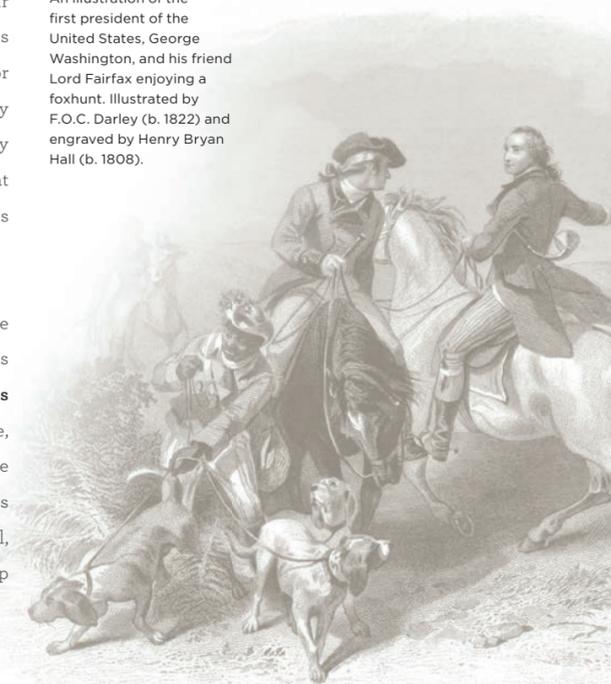
As the experimentation continued, the volume of breeds outpaced efficiency as hunters realized that each dog was unique—and that meant wildly varying retrieving ability and negative traits like a hard mouth and being shy around guns.

“They began to realize what we know is essential today. a specific breed does not guarantee you have the right sporting dog. You have to begin with a good foundation, the right pedigree, and the needed demeanor,” Lawson said.

**Beagles**, along with **mastiffs** and **hounds**, were essential in keeping wolves out of the earliest Massachusetts colonies in the mid-1600s. **Foxhounds** pop up in American history as one of the first sporting dogs unique to our country—not just imported by migrant settlers.

According to historians, the earliest organized recorded sport hunt was a pack organized by Thomas, Sixth Lord of Fairfax, in 1747. George Washington was also known to be an avid foxhunter. His diaries are full of stories of foxhunts near the nation’s capital, with hounds running within earshot while the first congressmen convened.

An illustration of the first president of the United States, George Washington, and his friend Lord Fairfax enjoying a foxhunt. Illustrated by F.O.C. Darley (b. 1822) and engraved by Henry Bryan Hall (b. 1808).



Colonial times brought a revolution of the hunter. Settlers of the evolving middle class wanted to hunt all the game that was once only possible for nobility. But their new home brought new challenges, and hunters realized they needed versatility from their dogs—a dog that could live at home but be equally comfortable in the fields, forests, marshes, and rivers.

Plantation living in South Carolina brought its own specific needs, so South Carolinians became as resourceful as their European ancestors. Lowcountry hunters were the first breeders of the **Boykin spaniel** in the 1900s for hunting ducks and wild turkeys.

“Many breeds were brought home by soldiers fighting in foreign wars, so their numbers were sparse at first. The Boykin was the locals’ means to have their very own breed that could match the game-rich territory they took over,” Lawson said. “These dogs became the MVP of the time. Plantation owners spent so much of their day on hunts essential to survival. So, these dogs, they became companions as vital as a spouse to settlers.”

As hunts evolved from a food source to a means of sports and recreation, trainers like Lawson became all the more indispensable.

The proper training is a months-long process, and with all the work put in, even the best-bred dog is far from a guarantee to have the right temperament to be a sporting dog.

“The ugly truth is it doesn’t happen with every dog,” Lawson said. He and his staff train about 30 dogs at any one time, and he estimates that 26 to 28 of them become hunting and sporting stars.

## SO, WHAT SHOULD OWNERS LOOK FOR WHEN CONSIDERING THEIR PUPPY FOR SPORT TRAINING?



TBL Retrievers conducts a dog training demonstration at Palmetto Bluff's annual Field + Fire event.

PHOTO: *Borjwing Lee*

“We’re looking for that prey drive, that puppy that when the leaf blows across the ground, they want to go jump and grab it,” Lawson said. “You want to see work ethic, to see a dog running hard to a pigeon or duck decoy. That desire, that catch and kill instinct, the dogs show us that behavior very early on.”

## AND IN RETURN, THE BEHAVIOR YOU, AS OWNER, MUST SHOW IS PATIENCE.

“A puppy is always a gamble when we start out. It’s about showing them that the training is a way of life,” Lawson said. “You put the work in, show them setups and obedience, practice blinder trees every day, and they will get better and better. It’s a process and a master class in stamina. You’re establishing behaviors. And just like us, dogs don’t work for free. Their payment is the retrieve or the praise after. It might be pieces of hot dogs and dog treats or just attention and love. But there is always a transaction going on in the training.”

Lawson grew up in the Lowcountry focused more on horses, as his dad was a cutting horse trainer. When he was 11, a trainer named Charles Rahn asked if he wanted to take his Christmas present Lab pup, Gypsy, for training. Lawson and Gypsy took to the training quickly. He read the Richard Waters classic training manual *Water Dog*,

and soon he was doing hunt tests with Gypsy and Rahn.

“It lit a fire under me. I graduated from high school, worked on a plantation, and I liked working with bird dogs and retrievers,” Lawson said. “I tried working for a dog trainer, but then I got homesick and decided to take in a couple dogs. I learned from trainers, and it just snowballed into a profession I love.”

Lawson said Gypsy, who lived nine years, was a great starter training dog but far from an award winner. His current dog, Boss, has been a training star, so much so that he even knows when to say “when” on a chase.

“I mean, this is a dog that does not give up. He’s so good-natured and so good around other hunting dogs. This one duck hunt, we sent him all the way across the beaver pond, 125 yards or more,” Lawson recalled. “He kept getting up on a bank and backing up, and we’re wondering what’s going on—we thought we’d finally found the hunt he wasn’t up for. So later on, we’re going around the pond to find a bird and come upon this bank. It was a wall of catclaw briar. It was thick, nasty, full of hooked prickles, and we could not get through it. We get back to Boss and he just gave us this look like, ‘I told you I couldn’t get in there. And you think you were going to?’”

A black Labrador on a duck hunt with his young master.



# “WE’RE LOOKING FOR THAT PREY DRIVE.”

A full-page photograph of a hunter in a field of tall, dry grass. The hunter is wearing a vest and sunglasses, holding a shotgun. A dog is running in the foreground. A bird is flying in the sky. The sky is a mix of blue and orange, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

LAWSON SAID  
THAT THE  
LOWCOUNTRY  
HAS  
ENDURED AS  
A HUNTER'S  
HAVEN  
BECAUSE ITS  
OPEN LAND  
CONTINUES  
TO BE GAME  
RICH.

Upland hunting: birds are typically found on the ground in heavy cover, so with his companion by his side, a hunter relies on his gun dog to flush out and then retrieve the game.

Lawson said that the Lowcountry has endured as a hunter's haven because its open land continues to be game rich. Boykins became especially popular because of their love of turkey hunts, and because of their small size, they could get through the cover where bigger dogs couldn't. While Boykins remain popular, especially in the Carolinas, Lawson doesn't see as many at TBL Retrievers.

"Their temperament is a little different, a little testier in places and in ways that Labs aren't," he said. Labs are around 95 percent of what TBL works with, but **golden retrievers, English cocker spaniels, German shorthaired pointers, springer spaniels, and Brittany spaniels** are all popular in the Lowcountry.

Lawson likes to give fans a soups-to-nuts experience when he comes to Palmetto Bluff's Field + Fire event, to show the progression of these majestic animals.

"We bring a puppy; show how we start retrieving. Then a one-year-old to show more advanced obedience training. And then a two- or three-year-old to show what mastering the craft looks like," he said. "The biggest misconception is that you can't have a house dog that is a sporting or gundog. It's all about establishing behaviors and expectations . . . patterns of 'if A, then B' for the dog."

"They are brilliant in compartmentalizing, and we learn that from them the more and more we work with each new dog," Lawson said. "But it's all about boundaries, consistency, and perseverance. If you, as an owner, bring that to the table, you are going to have a lifelong hunting buddy."

