



## A NIGHT WORTH CELEBRATING

On Friday, February 27, 2026, Edisto Island Open Land Trust staff, board members, Hutchinson family members, and members of the project team attended the 72nd Annual Carolopolis Awards Ceremony presented by the Preservation Society of Charleston. The Hutchinson House was recognized among 28 other awardees in the lowcountry for outstanding achievement in historic preservation. Notably, the Hutchinson House was the only awardee to receive TWO Carolopolis awards for both its interior and exterior preservation.

### What is a "Carolopolis" Award?

As described by the Preservation Society of Charleston: The Carolopolis Award was created in 1953 to recognize outstanding achievement in historic preservation. The presentation of a Carolopolis Award honors extraordinary private and public efforts to maintain the historic character and authenticity of Charleston and the Lowcountry. To date, the PSC has presented more than 1,500 awards in recognition of such achievement.

We are deeply honored to receive these awards from the Preservation Society of Charleston. The two awards signify the culmination of the almost 10-year preservation and restoration efforts of the Hutchinson House project by EIOILT. The project team used meticulous detail to restore the home to its c.1885 appearance, and these awards recognize those efforts. The Hutchinson House is only the second structure on Edisto Island to receive this recognition (first being Brick House Ruins in 2021).

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the Hutchinson House project in large and small ways. This honor was reached because of the incredible and ongoing encouragement of our EIOILT supporters and we share this milestone with all of you.



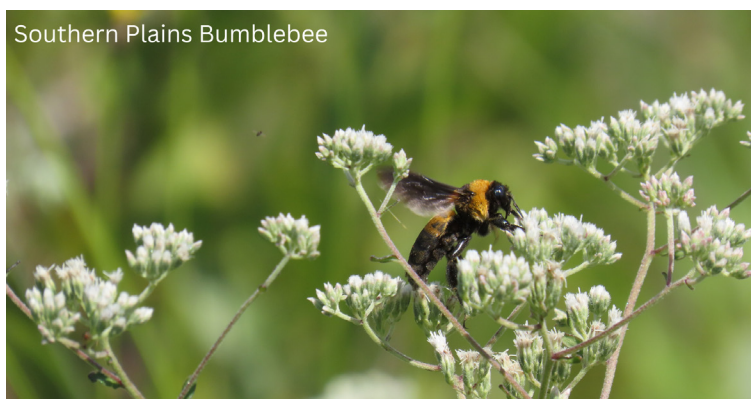
*Top: EIOILT Staff, board, and fellow associates pose at 72nd Annual Carolopolis Awards*

*Bottom Left: Hand holding a Carolopolis Award*

*Bottom Center: EIOILT Staff John, Tom, Sarah and Nolly*

# 2025: A BANNER YEAR FOR LAND CONSERVATION

The year 2025 was our most successful year for new land conservation in over a decade! We protected 8 new properties totaling 311 acres of land. That may not seem like a lot. But, keep in mind, Edisto Island is over 50% protected (52.4% to be precise) and the 250sq.mi local area that EIOLT works in is at 45% protected. Every acre here is sacred and we fight hard to protect every additional tract we can. Every property is unique. Each is important to protect for the integrity of the Island and the ACE Basin as a whole. Each new conservation success strengthens every prior success. We are excited to share a little bit about each of the 8 properties we protected in 2025.



In spring of 2025, EIOLT purchased two small parcels off the open market. The Cedar Hall Scenic Buffer is 3.1 acres near King's Market and the Small Springs Scenic Buffer is 1.5 acres by the Edisto Island Museum. Protecting both tracts preserves a part of an iconic live oak tunnel on the Scenic Byway, portions of natural wetlands, and helps buffer and connect surrounding protected lands to safeguard wildlife habitat. Thanks to funding from the Charleston County Greenbelt Program, EIOLT will be able to own and protect these parcels in perpetuity for the public's benefit.

In summer of 2025, EIOLT purchased the 2.6-acre Historic Store Creek Corner from the open market. This iconic, landmark site on the Scenic Byway holds two historic structures, directly adjoins EIOLT's recently acquired Store Creek Park property, and is part of EIOLT's conservation corridor initiative along Point of Pines Road. EIOLT is working currently to secure the grant funding necessary to help us to pay off our mortgage on this historic property. Paying off our loan is vital to ensure we can protect this land forever and preserve the opportunity for the public to enjoy the site. After, there will still be a long road ahead to see these historic structures restored and preserved, the site enhanced for public access, and the deep history of this property researched and interpreted. We'll need your support over the coming years to make those dreams a reality!

In fall of 2025, EIOLT protected 99.9 acres of Maxcy Farm on the Scenic Byway. The SC Conservation Bank funded the bargain sale purchase of a conservation easement on 48.2 acres of the property, which will stay in private ownership but is now protected from any further subdivision and development. EIOLT purchased 51.7 acres of the property thanks to funding from the SC Conservation Bank and the Charleston County Greenbelt Program. EIOLT plans to restore the majority of this property back to native prairie and savanna, to provide habitat to imperiled wildlife, while allowing for passive public access to this restored environment for hiking and nature viewing. A portion of the property EIOLT wishes to return to innovative sustainable agriculture in partnership with local farmers and nonprofits. The small remainder area will be reserved for accommodating public access and for providing the Edisto community with a gathering area, a food forest, and hopefully a community garden.

