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@edistoislandopenlandtrust  
Sign up for our eNews at edisto.org

Our Mission: To preserve the rural quality of life on Edisto by protecting lands, waterways, scenic vistas, and heritage through conservation and education.

## STAFF

John Girault  
*Executive Director*

Sarah Stroud Clarke  
*Hutchinson House Director*

Tom Austin  
*Director of Land Conservation*

Krystal Parsons  
*Young Naturalist Coordinator  
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Nolly Swan  
*Hutchinson House Community Outreach  
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# For Land's Sake

## 2025 VOLUME 3



We bought the farm! Not only that, a conservation easement next door was donated too. After a year of hard work, EIOLT is proud to announce that 99.9 acres of Maxcy Farm is now permanently protected. This is thanks to grant funding from the SC Conservation Bank, the Charleston County Greenbelt Program, the Lowcountry Land Protection Capacity Fund, and the gracious generosity and commitment to conservation from the Steedley family. EIOLT made a bargain sale purchase of a conservation easement on 48.2 acres of the property and then bought outright another 51.7 acres for the creation of a new public greenspace, right at the heart of Edisto Island. This is a conservation effort 20 years in the making and the beginning of a new saga in our stewardship efforts here on Edisto Island. We are over the moon to see Maxcy Farm preserved!

With this landmark conservation success an additional quarter-mile of the Edisto Island National Scenic Byway viewshed is protected. We have also taken a huge step forward towards linking Botany Bay Heritage Preserve to the ACE Basin National Wildlife Refuge with a continuous conservation corridor through the center of the Island. On our newfound 51.7-acre Maxcy Farm Nature Preserve, we have grand plans to not only restore native grasslands for grassland bird and pollinator habitat and to install walking trails for public access, but also to make it a hub for promoting creative and sustainable agriculture on Edisto Island. We hope to build a food forest and community garden for the community's use and to lease about a quarter of the property to local and beginning farmers for small-scale, specialty agricultural production. Hopefully one day soon we will have an opportunity to partner with other nonprofits and native plant nurseries to produce native plants and seeds for local rewilding and habitat restoration efforts.

We have a long road ahead of us, and a lot of networking with experts and ceaseless grant writing to turn our plans into reality. Nonetheless, we are committed to the effort and this investment into a conservation focused future for Edisto Island, and we need your help to get there. If you have a special skillset or business that can help us design, build, manage, or restore this Preserve to life, please reach out! We cannot wait to get connected. (We're also accepting donations of used tractors!)

*Grassland birds, like this one in the picture, and native pollinators, like this one pictured love Maxcy Farm. (Need better caption!)*



## SO MANY WAYS TO HELP!

Qualified Charitable Distribution, QCD

Gifts of Stock

Memorial/Honorarium Gifts

Bequests in Wills and Living Trusts

Gifts of Insurance

We love you however you choose to support! Contact John Girault with any questions at [john@edisto.org](mailto:john@edisto.org)



# HUTCHINSON HOUSE: COMPLETING A VISION

This winter marks the ninth anniversary of the pioneering decision of the Edisto Island Open Land Trust to purchase its first property with a standing structure. The home was barely visible from the road, completely overgrown with Chinese wisteria and it took a team of volunteers to hack through the overgrowth to approach it. After years of meticulous preservation efforts, the Hutchinson House now stands proudly restored to its c.1885 appearance.

The completion of this work is a testament of EIOLT’s commitment to its mission which in part is to protect the heritage of Edisto Island. It is also a testament to the supporters of the land trust who understood the mission to preserve this iconic Edisto home. Thank you for your endless volunteer hours, encouraging words, and your financial support. This project could not have succeeded without you.

We are also forever grateful to the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s African American Cultural Action Fund, the 1772 Foundation, and the National Park Service’s African American Civil Rights Fund for financially supporting the restoration of the Hutchinson House.

In 2020, at the writing of the National Park Service African American Civil Rights grant, a committee of EIOLT staff and board members, Hutchinson family members, and preservation professionals determined the preservation philosophy for the Hutchinson House. The philosophy is to preserve the home to its c.1885 appearance, honoring the legacy of Henry and Rosa Hutchinson as they had designed

and originally lived. The Hutchinson Family retained the oldest known picture of the house c.1900 which project architect Simons Young and the preservation team used to plan the restoration of the home to its current appearance. The NPS grant work commenced on 9/1/2021 and finished on 8/28/2025.

As a requirement of the NPS grant, in conjunction with the completion of the preservation work, we are thrilled to announce that EIOLT and the Preservation Society of Charleston entered into a formal agreement for the preservation of the Hutchinson House in perpetuity through both interior and exterior preservation easements. The Preservation Society of Charleston is the oldest grassroots preservation organization in the nation and continues to be the preservation leader in the Charleston area working to preserve and advocate for the diverse history of Charleston.

Our work is not complete as we endeavor to finish the intention of opening the Hutchinson House to the public as a place of learning in 2026. The Mellon Foundation is supporting the interpretive work of the house and grounds; what is currently an empty house, will transform into a historic house museum about the Hutchinson Family, the Clark Community, and the larger story of African American history during the Reconstruction Era and beyond on Edisto Island. As we prepare for the grand opening in 2026, we are introducing our Hutchinson House membership program soon. Stay tuned for more information and the opportunity to be the first to know of our grand opening dates!



# YOUNG NATURALISTS UNEARTH FOSSILS AND GROWS NEW ADVENTURES!

The Young Naturalists are having a busy and exciting few months exploring the Lowcountry’s natural wonders!