**TO LEARN MORE ABOUT GUNDOGS, FOLLOW BRETT LAWSON AND TBL RETRIEVERS ON SOCIAL MEDIA @TBLRETRIEVERS**



A Boykin spaniel demonstrating obedience skills at the 2018 Field + Fire event.

PHOTO: Bonjwing Lee

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PHOTO: Krisztian Lonyai

# INDIGO RISING

Written by: Justin Jarrett

Photography by: Krisztian Lonyai

Caroline Harper already had a feeling 2020 was going to be a great year, and then she saw Pantone's Color of the Year—Classic Blue, a hue reminiscent of the sky at dusk.

But Caroline sees indigo.

To be fair, she sees indigo everywhere now. A native of France, Caroline (pronounced “care-oh-lean”) came to the Palmetto State for college and never left, but she was a South Carolina resident for more than two decades before indigo made it onto her radar—and she was on the other side of the globe when it finally happened.

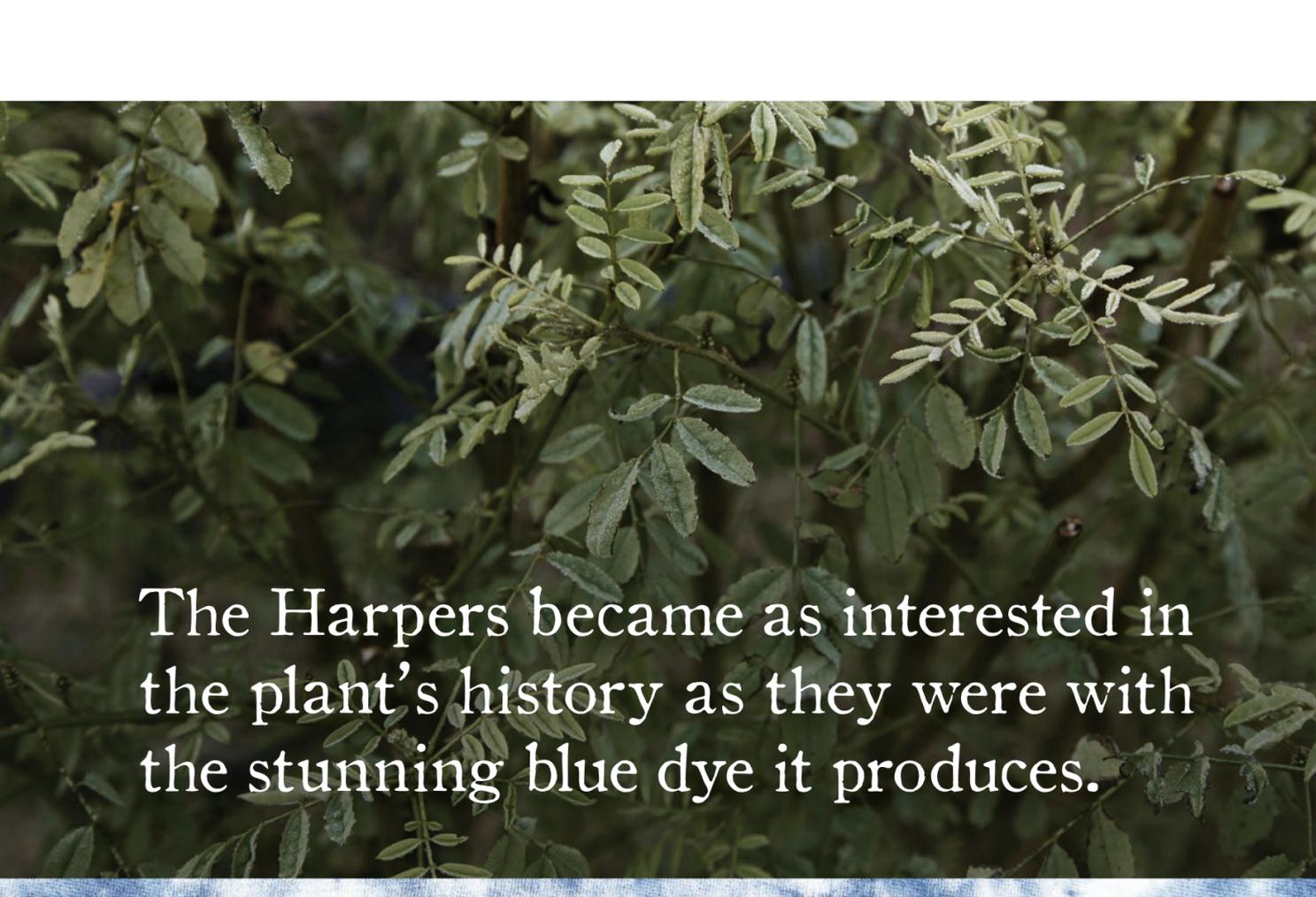
A little over six years ago, she took a trip to Japan and spent 10 days on a silk and indigo farm outside Tokyo. She learned about the plant and the dye, as well as the ancient Japanese art of *shibori*, which involves tying, knotting, and clamping fabric to produce different dye patterns.

Caroline had dabbled with different fabrics and chemical dyes as a hobby while working as a graphic designer, but nothing ever captivated her quite like indigo. Little did she know that the plant that had captured her attention on the other side of the globe had such deep roots back home.

Fast-forward six years, and Caroline and her husband, David, are at the forefront of reviving South Carolina's long-lost cash crop—or at least they hope so. Their company, CHI design indigo, is equal parts high fashion and historic preservation, aiming both to produce farm-to-fabric creations and educate people at home and afar about the plant's connections to the Palmetto State's past.

“It's interesting to think about,” David Harper says, “but it's actually like a 230-year gap of production if you really look at it. There really wasn't a dyeing tradition or a dye-making tradition in South Carolina that lasted much after the Revolutionary War.”

Indeed, indigo production was nonexistent in South Carolina for more than two centuries, although it was the state's number two export, behind rice, from 1747 until the 1790s. The crop was grown on land not suited for rice, and the fields were tended by enslaved people who were also responsible for harvesting the plants and manufacturing the dye. British subsidies made indigo production lucrative, at least until the Revolutionary War disrupted production and England turned to India for its indigo. Exports from South Carolina dropped off precipitously, and plantation owners turned their attention to growing cotton.



The Harpers became as interested in the plant's history as they were with the stunning blue dye it produces.

PHOTO: Krisztian Lonyai

The Harpers became as interested in the plant's history—its quick rise and fall—as they were enamored with the stunning blue dye it produces.

That history, like much of US history, is complicated. Indigo production in South Carolina was dependent on a system of brutal oppression—the enslavement of people of color.

The Harpers are cognizant of indigo's cruel past but see an opportunity to bring awareness and understanding of indigo's history and give the Palmetto State a chance to revive the industry in a manner that is beneficial to all. "There's some real opportunity for healing with indigo in the Lowcountry in ways that could open up new opportunities," David says.

## Growing indigo is easy enough. Processing it is another story.

Extracting the coveted, deep blue dye is an arduous task that is both time- and labor-intensive, hence the industry's success in the colonial South's oppressive economic system.

But Caroline was compelled to use the magical blue dye to transform textiles into works of art, so David had to learn how to produce it. The multistep process involves soaking and fermenting the leaves in tanks to produce a blueish water, which is mixed with lime and oxidized until it turns a deep navy blue.

The paste that settles to the bottom of the tank is dried and eventually ground into indigo dye powder.

That's when Caroline makes her magic happen, using the natural, organic "Blue Gold Indigo" to produce a wide array of products ranging from clothing and jewelry to bow ties and napkins.

But getting to that point is no easy task. It begins with the Harpers germinating seeds indoors as soon as the soil begins to warm up in March. When the seedlings reach about two inches tall and are strong enough, usually in early to mid-April, they're ready to go in the ground.

By July, the plants are knee-high, and in August, they hit full bloom and are ready to harvest, beginning the long process of once again turning green into vibrant blue.



PHOTO: Krisztian Lonyai



PHOTO: Krisztian Lonyai

## The Harpers are not alone in their quest to revive indigo's importance in the Palmetto State.

A small, but passionate and growing, group continues to increase production and spread awareness each year.

David sits on the board of the Charleston-based International Center for Indigo Culture, a non-profit organization with a mission to “inspire and create a new ‘farm-to-fabric’ economy and culture based around the indigo plant and the dye it produces.”

In other words, the Harpers don't see others working with indigo as competitors so much as collaborators.