In winter of 2025, EIOLT secured another three conservation easements. The first, Russell Creek Farm on Russell Creek Road, was funded by the Greenbelt Program. It protects 57.6 acres of critical coastal habitat by limiting all further development and subdivision on the site. The conservation of this tract unites 9 surrounding conservation easements into one contiguous block of protected lands, contributing to a conservation corridor along Russell Creek Road.



Pocosin Wetland at Polk Flynn Easement

The second easement of the winter was the Polk Flynn conservation easement in Adams Run. The conservation easement on this 136.7-acre working forest property was funded by the Greenbelt Program and, through the dramatic reduction of its development potential, protects a unique remnant ecosystem from the longleaf pine savanna that once covered much of Adams Run and Ravenel. This easement is one of the gateway properties at the start of Highway 174 on the way to Edisto and marks EIOLT's most northward conservation project to date.

Our final conservation easement of 2025 was a historic partnership between EIOLT and the Edisto Island Historic Preservation Society to place a conservation easement on the 9.6-acre property where the Edisto Island Museum stands, at the corner of Chisolm Plantation Road and the Scenic Byway. This conservation easement was funded by the SC Conservation Bank and the Charleston County Greenbelt Program. The easement prohibits future subdivision and development of the property, preserving the wildlife habitat and public viewshed of the land. Yet, the easement still allows for the continued use and expansion of the existing Museum as a nonprofit community space for the public's access and benefit. EIOLT and EIHPS have always been close partners and this easement symbolizes a further commitment by both organizations to better preserve Edisto Island's past, present, and future.



Sweetbay Magnolia

## WAVE 3 OF THE SEPTIC IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

We're happy to announce that Wave 3 of the Edisto Island Septic System Improvement Program will launch this spring, in April of 2026. Over the course of 2026 and 2027, we intend to teach folks how to take better care

Learn more online!



[edisto.org/water-quality](https://edisto.org/water-quality)

of their septic systems and to repair at least another 45 damaged or failing systems for lower income homeowners on Edisto Island. Our Septic Improvement Program is funded primarily by a Section 319 grant from the US-EPA in cooperation with SCDES, alongside further

grants, from the Health Harbors Fund through the Coastal Community Foundation and the Community Invest Fund of Charleston County, and the many generous donations we've received from the Edisto Island community.

A septic system is the only wastewater treatment option available to most of us here on rural Edisto Island, and their maintenance is the responsibility of each and every homeowner. Maintaining your septic system, getting it regularly inspected, and ensuring it is fully functional year-round is the number one thing you can do to keep pollution out of our waterways and protect water quality on Edisto Island.

To learn more about, or apply to, the program please visit: [www.edisto.org/septic](https://www.edisto.org/septic)



# YOUNG NATURALISTS KICK OFF THE YEAR WITH CREATIVITY, CONSERVATION, AND EXPLORATION

The Edisto Island Open Land Trust's Young Naturalists Program began the year with a series of engaging, hands-on experiences that combined creativity, environmental stewardship, and outdoor discovery for local students.

## January: Nature-Inspired Crafts at the Library

The year kicked off with a cozy and creative gathering at the Edisto Island Library, where students explored the natural world through art. Using nature-inspired materials and themes, participants created handmade medals with library volunteer, Mr. Carroll Carter that reflected the beauty of the Lowcountry. The session offered a fun and meaningful way for students to connect with nature while expressing their creativity.



## February: Spartina Seedling Restoration Project

In February, Young Naturalists welcomed Olivia Faulk from the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, who guided students through a meaningful coastal restoration effort.

Students replanted spartina seedlings, learning how this vital marsh grass:

- Prevents shoreline erosion
- Improves water quality
- Provides habitat for birds, fish, and marine life

The seedlings will continue growing this spring before being transplanted back into the marsh—giving students a hands-on role in protecting Edisto's coastal ecosystems.





### March: Exploring the ACE Basin with Tom Austin

Most recently, students ventured into the ACE Basin National Wildlife Refuge with local naturalist Tom Austin, gaining a deeper understanding of the region's rich ecological history.

Highlights from the outing included:

- Observing historic rice fields now managed as habitat for ducks and wading birds
- Learning about native plants and their adaptations
- Discovering fun wildlife facts—like how a cricket frog can jump up to 40 times its body length
- Exploring the significance of live oaks and the landscape's history

Tom Austin's storytelling and deep knowledge helped bring the landscape to life, connecting students to the broader ecosystems that define the Lowcountry.



## ALL BECAUSE OF YOU

From crafting at the library to restoring marsh grass and exploring protected lands, each Young Naturalists outing is designed to spark curiosity and build a lasting connection to nature.

