

Welcome to Hidden Cypress Golf Club - the 2nd of 3 golf courses built in Sun City. Your tour today has been designed by representatives from several groups listed below to see the beauty and natural areas, learn a little about our native plants and wildlife, and maybe to pique your interest in learning how to golf! For 50 years, this was the Union Camp plantation of Loblolly pines for making paper. There were several hunting camps where deer and wild pigs were hunted. Prior it was pasture and before that plantations of cotton and indigo. Designed by Mark McCumber, it opened April 2000. Only holes 2, 6, 7 and 8 had developed homes on them...today, only hole 9 is undeveloped and left as a nature preserve.

**Hole # 10:** Lagoon has alligator *Big Bubba*. You may see **great blue herons, great egrets, snowy egrets, ibis, cormorants and anhinga's** in and around the lagoon and look for **tree swallows, Killdeer, and Bluebirds** on the ground and in the trees. When you see a bluebird here in Sun City, it was born in one of the 145+ bluebird boxes installed by the Bird Club including a new project installing them on almost all holes on the golf courses. Open fairways add to the diversity of wildlife that we are blessed to have here in the Lowcountry. The red-headed woodpeckers are one of these species that prefer open spaces, along with the **fox squirrels**. Look and listen by the tall **Loblolly pines** for **Pileated Woodpeckers**. Be aware of where you are walking and standing, as fire ants may be present and those allergic to wasps may be highly allergic! It's a free drop if a golfer is near a gator or ant hills.

**Hole #12:** The island has been used as a small **rookery** primarily by **Great Blue herons and anhinga**. Where there is one nest of Great Blues, you will generally see several. Rookeries are usually built near or in water for protection, multiple birds together can warn each other of danger, and gators keep other predators such as racoons, away from the eggs and hatchlings. Another rookery island is near the SCHH entrance. The trees you see on the island are **Live Oak and Sweet Gum**. Look for **Fox Squirrels** - related to gray squirrels but have more variable coloring including a facial mask with white patches on the nose, paws and ear tips, and they are larger than gray squirrels- about twice the size, prefer mature pine forests with an open understory- perfect for golf course living!

**Hole #13:** A Par 5 that takes 3 near perfect, long shots to even think about Par on this hole. 'Mogul' type fairways prove no lie to be flat and the green is protected on 3 of 4 sides by sand bunkers. Landing the green is the biggest challenge as it is sloped toward the water and a large sand bunker is waiting to catch any runaway golf balls. The lagoon on your right has two resident alligators, which means there is plenty of food in that lagoon. **Snakes** play an important role in our environment controlling rodents. SC has 42 species of snakes, 6 of which are venomous and more secretive, most common is the copperhead that has the least toxic venom. [www.whatsnakeisthat.com](http://www.whatsnakeisthat.com)

Hidden Cypress and Okatie Creek are ***Audubon International (AI) Certified Wildlife Sanctuaries***. Audubon International is not part of the Audubon associated with birds. Rather AI works with golf courses, housing developments, hotels and others to help them implement environmental management practices that ensure natural resources are sustainably used and conserved. The golf maintenance group are working AI to increase “no mow” areas; mow lagoon buffers winters keeping them under control and letting them grow in warmer months to provide shelter for wildlife; and planting areas of wildflowers beginning on Okatie Creek.

**Hole # 14:** Along the lagoon is a nesting area for **red winged blackbirds** in early summer. Families of **Black bellied whistling ducks** are sometimes seen here and on #15.

**Hole #15:** This lagoon is in the group of ponds designated for sustainability by the **SC Fishing and Hunting Club**. Some of SCHH’s lagoons are designated as fishing lagoons, managed by the **Sun City Hunting and Fishing Club**. Lagoons that are accessible from common ground property can be freely fished. Fisherman are not to go on private property unless permission is given by the homeowner. Lagoons bordering the golf course cannot be fished, primarily for the safety of the fisherman. Not all ponds in Sun City have been stocked with fish by the club but many have fish for a variety of reasons such as an underground conduit connectivity to a pond that has been stocked, and Mother Nature or a fisherman moving fish on their own without club knowledge.

The club helps with maintenance of the lagoons by building and installing **spider blocks** made of cinder block, piping and concrete to improve fish health and be homes for small fish which serve as food for larger fish, maintaining a healthy, sustainable ecosystem.

Residents should remember that anything that ends up in the streets of Sun City eventually ends up in our ponds and wetlands.

**Bald Cypress trees** with visible “knees” poking up around the tree and in the water to “buttress” or help support the tree in the wet, soft mud gave the course its name

**Hole #16:** When this land belonged to Union Camp, they built railroads on the property to remove the logs. Some of the tracks were located to your left where Bishop St. is now.