“There's this sense of all boats rising together at this point, because indigo

is such an important revival and education is so fundamental,” David says. “When we hear about other natural dyers and other people doing the work, it really is not so much a sense of competing as it is a question of how can we all make this work for everybody?”

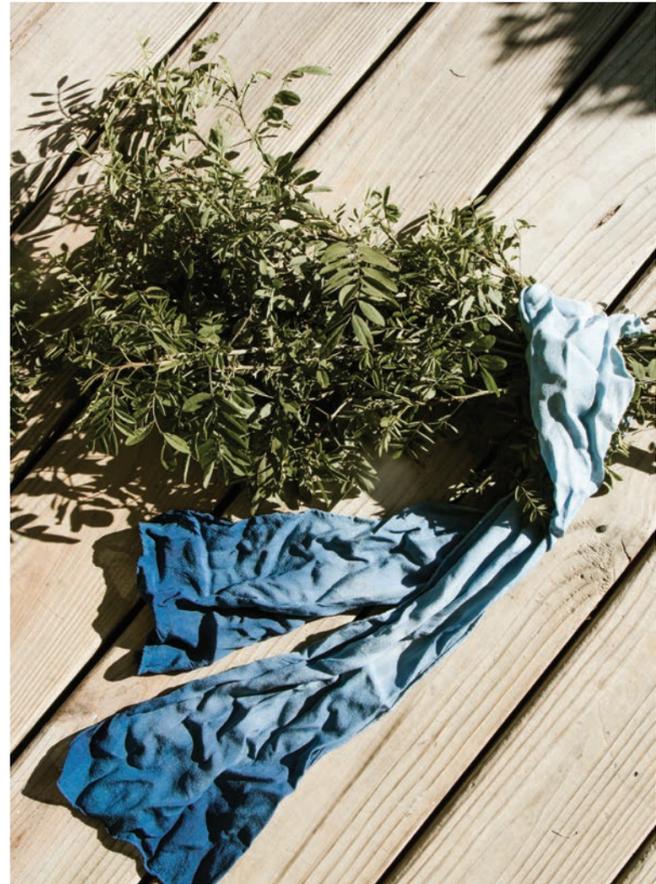
The Harpers have made education a cornerstone of their business, hosting workshops and other events aimed at educating people about the history of indigo, as well as best practices not only for growing and processing it, but also for dyeing with it. They're also working on plans for a kit designed for art teachers to use in the classroom to introduce students to the history and utility of indigo.

“Our goal truly is educating people, especially in the Lowcountry, about not only this as a history lesson, but something that can be part of economic development in the future,” David says. “It's about the Lowcountry experience of being able to do these hands-on workshops, get some hand-dyed products, and even if you're flying back to Germany, you can be like, ‘Wow, I really just went to the heart of the Lowcountry through this experience.’”

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PHOTOS: Krisztian Lonyai and courtesy of Caroline Harper



PHOTOS: Krisztian Lonyai and courtesy of Caroline Harper

## The indigo revival in South Carolina got jump-started with the 2017 release of Natasha Boyd's novel *The Indigo Girl*.

*The Indigo Girl* tells the story of Eliza Lucas Pinckney, who as a teenager in the 1730s was responsible for developing indigo as a major cash crop in South Carolina.

It was perfect timing for Caroline, who was already three years into her quest to revive indigo production in the Palmetto State.

"I kind of picked it up at the right time," Caroline says.

Well, as right as the timing could be to take on a trade from a bygone era.

Indigo was once ubiquitous along the Lowcountry coast, grown from Georgetown down to Savannah, with what is now Beaufort County

producing quite a bounty. After centuries of dormancy, indigo is again sprouting from the fertile Lowcountry soil. The Harpers have crops in Kingstree, John's Island, Edisto Island, and Green Pond, and they process plants from other cultivators around the region, including Three Sisters Farm in Bluffton.

The timing makes perfect sense to Caroline.

"I think I was meant to do this kind of work," she says.

The Harpers hope the timing is right for another big move on the horizon. They plan to move to the Charleston area and add a brick-and-mortar store to complement the online storefront and the busy roster of shows, festivals, and markets where Caroline sells her indigo-dyed creations.

After all, 2020 is the year for Classic blue, and in South Carolina, it doesn't get much more classic and bluer than homegrown indigo. ●

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# COME & SIT A SPELL

Written by: Anna Jones | Photography by: Newport653



A front porch is as synonymous with the South as a fresh, salty batch of boiled peanuts or the syrupy sweetness of pecan pie. The structural version of hospitality in every home, a porch welcomes owners and guests as they come and go, offering shelter from a bit of rain or a shady place to rest a spell. Spanning the length of the home, porches extend the living space—offering the ultimate outdoor living room. Catching cool breezes rolling off the river, they're the perfect place to enjoy a slow sunset (and perhaps a nip or two) and chat about the day with family and friends. A good porch captures a moment in time, pressing pause on the ever-quicken pace of life and asking us to slow down and breathe in the salty air before stepping inside. A good porch is also a place of possibility, growing and changing to adapt to the family in which it serves, while always acting as the ever-perfect backdrop for an impromptu gathering to host those we love most.

Harkening back to the earliest settlements, porches are a vital element of the architectural vernacular of each region in the South. Like any good invention, porches were born out of necessity, a requirement for any homeowner to withstand the sweltering heat and humidity of Southern

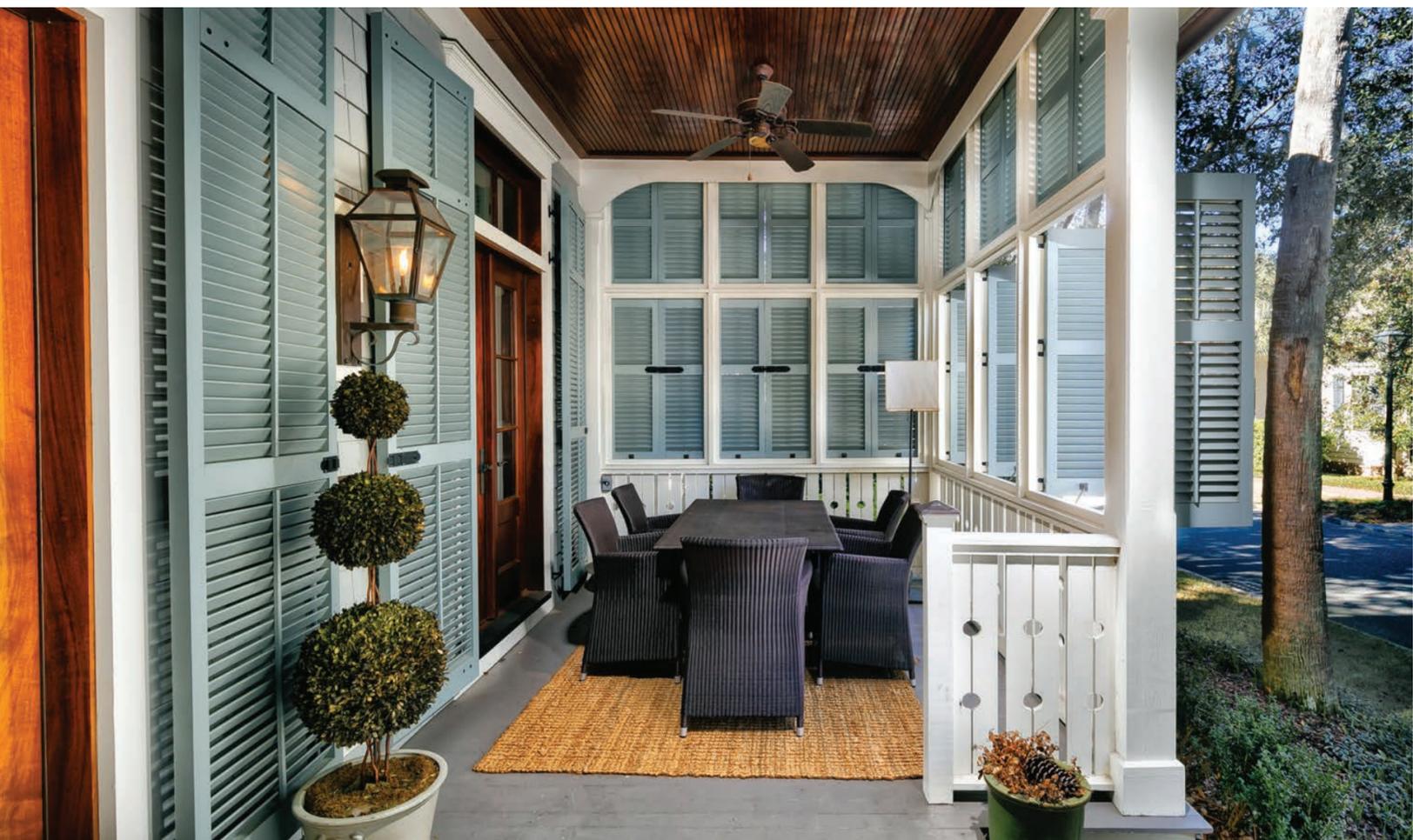
springs and summers (and sometimes, falls and winters), creating an outdoor living room that wasn't nearly as hot as the one inside. The bonus living space provided by porches gave families the opportunity to enjoy the cooler temperatures as well as each other's company, lending itself to the porch's legend of being the place for relaxation and winding down at the end of a long day.

