

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 # 1:** Lagoon at tee has alligator *Big Bubba*. You may see **great blue herons, great egrets, snowy egrets, ibis, cormorants and anhinga** in and around the lagoon and **tree swallows, Killdeer, and Bluebirds** on the grounds and in the trees. **Wood Stork**, an endangered species, is more prevalent now in SCHH. 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 to install them on almost all holes on the courses. The lagoon by the 1<sup>st</sup> green is special as it has an alligator nest on the back-left side, just into the woods. Be aware of where you are stepping and standing to avoid **fire ants**. Those who are allergic to wasps may be highly allergic if bitten. It's a free drop if a golfer is near a gator or ant hills.

**Cart path on way to #2.** A no-mow area maintained for wildlife – a herd of 12+/- **deer and wild turkeys, red tailed and red shouldered hawks** in the pines, and **yellow rumped warblers** in the low shrubbery in cooler weather. 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 #3:** The large tree in the hollow on your right is a live oak, one of our most recognizable native plants with **Spanish Moss**. 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 will 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.

In the small lagoon to your right is the pumping station used for irrigating some of the golf holes. Look for an alligator lounging under the shrubs on the far side, **turtles, grebes and mergansers**, two types of wintering ducks; and an **Osprey or red-shouldered or red-tailed hawk** on the back tees. **Pileated woodpeckers** in the Loblolly pines and **red-headed woodpeckers** near the greens. 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**, related to gray squirrels but more variable coloring including a facial mask with white patches on the nose, paws and ear tips, and about twice the size. They prefer mature pine forests with an open understory- perfect for golf course living!

**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.

**Hole #4: Mistletoe** is a parasitic plant that, once attached to a host tree, obtains its moisture and nutrients from the tree. This can cause slowing of growth, and death of some limbs and may kill the tree. A variety of birds nest in mistletoe, some butterflies lay eggs in mistletoe, and the berries (poisonous to us) are eaten by many mammals and birds.

**Hole #6: Alligators** are often seen in this lagoon, as well as **egrets, anhinga’s and herons**. 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.

**Hole # 7:** A picturesque par 3 hole with challenges from its design to natural hazards that keep most golfers on their toes. Water comes into play in front and to the left. The grounds crew allow the natural brush along the banks to grow throughout the summer creating another obstacle for an errant shot. If Nature doesn’t interfere, then the two large sand bunkers need to be navigated to make a chance for Par.

One pond adjacent to #7 green on the Hidden Cypress golf course is in the group of ponds designated for sustainability by the **SC Fishing and Hunting Club**. 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.

**Hole #8:** A fox has den in this area, and it can sometimes be seen in the surrounding neighborhoods.

**Okatie Farms** - 320 plots ranging from 10 x 20 to 20 x 25 foot raised beds. Water is supplied by the community. Club members maintain several plots twelve months a year growing fresh produce for the local food pantry, **Bluffton Self Help**. The Farm has its own **bee hives** on site at the East gardens. Products with **neonicotinoids are strongly discouraged** at SCHH, a pesticide since they will affect bees and other pollinators. Most “big box” stores are moving away from this, but Ace Hardware still has not. **Owls and hawks** help control the rodents that our gardens can attract.

**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 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.

*Brought to you by Golf Services assisted by Golf Advisory Committee, Bird Club, Fishing & Hunting Club, Avant Gardeners, Okatie Farmers, and Photography Club volunteers.*

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.

**Hole # 9: Barred owls** in the pines behind the practice area and **pileated woodpeckers** in the trees behind the 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.