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Dewees Island Arts Council
 Visual Arts Series
Mark A. Kelso, Exhibitor
Birds of Dewees
 August 31-October 10, 2002

*Conservation is a state of harmony
 between man and nature.*

Aldo Leopold



Across the Way...

Life on Dewees Island, South Carolina

October 2002
 Volume 1 - Number 1



We are pleased to introduce to you the first in a numbered series of monthly newsletters...created to keep both Dewees Islanders and the greater community informed about the unique and exciting lifestyle that is the essence of life "Across the Way."

The title for this series is borrowed from an historical piece written about Dewees by one of our most beloved Dewees Islanders, Burney Fair.

Dewees has been a forerunner in so many ways, and we want to pass along all the wonderful discoveries we've made.

Burney's piece, "Across the Way" was written to educate readers about the truly unique character of Dewees. In the same spirit, we have created this series to discuss in-depth what it is that makes Dewees so very different from any other place on

Earth. Dewees has been a forerunner in so many ways, and we want to pass along the discoveries we've made in dozens of areas...areas like oceanfront building and beach renourishment/management; owner involvement and outreach; arts in the community;

wildlife management; environmental education programs. We also hope to capture in this series some of the fun stories that Dewees has to tell:

its flora and fauna, its design, its principles, its history, and most importantly, its people. All of these aspects come together to make Dewees an exceptional community...and a great source of ideas for communities everywhere!

Dewees Island Sweetgrass:

The Stuff Baskets & Dreams Are Made Of



A very noticeable perk of life "Across the Way" during this fall season is the beautiful blanket of lavender color that envelops the Island as the sweetgrass is in bloom. The sweetgrass blooms from early September to mid-October each year, and this burst of fall color is a much anticipated annual sight on Dewees. The blooming of the sweet-grass grandly ushers in the autumn season. It also marks the end of another sweetgrass harvesting season for the much celebrated sweetgrass basket-makers of Mt. Pleasant.

The sweetgrass plant (*Mulenbergia Filipes*) is more than just beautiful, however...it is a greatly valued part of life on Dewees. It serves to prevent erosion, and it is a hearty, drought-

resistant choice for the indigenous-species-only landscaping that is a requirement on Dewees. Besides landscaping, the natural sweetgrass growth on Dewees has been allowed to remain in abundance, since the development plan here leaves 93% of the Island untouched at its completion.

This beautiful plant also serves the Dewees community by linking it with the cherished Lowcountry tradition of sweetgrass basket artistry. Over the past decade, Dewees has been the seasonal harvesting location at which the world-renowned Mount Pleasant sweetgrass basket-makers have collected their materials. Massive development on Lowcountry sea islands has depleted the sweetgrass supplies, and forced the basket-makers to travel out of state to

find the precious plant. Here on Dewees, however, the community has taken steps to sustain this 300-year-old West African art form. Now, from May until early September, the Island hosts

a sweet-grass harvest every two to three weeks, depending on how much rain we've had. Sweetgrass artists Nakia Wigfall, Angela Manigault, and Elizabeth Mazyck come with their families on a rotational basis to harvest our native sweetgrass and palmetto fronds. The sweetgrass artists have become part of our family here on Dewees, and they hold regular workshops and exhibitions on the Island.

Unlike most developments, Dewees has allowed the sweetgrass to flourish.

Dewees Turtles Make the Big-Time

As many Lowcountry residents know, Dewees Island has a very committed group of owners who volunteer to help with the Island's Loggerhead Turtle protection program...the group patrols the beaches, protects the nests they find, and even escorts the hatchlings to the surf zone. Now, thanks to their efforts, Dewees has given birth to a foursome of stars!



How? Four Dewees Island loggerhead sea turtle hatchlings are now living and working at the South Carolina Aquarium in downtown Charleston. Our four little tykes are getting some introductory experience in a small rotational display, with one turtle at a time out in front of the crowd, while the other three wait in the understudies' tank behind the scenes. The foursome will soon take over on the main stage, when the three Isle of Palms hatchlings from 1999 grow too big for that tank and are transported to their new home in the Sargasso Sea. The Dewees Turtle Patrol should be very proud of their little stars!

Labor Day Festivities

The Dewees Island Labor Day Festivities this year included the traditional cookout, a Sweetgrass Basket-making Workshop, a sweetgrass artists' reception, and a variety of games, including the now-famous "Dammitball." Sweetgrass artists Nakia, Angela, and Elizabeth sold a number of gorgeous baskets at the sweetgrass exhibit, and rumor has it that the Dammitball competition established quite a reputation! Thanks to all who were involved.

Arla's New Mobile Home



Many of you who have been on the Island this year probably noticed at some point the osprey nest perched high atop The Huyler House chimney. According to our naturalist, Arla Jessen, this nest was a backup home built by an osprey couple who returned to Dewees at nesting season only to find that their original nest on Lot 1 was occupied by a family of Great Horned Owls. While we applaud the ingenuity and perseverance of the displaced ospreys, this nest could not be allowed to remain on The Huyler House chimney through the winter. (What would Santa do?) So, on August 27th, Arla and her crew officially made the nest a mobile home, moving it from The Huyler House chimney top to inside the Nature Center, where it will be dried and put on display. Come see Dewees Island's very own mobile home!