Here in the Lowcountry, porches were (and many still are) elevated, built off the ground to capture breezes underneath the porch floor and often strategically positioned facing the river or tidal creeks to take advantage of nature's air conditioning. Deep, wide porch spaces throughout the Lowcountry provided welcome shade from the sun, some with louvered ceilings that stretched high enough to also create proper airflow and ventilation to help alleviate the hot Lowcountry weather.

Porches in downtown Charleston, however, follow the trim profile of traditional townhomes and typically feature a double-decker porch that extends down the side of the home rather than the front facade.



Like any good invention, porches were born out of necessity, a requirement for any homeowner to withstand the sweltering heat and humidity of Southern springs and summers.



Many New Orleans porches follow suit, trading traditional wooden banisters for ornate black iron that curls and flowers into a tapestry of designs. Traditional Georgian columns flank the Greek Revival porches of many stately Southern homes of old. These porches are usually flat, lower platforms that serve not only as a formal greeting place, but also as an ideal spot to celebrate special occasions and host cocktail parties.

Different folklore explains why this blue color will deter evil spirits—some believe the blue was representative of water, which spirits cannot traverse, while others say the color helps keep restless souls away from the home. While indigo and the use of the color blue to protect against evil spirits is deeply ingrained in African culture, the color haint blue remains a popular paint choice—lightening many porch ceilings across the South to this day.

We would be remiss in discussing the vernacular of porches if we didn't mention the haint blue porch ceilings found throughout the South. A blend of light blue with a hint of green, "haint blue," first produced from indigo grown on Lowcountry plantations, was originally used by enslaved Africans to ward off evil spirits or "haints," which some believe to be a variation of the word "haunt."

Front porches are especially important to the architectural aesthetic of the Bluff, as they offer a signature look to the front facade on almost every home in the community. Here at Palmetto Bluff, the Design Review Board goes to great lengths to preserve and uphold the elegant history of Southern architectural vernacular, and this certainly includes the thoughtful construction of porches within



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As welcoming and transparent living spaces, front porches offer the ideal place for sincere and impromptu interactions between neighbors and guests.

the community. Porches in Palmetto Bluff must be at least 8 feet in depth to give them substance and space, lending a more authentic aesthetic to the front of the house and keeping in line with traditional Lowcountry architecture. (Plus, since many homes have vehicular access from back alleys, the beauty of the front porch is unobstructed by any cars, and therefore creates a welcome greeting for each home.)

“Porches at Palmetto Bluff come in all shapes and sizes—screened, unscreened, louvered. Some are in the rear of the home, some are on the upper levels, some are on both,” said Stephanie Gentemann, director of the Palmetto Bluff Design Review Board. “Front porches are especially important at the Bluff, as they emphasize community and connection, one of the four cornerstones of our company.”

And this cornerstone is everywhere. Cavernous porches line the sidewalks of the Bluff’s neighborhoods, ensuring each porch is as livable and functional as it is beautiful. As welcoming and transparent living spaces, front porches offer the ideal place for sincere and impromptu interactions between neighbors and guests in the community, a vital dimension of the original vision of Palmetto Bluff.

The sense of community a front porch provides is undeniable. Walk down any street of the Bluff, and you’ll understand why they are the heartbeat of this community—where neighbors stop by to say hello, where books are read on a swing, where stories are shared under the cool shade. (Just make sure you don’t have to be anywhere anytime soon, as “porching” usually lingers longer than you might expect.) ❖

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY: LISA STAFF

## a simple handwritten note.

A postcard from a loved one on a journey in a land far away.  
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Annual Christmas cards wishing tidings of good joy.

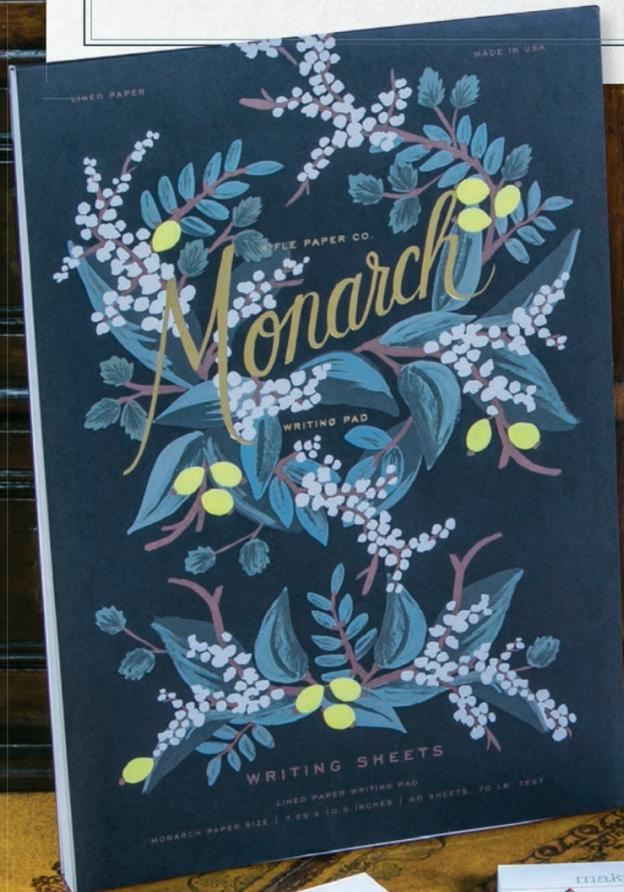
All things that time has seemingly erased.

In a digitally wired society, the act of handwriting anything has just about vanished. Gone are the days of putting pen to paper to leave someone a message about a missed phone call, to catch someone up on life's busy affairs, to even make a grocery list. How easy it is for us to simply send an email or a text wishing someone well. We'd like to change that.

There is something uniquely special about taking the time to write a note to someone. Big or small, there is a timelessness

to handwritten correspondence—where the recipients of such a kind gesture probably hang onto those handwritten pieces, unlike texts or emails. Postcards held up by magnets on refrigerators, love letters placed in scrapbooks, or greeting cards slipped into a bedside table drawer for later reading, a handwritten note creates a personal connection that isn't soon forgotten.

So, put away the phone. (Goodbye, Siri.) We're getting back to the business of creating personal connections one card a time. From our favorite local Lowcountry boutiques to a few national retailers, check out some of the stationery sets, greeting cards, and writing pads—some artful, some personal, and some just perfect for that one-of-a-kind friend—that just may make your next handwritten note one that is cherished for years to come.



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## From grandmother, with love...

As a child, all through my college years, and even as an adult, my grandmother used to send me cards and letters filled with news from her small town—when she last played a rousing game of bridge, what she brought to the church potluck, or details about an upcoming trip with her college roommates. Sometimes, she'd even include a gently folded newspaper clipping from an article she thought I'd like. She'd also make sure to ask me how I was doing, knowing that it would be awhile until she got her answer, as she would have to not only wait until her letter arrived, but she'd also have to wait for my reply. Sure, her cursive handwriting was sometimes hard to read, but I still have these lovely reminders of her—her dedication to the art, her witty anecdotes, and her written words of love. Every single one of them.