Through these experiences, students aren't just learning about conservation—they are becoming part of it.

You are the reason these wonderful children are able to gain these amazing experiences and a greater appreciation for our natural environment. Whether you are directly designating your donation toward the Young Naturalist program, or contributing to our general fund, you have had a direct impact on the lives of these kids and the future of Edisto Island.

Thank you for recognizing how impactful this program is to each of these students and all those who came before them!



# STORE CREEK CORNER OPEN HOUSE RECAP



*Photo Left to Right: Earl Sease and Wife Trudy Bailey Sease, Board member Eleanor Ellison, and Ann Bailey King (sister to Trudy) perusing the pages of The Bailey's Store Ledger, a loan from Ann Bailey King. Trudy and Ann lived in the home as children and still visit often.*



On January 15, we hosted our first community event at the Historic Store Creek Corner. With over 100 visitors attending the event, we welcomed attendees from as far away as Northern Virginia to celebrate the purchase. For many, this was hardly their first time inside the house, store, or restaurant but instead a long-awaited return to a place of many fond memories.

Together islanders, many of whom are also family members, came together to recall special moments from the property and shared pictures and mementos with EIOLT to document. The event was an opportunity to ask YOU what you would like to see and do here in the future. The top ideas attendees suggested for the site ( including the house, store, and restaurant) included an event space, wedding venue, museum art gallery, senior center, and space for educational outreach programs. If you have additional ideas, please email [nolly@edisto.org](mailto:nolly@edisto.org) with your suggestions. Lastly, we extend appreciation to our sponsors: Edisto Ace Hardware and Bob's Sea Spirits Liquor.



*Left: Executive Director John Girault and Event Sponsor Bob Redfern owner of Edisto Ace and Sea Spirits Liquor.*

# A SPECIAL GIFT

Edisto Island has been a special place to Donna Jones for more than 50 years. She knows how important it is to prevent Edisto from becoming another heavily developed sea island. In recent days, she had a very important decision to make. Donna had already determined that the Edisto Island Open Land Trust was a valuable organization, one that she believed enough in, that she included EIOLT in her estate plans. However, understanding the modern day pressures that could threaten the future of Edisto Island, she rethought her strategy. After working with her financial planner, she determined that instead of making a legacy gift in the future, she could make her significant donation during her lifetime, so that EIOLT could leverage her contribution and save more land on Edisto today.

At EIOLT we are beyond grateful for Donna's generosity and her wonderful act of kindness that will have far reaching impacts on the future of Edisto Island.



*"Edisto Island is a very special place filled with history, nature, and beauty." -Donna Jones*

## CREATIVE GIVING WORKSHOP

Wednesday, May 13th @ 1 PM

Do you want to help the Edisto Island Open Land Trust protect an ever-growing network of lands with foresight and visionary support? If you would like to learn more about the tax advantages of charitable giving that will have a lasting impact on keeping Edisto Island scenic, natural and unspoiled, then we have a great event for you.

Join us on May 13th for a free luncheon where you will have a chance to hear from seasoned financial planner, Clay Thornton. This will be a casual and interactive opportunity to get your questions answered and to learn more about the myriad of ways you can reduce your personal tax burden while helping the charities you love. Simply RSVP to [kim@edisto.org](mailto:kim@edisto.org), so we know how many folks to prepare for. This workshop will cover a variety of topics, including; gifts of personal property, real estate, life insurance, bequests, and of course QCDs or Qualified Charitable Distributions/IRA Charitable Rollover. Clay will share his expertise and help better understand how you can benefit from supporting the organizations you love the most.



In the meantime, perhaps you will consider joining the Horizon Circle, our group of legacy supporters who have notified EIOLT that they have included us in their estate plans? A bequest through your will can be a specific sum, a percentage of your estate, or specific asset. These thoughtful gifts ensure a brighter future for the land trust.

If you have already included EIOLT in your will, please let us know so we can formally include you in the Horizon Circle and thank you during your lifetime. For more information please call John Girault, 843-869-9004, or [john@edisto.org](mailto:john@edisto.org). Thank you for your consideration of such an important decision.



P.O. Box 1  
547 Highway 174, Suite 7G  
Edisto Island, SC 29438

843.869.9004  
info@edisto.org



@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  
& Finance Administrator*

Kimberly Flathmann  
*Outreach & Event Coordinator*

Deborah Hargis  
*Donor Database Manager*

Nolly Swan  
*Hutchinson House Community Outreach  
& Event Coordinator*

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Janet Oakley – Chair  
Peter Beck – Vice Chair  
Eleanor Ellison – Secretary  
Aaron Justice – Treasurer  
Lloyd Bray • Mark Crawford  
Greg Estevez • Sidney A. Gauthreaux  
Dean Habhegger • Melinda Hare  
James Kempson • I. Jenkins Mikell, Jr.  
Barbara Neale • Aleta P. Riesberg  
Charles R. Snow • Ellen Unger

Non-Profit  
U.S. Postage PAID  
Charleston, SC  
Permit No. 137