In August, our group went fossil hunting with Ashby Gale, a local paleontologist and author. The kids learned how fossils are formed, where to find them, and what they tell us about the ancient past. Excitement filled the day as everyone unearthed their own prehistoric treasures—shark teeth, shells, and other fossilized finds that sparked curiosity and awe.

Then in September, we gathered at Jered and Danielle Crosby’s home for a hands-on plant art afternoon. Using ferns as stencils, the Young Naturalists spray-painted and tie-dyed shirts before creating their own hanging plant masterpieces. They learned about the different types of plants, how to assemble their hanging gardens, and, of course, the importance of wearing gloves while spray painting!

In November, we explored the Hutchinson House with Sarah and Nolly to learn about its rich heritage and tour the finished house. They also got to help retrieve surface artifacts from the grounds and learn to use a screen to sift through soil to find artifacts. Our biggest upcoming project, Seeds to Shoreline, will have the Young Naturalists collecting Spartina grass seedlings, growing them, and later replanting them along Store Creek—a hands-on effort to restore and protect our local salt marsh ecosystem.

From fossils to ferns and now shoreline restoration, our Young Naturalists continue to connect curiosity, creativity, and conservation—one adventure at a time.



Top: A fossil find on Edisto Beach!  
Bottom Left: Young Naturalists at the Hutchinson House  
Bottom Right: Creating hanging plant masterpieces.



# SMALL LOTS, BIG PICTURE



EIOLT is happy to announce we protected two new properties this spring! The first is across from Kings Market and the second is near the Edisto Island Museum. Another 4.6 acres protected on Edisto. Being next to public spaces, their preservation preserves the character and integrity of these adjoining lands from any future adverse impacts. Both of these lots are part of iconic Live Oak tunnels on the Edisto Island National Scenic Byway. Their purchase by EIOLT helps protect natural wetland networks while paving the way for a future island-wide conservation corridor. So as you can see, although they are each but a small lot, they are both important puzzle pieces in helping resolve the big picture for Edisto Island’s future.

EIOLT purchased both parcels off the open market thanks to your generous donations to our Acquisition Fund. The Acquisition Fund is the cornerstone of EIOLT’s land protection strategy. It is how we continue to move the needle towards conservation in today’s competitive real estate market. When paired with public funding opportunities from the Charleston County Greenbelt Program and the SC Conservation Bank, the impact rendered from our Acquisition Fund is amplified some ten-fold. It is our kindling for conservation and the leverage we need to push Edisto forward on course towards a better tomorrow.



*Top Left: Hutchinson family and Clark Community Members celebrated the completion of construction and met with the VZBLYF team at the Second Annual Clark Community Day. Top Right: The VZBLYF (Visible Life) interpretation team onsite in September. J.E. Azmi, Isissa Komada-John, and Shante Cozier.*

*Bottom left: West Room final restoration in 2025. Bottom right: Downstairs East Room final restoration in 2025.*







## A FUTURE HOME FOR THE LAND TRUST

In early September, EIOLT purchased one of the most beloved and well-known properties on Edisto Island. Nestled together on a three-acre parcel, the buildings known as the “Bailey Plantation House,” “Bailey Store,” and the Old Post Office Restaurant, are iconic symbols of Edisto’s history and culture. Bounded by the historic intersection of Highway 174, Edisto Islands’s National Scenic Byway, and Point of Pines Road, as well as the island’s most central waterway, Store Creek, this location carries significant historical and ecological value dating back to the earliest settlers on Edisto Island.

It is an honor for the land trust to steward a property that holds such meaning for so many people on Edisto and

beyond. As a commercial property, any number of outcomes were possible for this corner. With our purchase, we can ensure its protection, provide a community gathering space, and a publicly accessible waterfront park to connect people with our natural surroundings for generations to come. After 30 years our organization will finally have a permanent, accessible location that will allow us to better interact with our supporters, and provide a location to connect with new faces and visitors to Edisto. In 2024, we protected the adjacent property along Point of Pines Road for a contiguous 4.6 acres on Store Creek Corner. It is important to note that EIOLT took out a substantial commercial loan over \$1.3 million in order to save these sites. Our immediate goal is to secure public and private

funds in order to pay off this loan in 2026. While future plans are still in progress, we invite suggestions and narratives from the community to maintain Edisto Island’s iconic corner. Please join us in January for an open house!

The purchase also ensures the cultural history that once thrived at this location is researched, shared, and enjoyed by everyone interested in understanding how Edisto Island evolved since the early 1800s. To this end, over the past few months we have tasked Nolly Swan of the Hutchinson House to conduct a thorough history of the property and its three structures. While her research is ongoing, she has constructed an amazing timeline of the property. The entire history is too long to fit into one newsletter, so we are rolling out a monthly email called “Store Creek Corner” to provide insight into the history of this famous corner. Make sure you are signed up for our online newsletters to enjoy this series; you can also find the entries on our webpage.

We are searching for historical photographs and stories from the corner. If you have any to share, we kindly ask that you reach out to Nolly Swan at [nolly@edisto.org](mailto:nolly@edisto.org) or call the office at 843-869-9004.

# OPEN HOUSE

**Thursday, January 15th**  
**3 p.m. -7 p.m.**

Please join us to explore the buildings, enjoy some festive cheer, and provide input for the future community use of the site, as we begin the process of rehabilitating this iconic corner.

*Below: Excerpt from the 1825 Mills Atlas of Edisto Island with Store Creek Corner circled in red. “Store” likely refers to what is currently known as the “Bailey Plantation House” with the original route of the highway to the right.*