Alligator Foil Embossed Folded Notecard Set, Lettrs Gifts, \$17.95; Howdy Card, Lettrs Gifts, \$4.95; Nobody Ever Asked Cowboys to Keep It Down Card, Mameem & Maudie, \$3.95; Whale Hello There Card, Lettrs Gifts, \$4.95



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# Local character

CAMERON WATFORD

Written by: Sarah Monroe / Photography by: Krisztian Lonyai



Riding horses has always been Cameron's passion. From a young age in Monroe, Connecticut, all Cameron wanted to do was ride. And while many children grow out of their obsessions, Cameron did not. She attended college at the University of Findlay, where she focused on business management and, you guessed it, equestrian studies. Findlay's commitment to a hands-on education was the perfect grounds for Cameron to start her professional career. After graduating, she went to work for Betsy Steiner, a Grand Prix dressage rider, as a working student and groom. But Cameron's family ties had her yearning to be back in the Lowcountry. In 2008, Cameron joined the Palmetto Bluff team at Longfield Stables as the assistant stable manager, and today she proudly serves as our stable manager.

The life lessons these elegant creatures taught her have remained with her, as she practices respect and patience daily at Longfield Stables.



**Q: What goes through your mind as you drive into Palmetto Bluff?**

A: I usually run through the day's schedule and plan out my to-do list. My days start early at 6:00 a.m., so one of the highlights is getting to watch the sunrise from the stables.

**Q: What about on your way home?**

A: I'll recap what went on in my day and have a phone call with my mom.

**Q: What is your greatest accomplishment?**

A: It's definitely getting this job. Before, I was working in a student position in New Jersey and wanted to move closer to my parents who live on Hilton Head. I cold-called, and it turned into a wonderful opportunity.

**Q: What is your most marked characteristic?**

A: I'm pretty even-keeled. Nothing really ruffles my feathers, but that's an important part of working with horses. They respond to your stress, so being able to not share that with the horses is crucial.

**Q: What was the last book you read?**

A: *Emily of New Moon*. I love to read.

**Q: If you could have one super power, what would it be? And how would you use it in your job?**

A: Oh, teleportation for sure. I don't like traveling and driving, but I enjoy going to different places. As for using it in my job, we have 173 acres here at Longfield Stables, so being able to blink and be somewhere quickly would help. We average 10 miles of walking a day.

**Q: What are you doing when you aren't at Palmetto Bluff?**

A: I love to garden—mostly fruits and vegetables. I can't keep flowers. I also enjoy spending time with my husband and our greyhound.

**Q: What got you interested in horses?**

A: It's something you're born with. When I was little, I would always want to play on the coin-operated horse at Kmart. My aunt rode horses, and I always wanted to be riding. When I was 12 years old, I started riding lessons and got my first horse, Fawn.

**Q: What word or phrase do you use the most?**

A: At home, I always use, "It's no problem." But at work I use, "Absolutely!" or "Will do!" the most.

**Q: What makes you laugh?**

A: Our dog, Winnie, can be pretty ridiculous at times. Since she's a retired racer, she likes to run a lot of laps in the backyard. To wipe her paws before she comes back inside, she does a 360-degree spin. She's also very communicative when she thinks she deserves a treat.

**Q: What is your favorite spot at the Bluff?**

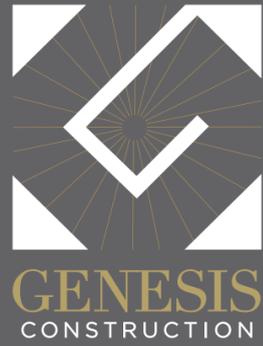
A: That would be Longfield Stables at sunrise or sunset.

**Q: What is your favorite animal?**

A: Horses.

**Q: What is your best advice for new riders?**

A: My best advice would be to take as many lessons as possible and on as many different horses as possible. They each have their own personalities, so it's important to ride as many as you can. Another piece of advice is to learn about horse care. Many people don't learn that these days, and it's a very important part of it all. •



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# Hospitality

IN THE FLATWOODS



Written by: JAY WALEA

*It was* A LONG, SLEEPLESS NIGHT FILLED WITH THE ANTICIPATION OF THE DAY TO COME, KNOWING I WAS GOING HUNTING AT PALMETTO BLUFF FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MY LIFE.



I was only 10 years old but had been hunting with my dad since I was old enough to walk. **SOX CALDER**, CEO of Union Camp, had a father-son hunt every year in December where he would invite his executive staff and their sons on a day-long dog drive at Palmetto Bluff. My dad was head of accounting, and that was what opened the door for me to the most beautiful place on Earth. For years, we participated in Sox's annual hunt, but once I got into middle school, my dad and I were able to come hunt with **ANTON WITHERINGTON**, head of the land resources division and one of Dad's best friends. That meant that I actually got to stay at the Lodge for three days and participate in every hunt (still hunting and dog hunting).



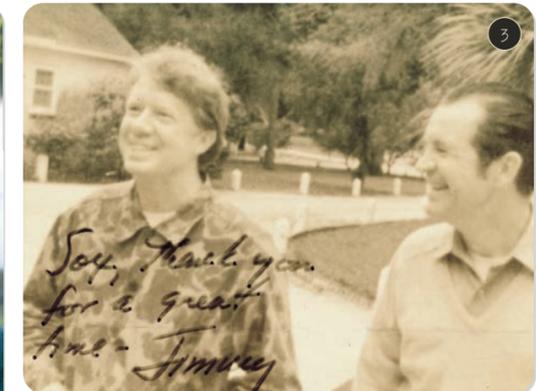
A hunter proudly displays his wild turkey.

These early years hunting at the Bluff gave me the ultimate lifelong goal of one day working there and becoming one of the famous guides that I looked up to and on whose teachings I built my hunting skills and tactics. Famous names like **CHARLIE BALES**, **WOODROW SCOTT**, **WILD BILL MIXON**, **CARL WOODS**, **RICKY CROSBY**, and **RICHARD LEVANT** quickly became my heroes. Every time I was with them, I observed an amazing work ethic more intensive than anything I'd ever seen. No matter what day or what hour, those guys were game—ready to tackle the next task while always wearing a smile. These men were masters

of their fields in everything from forestry management, wildlife management, food plots, animal behavior, and trapping skills to woodsmanship.

In 1991, my lifelong goal of working at Palmetto Bluff became a reality. It wasn't until then that I got the full understanding of what it took to become one of those famous guides who were the heroes from my childhood. Hired as an intern, I worked my entire college career at the Bluff, coming home every weekend and working every holiday and break. It was during these years that I learned everything that went into running a first-class hunting operation and the hospitality that went along with it. Most of my time was consumed by skinning shed detail, hog trapping, and filling feeders, but I took every chance I got to learn from the guides and absorbed each of the lessons like a sponge. I did get to interact with the guests quite a bit; little did I know that Charlie Bales was molding me into his interpretation of a guide. My full-time career started in 1994 when Charlie Bales and Anton Witherington brought me on as a full-time guide with Union Camp.

I had always been amazed at how the guests put the guides on a pedestal (like I had done when I was a child).



1. Front of the Lodge where the day's harvest would be displayed. / 2. Union Camp hunting guides (from left): Ricky Crosby, Dusty Durden, Jay Walea, Mike Rahn, Bill Mixon, Richard Levant, and Irvin Harriot. / 3. US President Jimmy Carter at Union Camp. / 4. Dining room of the Lodge circa 1960s.

# Through the years...

5. Wilson Mansion ruins. / 6. Palmetto Bluff cruising boat, a Boston Whaler. / 7. Hunter with a mixed bag of turkeys and hogs. / 8. Limit of trout from the May River, circa 1960s. / 9. Wildlife stamp.





10. Back view of the Lodge at Palmetto Bluff.



11. Hunter and guide after a successful turkey hunt.

They were larger than life. Each guest had his or her favorite, and our names were, and still are, known worldwide. During my career, I have guided former presidents of the United States, Japanese royalty, governors, senators, and former head coach of the Georgia Bulldogs Vince Dooley. I learned to treat each person just as I did the last—teasing them when they missed but always treating them like “one of the guys.” Most of these people were big executives in their day-to-day life who weren’t spoken to like that, and they loved it.