**The importance of wetlands and 260 lagoons** designed to prevent flooding, hold and clean water, and support natural habitats along with providing a beautiful community. The Lowcountry is very close to sea level, and the water table is high. Wetlands act as sponges, and development took away precious acreage used to soak up rainwater. It now goes into street drains then into the lagoons, then wetlands and rivers, including the **New and Okatie Rivers**, headwaters of the Okatie that runs by Riverbend, are on Sun City property. This

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rainwater collects particles from lawns, roofs and roads, which settle to the bottom of our lagoons before flowing into wetlands and rivers. This process also allows Sun City to utilize the water for irrigating common areas and golf courses, saving money for residents. **Sun City receives annual financial credits** from Beaufort County for use of Best Practices in caring for and monitoring our run-off.

Many wildlife species use our lagoons, native plants hold the soil at the edges of the ponds and absorb excess nutrients that wash off lawns and roads when it rains. They help **sequester chemicals, fertilizers and pesticides** and act as a buffer to prevent chemicals from entering the lagoons. Without them, the oxygen levels in the ponds would drop and cause algae blooms not good for aquatic ecosystems (and not too attractive, either...). The plants also provide habitat for native wildlife, such as dragonflies that eat lots of mosquitoes, fish, alligators, and wading birds such as herons and egrets.

There are some things that residents can do to help make sure our lagoons, wetlands and, therefore, our rivers, stay clean and healthy.

1. Leave a **vegetated buffer** (1' high & deep) along your lagoon edge. Do not remove any plantings that have been installed on the edge of lagoons.
2. Take your car to a **commercial car wash**, or if you must wash it or your golf cart, use a **biodegradable soap**. Wash carts over a grassy area to filter the water before it reaches a drain and shut the hose off while soaping up the car.
3. Reduce pesticide and fertilizer use in your yards and on plants. Our **centipede grass** does not need or like fertilizer. If you must use fertilizer on plantings, liquid is recommended as it disperses faster than granular. **Pesticides such as Round-Up can be very damaging** to beneficial insects such as bees.
4. **Take all your garden waste and clippings to the SCHH Mulching Center.** This center designed to protect the wetlands is one reason SCHH receives the credits.
5. **Do not place foreign objects**, fish or plants from a home fish tank, into any lagoon.

The wetlands on the way to #17 are in transition. With the increase water level, it no longer dries out. See **water hyacinth** here in the summer. Many trees are dying unable to tolerate "wet feet". However, other trees such as **swamp maples** and **Bald Cypress** that don't mind water, that will begin to thrive here. This process of environmental change after a major event is known as **succession**. The dead trees themselves serve an important role of providing nesting space for cavity nesting birds and insects in decaying trees are a great source of food for wildlife.

**Hole #17** is the signature hole for Hidden Cypress, a Par 3 with rambling streams, waterfalls and fountains to entertain. This hole can play easy one day when the pin is

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placed up front, but near torture when the pin is placed top left as going for the pin means clearing the sand bunker then softly landing the ball, so it doesn't roll off the back where it almost always rolls off the wall and plummets to its demise.

The "stream" is controlled by what is called a **vaulted pump station**, located underground. This pump pushes water to the top of the hill where it flows into the stream and runs downhill. The water is all recycled and is not a natural stream. The pump and the waterfall that we saw as we came up to the top of the hill are run 12 hours per day, turned on at 8 am and off at 8 pm.

**The tunnel heading to hole #18 ...** crossed over Murray Hill Dr. and under Colonel Thomas Heyward Blvd, through the tunnel. **Bats** sometimes hang from the roof of the tunnel. As the primary predators of night-flying insects, **bats** play a significant role in controlling insect populations and thus insect spread diseases. Estimates from studies show that some **bats** eat more than 70% of their weight in insects each night and some pregnant females at 100% of their body weight.

**Hole # 18:** Multiple water birds, primarily **white ibis**, are often present, sometimes numbering in the hundreds. **Wood Stocks**, an endangered species, are becoming more present in SCHH. As many as a dozen **alligators** have been counted at one time spread around the banks of this hole. The large live oak, one of our most recognizable native plants, with **Spanish Moss and Resurrection fern** is featured on this hole. Native plants are plants that have been growing in an area before it was settled by people from other parts of the world. Over time they have adapted to climatic conditions where they grow. They are drought tolerant, therefore, require less irrigation than many plants that have been introduced. Many native plants have developed defense systems which help protect them from insects and foraging by predators. Native plants also provide wildlife habitat which is more beneficial than that provided by introduced species of plants. Native plants need to be preserved or planted in areas large enough to support communities of wildlife and are a much richer source of food for bees. Native plants that you see on the golf course are **Live oak trees, Red oak trees, Sweet gum trees, resurrection ferns, Spanish moss, Wax myrtle, and rushes and grasses, Pickerelweed, Blue flag iris**, and more that grow along the edge of ponds. **Resurrection fern** - when dry, the ferns appear brown and dead and as soon as it rains, they turn lush and green.

*Thank you for joining us today. We hope you enjoyed yourself and learn something. Please encourage your friends and neighbors to take a tour. Please take a couple of minutes to complete a survey to help us improve the golf course nature tours.*