For the thousands of guests who visited Palmetto Bluff, there was one common consensus: they loved the hospitality, the hunting, the fishing, and the amazing Lodge and staff, and they couldn’t wait to come back. A true home away from home, the Lodge was something to behold. When guests would arrive, they were greeted at the door by **JAMES THE BARTENDER**, smiling as he handed them one of his famous Bloody Marys. A gentleman by the name of **TINY** would show them to their rooms, while cutting up with them as if they were family. **MRS. BESSY**, God love her, would be in the kitchen preparing the best fried chicken on the planet with her daughter, **BIG CAROL**, by her side. We, the guides, would

then arrive after lunch to load up the hunters and head out into the wilds of Palmetto Bluff for an adventure that the guests had been looking forward to all year. After the hunt, it was tradition to bring all the game to the front door of the Lodge for photos and tall tales of how the game was taken. Mrs. Bessy would have hors d’oeuvres ready and waiting. (My favorite was her blue crab balls.)

The guides would soon retire to the skinning shed while the guests were served supper, which could be anything from local seafood to monster rib eyes. Many a moonlit night I came back across the pond dam to the Lodge to see the glowing embers of cigars being enjoyed by guests on the back porch, as they recounted the day’s happenings and eagerly anticipated the new day to come, too excited to go to sleep.

Palmetto Bluff has always been a special place filled with Southern hospitality and the allure of vast forests and fields—a true hunter’s paradise. And while some of the people may be gone—Mrs. Bessy, Big Carol, and James the bartender—the allure is still there, not only for hunters and sportsmen and women, but now for families. •



*What was* ONCE A HUNTING CAMP WITH TALL TALES TOLD AROUND CIGAR CIRCLES HAS NOW EVOLVED INTO A PLACE WHERE CONNECTIONS ARE MADE AND STORIES ARE SHARED ON FRONT PORCHES, IN TREE HOUSES, OR IN PARKS—WITH NATURE AND HOSPITALITY STILL TAKING CENTER STAGE.



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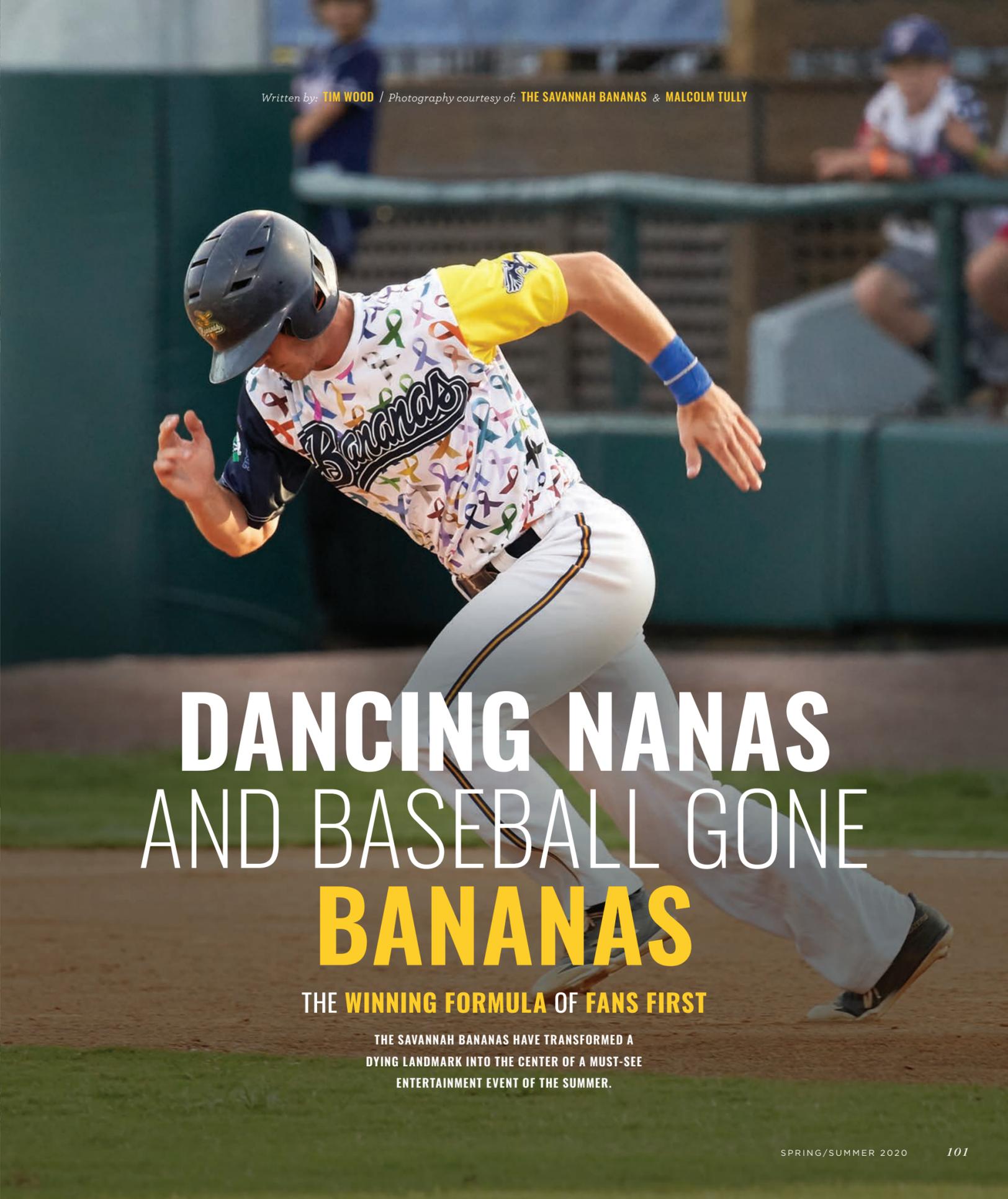




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Written by: **TIM WOOD** / Photography courtesy of: **THE SAVANNAH BANANAS & MALCOLM TULLY**



# DANCING NANAS AND BASEBALL GONE BANANAS

THE **WINNING FORMULA OF FANS FIRST**

THE SAVANNAH BANANAS HAVE TRANSFORMED A DYING LANDMARK INTO THE CENTER OF A MUST-SEE ENTERTAINMENT EVENT OF THE SUMMER.



## THERE IS A PIECE OF **BASEBALL HEAVEN** HIDING ON THE EDGES OF DAFFIN PARK OFF OF VICTORY DRIVE IN SAVANNAH, GEORGIA.

Grayson Stadium has been a staple of the Savannah cityscape since before many of the city's signature squares were constructed, but over the past two decades, the orifice has sadly become a depressing historical asterisk rather than a celebrated landmark.

Multiple owners had tried and failed to attract crowds to Grayson, all the while trying to convince the city to fund a new ballpark. The baseball team went through a series of Major League affiliations from the Braves to the Cardinals to the Expos to the Mets. No matter the organization, the team rarely caused a ripple among residents of the Coastal Empire and Lowcountry.

Even when the on-field product was strong, as they were in the Sand Gnats' final three seasons in town when they averaged 80-plus wins per year, the turnstiles rarely registered more than 2,000 fans per game. I know this

struggle intimately. I was the general manager of the Sand Gnats for the 2004 season.

So, when the Sand Gnats left for a shiny new ballpark in Columbia, South Carolina, and got an immediate marketing boost with the arrival of Tim Tebow, few of the remaining Savannah diamond diehards expected a new tenant for their beloved Grayson.

Enter Jesse Cole, his wife, Emily, and his protégé Jared Orton. The trio had run a successful franchise in the summer collegiate Coastal Plains League in Gastonia, North Carolina. They saw Savannah as the next challenge, as a sleeping giant of baseball entertainment.

When they arrived in Savannah in October 2015, they were welcomed by a cobweb-covered Grayson and a heavy dose of pessimism.

**"WE KNOW BASEBALL WAS DECLARED DEAD HERE,"** said team president Orton, a former collegiate baseball player who was in the midst of his second stint of working with Cole. **"WE GOT THE KEYS TO THE BALLPARK AND SAW A FIELD WITH NO NAME, NO LOGO, NO OFFICE, BUT WE HAD A DREAM. WE HAD NO HELP FROM PREVIOUS OWNERS, NO LISTS OF TICKET HOLDERS, SO WE STARTED TAKING PICTURES OF THE NAMES ON THE BACKS OF SEATS, GOOGLED PHONE NUMBERS, CALLED THE BUSINESSES WITH BILLBOARDS ON THE OUTFIELD WALLS, AND WENT TO WORK."**

Jesse had a history of taking on big projects. He became part owner of the Gastonia Grizzlies in 2014 with the team over \$100,000 in debt. Cole quickly began turning things around in Gastonia, drawing attention from the baseball business community—including his future wife, who was working for a minor-league team in Augusta, Georgia, when she heard about Cole.

"My boss at the time heard Jesse speak at a conference," Emily told WBUR in a 2018 interview. "And she actually left the room and called me and said, 'I met the guy you're going to marry.'"

Jesse proposed to Emily on the Gastonia pitcher's mound between innings of a game. The pair soon took a celebratory trip to Savannah, where they first encountered Grayson.

**"I REMEMBER JESSE TELLING ME THAT THE PAIR FELL IN LOVE WITH GRAYSON. THEY SAID IF IT WAS EVER AVAILABLE, WE WERE ALL HEADING TO SAVANNAH,"** Orton said. **"BUT GETTING HERE, WE DIDN'T FEEL MUCH LOVE BACK AT FIRST FROM OL' GRAYSON."**

Orton said the crew sold four season tickets and one minor sponsorship package during their first four months in town. Cole never fretted, at least publicly. He had sold a brand of entertainment

craziness in Gastonia that he was preparing to unleash on Savannah—one complete with Salute to Underwear Night, where those who wore their undergarments on the outside of their pants got a free ticket.

When the team introduced the Savannah Bananas logo in February 2016, fans quickly realized this wasn't the same old baseball product. Yes, Hank Aaron, Babe Ruth, and Mickey Mantle had all played at Grayson, but if baseball was to be part of the stadium's future, a new path needed to be forged.

**"WE QUICKLY SHOWED FOLKS THAT THIS IS ABOUT ENTERTAINMENT. IT'S A SHOW, IT'S A CIRCUS, AND WE'RE THE RINGMASTERS,"** Orton said. **"WE KNEW WE HAD TO QUADRUPLE DOWN ON THE ZANINESS. IF WE COULD JUST GET FANS TO THE STADIUM, THEY WOULD BE SAYING, 'I CAN'T BELIEVE HOW MUCH FUN I HAD TONIGHT.'"**





They just had to survive until they could start showing off their plan. The Coles went millions of dollars into debt buying the franchise and prepping for the opening. At one point before opening day, their COO called to tell them they were officially out of money and had overdrawn their account.

**“WE COMPLETELY BOOTSTRAPPED THIS THING. WE WERE DAY TO DAY AS TO WHETHER WE WERE GOING TO GET TO THAT FIRST GAME, BUT JESSE AND EMILY, THEY NEVER STOPPED PUSHING,”** Orton said. The Coles sold their North Carolina home, bought a condo on Tybee Island, and went all-in on Savannah. **“THEY PUSHED THE CHIPS INTO THE POT AND MADE IT CLEAR WE WERE NOT LOOKING BACK.”**

Cole greeted fans and media at the Bananas logo announcement in a yellow tuxedo and has been the team’s human mascot ever since. He first began winning over Savannah residents and officials by making it clear there was no push for a new ballpark, that Grayson was the gem they wanted to polish.

Next, they introduced a radical plan. Most CPL teams sold tickets for \$8 at best, but the Bananas were selling a season-ticket package that averaged \$15 per ticket per game but included an all-you-can-eat buffet. All the ballpark staples were included: hot dogs, chips, chicken sandwiches, soda, and more.

Cole and Orton relentlessly blanketed the city with Bananas hype, and before they knew it, they had sold out their season opener—selling more than 4,000 tickets, a feat not seen at Grayson since John Smoltz did a rehab stint in the mid-’90s.

Fans were greeted with the Banana Band, a 10-pack of Dixie-playing musicians. Players passed out programs to fans and broke out in a choreographed dance to Michael Jackson’s “Thriller” between innings.

Getting the players and coaches to buy into the fun is all part of the master plan.

**“WE KNEW WE HAD TO BREAK DOWN THAT FOURTH WALL, GET FANS AND PLAYERS RECONNECTED AND REFOCUS ON THE MAGIC OF THE GAME AND THE FUN,”** Orton said. **“LISTEN, THIS IS A LIVE SHOW 25 NIGHTS PER YEAR; IT’S SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE RIGHT HERE IN SAVANNAH AND THE LOWCOUNTRY.”**

And a funny thing happened in the middle of the zaniness: the team was winning games. They won the league championship in 2016 and have won the division the past two years. Players raved about Savannah; their stats proved they played better in Savannah than they had before—a phenomenon that college professors and baseball executives alike have studied and lauded.

Grayson has been home to nonconformist comedy before. It was one of the settings for the 1976 Richard Pryor-Billy Dee Williams baseball film *The Bingo Long Traveling All Stars & Motor Kings*. Sacha Baron Cohen filmed an all-time classic *Borat* segment at Grayson in 2002. But Savannah

has never seen the level of sustained, laugh-out-loud wackiness that has been the Bananas.

The Coles won CPL Executives of the Year in 2016 and kept ramping up the fun.

That fun has included things such as the Banana Nanas, a crew of 11 retired women who dance on the field during games. A dancing first base coach who randomly broke out into twirls and romps between batters. Players going on dates with grandmas during games, filming music videos, and handing out roses to little girls Bachelor-style between innings. And the team wearing kilts for the entire game, an homage to the city’s rich St. Patrick’s Day celebration tradition.

Hollywood has even taken notice, as a number of TV projects focused on the Bananas story are in development—from sitcoms to reality show concepts.

The city has used SPLOST funds (Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax) to continue renovating and sprucing up the stadium. A new long-term lease is in the works. And the Coles have continued to invest in the fan experience, including the indoor-outdoor Stadium Club eatery off the thirdbase line where the Sand Gnats’ dilapidated trailer office used to sit.

The team has drawn regulars from as far away as Macon and has been just as ferocious in bringing in fans from the Lowcountry.

“Listen, I’m 78 years old, and I’m as much of a fuddy-duddy baseball purist as you’ll find,” said Sun City resident Jim Travers. “I go to those games, and it’s like a fountain of youth. It is the most fun you’ll ever get that fits a social security check budget. It is amazing.”

**“ANYTHING THAT IS THE NORM, THROW IT OUT, THAT’S WHAT WE SAY. OUR COMPANY NAME IS**



**“LISTEN, I’M 78 YEARS OLD, AND I’M AS MUCH OF A FUDDY-DUDDY BASEBALL PURIST AS YOU’LL FIND. I GO TO THOSE GAMES, AND IT’S LIKE A FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH. IT IS THE MOST FUN YOU’LL EVER GET THAT FITS A SOCIAL SECURITY CHECK BUDGET. IT IS AMAZING.”**



**FANS FIRST ENTERTAINMENT, AND IT’S WHAT WE LIVE AND WHAT WE PREACH,”** Orton said. And it is a strategy that has led to three-and-a-half straight seasons of sellouts, 88 games, and going strong heading into 2020. To be fair, not every creative spaghetti noodle the trio has thrown has stuck to the wall. The team tried equally “out there” event nights during the off-season that flopped.

“We would be running these events and fans would say, ‘Yeah, but where are the Bananas?’ It taught us a lesson,” Orton said. “No matter how much you paint outside the lines, there is still a lane that works, and baseball is the center of that for us.”

So as the team enters its fifth season in 2020, Orton said there will be plenty of celebrating—

including honoring sponsors and ticket holders who bought into the Bananas when the Coles had pennies in their bank account.

Fans First is committing to a whole new level of innovation as well. They have committed to an ad-free game experience. No more billboards, no more sponsors—a potential loss of \$500,000 in business relationships, all in the name of truly transforming the ballgame experience.

“Sponsors have committed to us, but that marketing meeting where we’re trying to pitch new ways to sell their brand to fans who don’t want to be sold to at games, we know it became a stale conversation. So, we converted as many of those sponsor dollars to group ticket sales for their company’s employees,” Orton said. “We’re

going to sell our brand to local businesses instead, show them the secret sauce of how to sell fun to potential customers. We truly believe these ideas will work in any business environment.”

It is a concept that could upend the entire sports world. Pure madness, the establishment will say. But given what we’ve seen in the transformation in Daffin Park, are you really going to bet against the modern-day Bill Veeck in the yellow tuxedo?

**“WE THRIVE ON THE NAYSAYERS. WE FEAR BEING IRRELEVANT, SO YOU’RE GOING TO SEE MORE IDEAPALOOZA THAN EVER BEFORE,”** Orton said. **“FANS DON’T DESERVE THE WORD ‘NO.’ THEY DESERVE ANYTHING GOES, NO BOUNDARIES. AND THAT’S WHAT THEY’LL GET AS LONG AS THE BANANAS ARE HERE.”** ♦

APRIL

**3 FIRST FRIDAY LECTURE SERIES: LOWCOUNTRY RAPTORS**  
You usually only see hawks from far away or hear owls during the night when you cannot see them. Lila Arnold, founder of Lowcountry Raptors, is letting you see them up close and personal! Come learn about these beautiful winged predators.

**8 BROWN BAG LUNCH LECTURE: TURKEY TALK WITH JAY**  
Purrs, clucks, putts, and whistles! Wait, aren't turkeys just supposed to gobble? From calls to behavior to the intricacies of the hunt, Jay Walea, director of the Palmetto Bluff Conservancy, talks about his favorite bird: the wild turkey.

**13-17 ARTIST IN RESIDENCE**  
For more than a decade, Nashville-based artist Drew Holcomb and his band the Neighbors have been making music that inspires listeners to think, feel, dance, and love. Join Drew in the Artist Cottage for a catalog of vibrant, honest songs that will not only find a place in your heart but will also have you singing along.

**23 CHAPEL CONCERT SERIES**  
Enjoy an acoustic performance in the beautiful May River Chapel.

MAY

**1 FIRST FRIDAY LECTURE SERIES: SCREENING OF A SEA OF CHANGE**  
*A Sea of Change* is a documentary by Barbara Ettinger and Sven Huseby that reveals disturbing changes in the world's oceans due to ocean acidification. The documentary screening will be followed by a Q&A with Sven Huseby and Barbara Ettinger.

**4-8 ARTIST IN RESIDENCE**  
A well-timed meet-up at a sheep station in Australia brought Eric McKay and Patrick Murtaugh's shared passion for homebrewing and craft beer into focus—resulting in the creation of Hardywood Park Craft Brewery in Richmond, Virginia. Pull up a seat in the Artist Cottage while you taste innovative and traditional ales and lagers and learn more about their "Brew with a Purpose" mission.

**10 BROWN BAG LUNCH LECTURE: COSTA RICA ECOTOUR EXPERIENCE**  
Lydia Moore, the Conservancy research and education coordinator, is back from Costa Rica and ready to tell us all about it.

**20 BROWN BAG LUNCH LECTURE: DOLPHINS**  
Bottlenose dolphins can be found year-round in the May River, but have you noticed times when they seem more abundant? Alyssa Marian, a grad student from the College of Charleston and USCB, is conducting acoustic and photographic surveys of resident and migratory bottlenose dolphins in the May River to learn the unknown behaviors between these groups.

JUNE

**5 FIRST FRIDAY LECTURE SERIES: NATIVE LANDSCAPING**  
Yards filled with native plants are needed now more than ever. Bees, butterflies, and birds rely on these plants, and Aaron, the Conservancy educator, is going to talk about the native plants that can make your yard look beautiful while still being a valuable part of the ecosystem.

**16 SUMMER CONCERT SERIES**  
Enjoy cool tunes on a hot night at our summer concert at the Crossroads in Moreland Village. Proceeds benefit Family Promise of Beaufort County. \$25 per car (pack 'em in!) at the gate.

**18 LUNCH WITH AN ARCHAEOLOGIST**  
What is the prehistory of coastal South Carolina? Who were the Wilsons? Grab a sandwich from the Canteen and have lunch with Dr. Mary Socci, the Conservancy's archaeologist. She can answer these and many other questions you may have related to history and archaeological work at Palmetto Bluff.

**22-26 ARTIST IN RESIDENCE**  
Leigh Webber is an award-winning photographer based in Charleston, South Carolina, who specializes in fashion, travel, lifestyle, and underwater photography. A contributing photographer to various publications including *Garden & Gun*, *Coastal Living*, and *Charleston Magazine*, Leigh will be joining us in the Artist Cottage in June.

JULY

**1 BROWN BAG LUNCH LECTURE: THOMAS JEFFERSON**  
Palmetto Bluff resident David Miller, great-great-great-great-grandson of Thomas Jefferson, shares his research and family stories of the life of his famous ancestor.

**4 FOURTH OF JULY GOLF CART PARADE**  
Deck out your golf cart and cruise it down to Wilson Village for the 2020 Fourth of July Golf Cart Parade.

**7 SUMMER CONCERT SERIES**  
Enjoy cool tunes on a hot summer night at our summer concert at the Crossroads in Moreland Village. Proceeds benefit Family Promise of Beaufort County. \$25 per car (pack 'em in!) at the gate.

**20-24 ARTIST IN RESIDENCE**  
Raised in the Mississippi Delta, Nick Weaver of Blue Delta Jeans is our July Artist in Residence. Weaver's roots run deep in the cotton industry (his parents are third-generation cotton pickers), so a career crafting blue jeans felt like second nature. A true Southern entrepreneur, Weaver has continued to expand the business, always focused on the success of the Mississippi economy.

AUGUST

**3-7 ARTIST IN RESIDENCE**  
Cassandra King Conroy is an award-winning author of five bestselling novels and two nonfiction books, in addition to numerous short stories, essays, and magazine articles. Her latest book, *Tell Me A Story*, is a memoir about life with her late husband, author Pat Conroy. Stop by the Artist Cottage in August as this storyteller reflects on her life with the original Prince of Tides.

**4 SUMMER CONCERT SERIES**  
Enjoy cool tunes on a hot night at our summer concert at the Crossroads in Moreland Village. Proceeds benefit Family Promise of Beaufort County. \$25 per car (pack 'em in!) at the gate.

**8 RISE & RUN**  
It is the perfect time to start training for the Buffalo Run. Join us for a brisk run through the maritime forests of Palmetto Bluff.

**21 EXPLORE PBC: CREATURES OF THE NIGHT**  
What goes bump in the night? Join the Conservancy as we head out into the woods to look and listen for nocturnal wildlife residing on Palmetto Bluff. We will listen for bats using ultrasonic bat detectors and may even set up a light trap for insects!

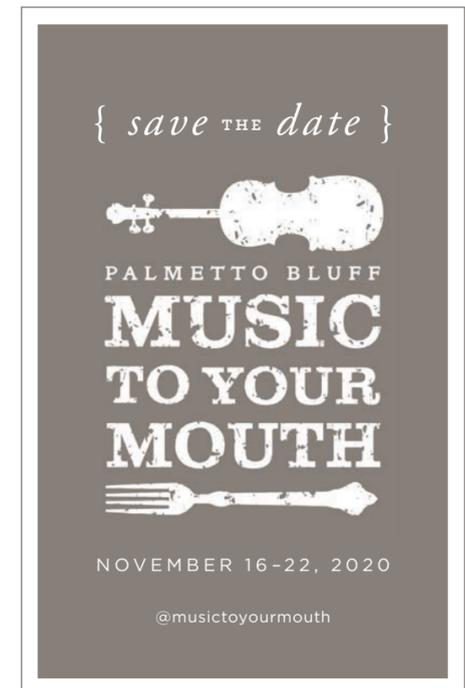
SEPTEMBER

**5 RISE & RUN**  
Start your training schedule for the Buffalo Run with this brisk run through the ancient maritime forests of Palmetto Bluff.

**16 BROWN BAG LUNCH SERIES: STREET NAMES OF PALMETTO BLUFF**  
Ever wonder about the street names at Palmetto Bluff? Why is there a North and South Drayton or what is a "Blue Willow"? Dr. Mary Socci and Jay Walea are here to explain the significance behind the names.

**17 CHAPEL CONCERT SERIES**  
Enjoy an acoustic performance in the beautiful May River Chapel.

**21-25 ARTIST IN RESIDENCE**  
Founded by husband and wife team Andrew and Patricia Hodson, Veritas Winery has grown into a 20-year-old family business that includes over 50 acres of grapes in the Monticello wine region, producing a complex portfolio, ranging from sparkling to beautifully balanced red wines. Winemaker Emily Pelton, daughter of Andrew and Patricia, will be sharing her innovative take on winemaking in the Artist Cottage in September.





PALMETTO BLUFF