

## Aquariums Offer Special License Tags

A North Carolina Aquariums license plate will soon grace bumpers across the state. The special plate features the aquariums' spadefish logo against a blue background.

The public can purchase the special plate for \$25, in addition to the regular state fee. The \$25 special plate fee will go toward educational programs and activities at the state's three public aquariums. The plates can also be personalized with four letters or numbers for an additional \$30.

To view the new plate in color and download an application form, visit the aquarium website at [www.ncaquariums.com](http://www.ncaquariums.com). For more information, call Mark Joyner with the N.C. Aquarium Society



toll free at 800-832-3474, ext. 226.

The state's three public aquariums are located at Fort Fisher, near Kure Beach; at Pine Knoll Shores, near Morehead City; and on Roanoke Island, near Manteo. They are administered by the North Carolina

Department of Environment and Natural Resources, and are designed to inspire appreciation and conservation of North Carolina's aquatic environments.

The N.C. Aquariums are accredited members of the American Zoo and Aquarium Association (AZA). The 212 members of AZA work together to provide innovation and leadership in education, conservation advocacy and animal care.

## Backyard Big Bird A Most Unusual Pet

By Barbara Milhaven

Not everyone has a pet Great Egret, but I understand that a few people living in McGinnis Point do and this is about one such egret and one family. Having had the pleasure of witnessing this remarkable relationship first hand I can tell you it is pretty amazing to see.

A few years ago residents and visitors alike could drive by or walk over to the lagoon on Lagoon Lane, McGinnis Pt. to watch the many egrets fly in at days end to make their beds in the surrounding trees. Sometimes there were so many it looked like snow. This egret rookery lasted a number of years until the building of new homes in the area necessitated taking down most of the trees. Believe me, this was truly a sight to behold, and I wonder where their new bedroom is now.

Clem and Mickey Sharek live at 110 McGinnis Dr. and while sitting in the living room of one of their neighbors' home, I was absolutely amazed to see Clem actually feeding an egret! According to Clem, this egret has become his special companion when he is

out on his dock getting bait or fishing. The egret evidently was intrigued and curious on one of its flights over this dock by what Clem was doing down there and perhaps a little hungry.

This beautiful creature landed to investigate and came close enough for Clem to toss her (Clem thinks it is a her) some fish. A friendship developed between bird and man and continues whenever Clem and his wife Mickey are in residence. Clem tells me that when he is on his dock "Miss or Mrs. Egret" or for that matter "Mr. Egret" drops down and gets to within three or four feet from him waiting for breakfast, lunch or supper. Evidently even if Clem is not on

the dock the egret will walk the boardwalk to the house and peck on their windows or even the windows of their neighbors. Is this not amazing?

When last I spoke with Clem he mentioned that lately he has not seen his pet egret and we only hope this does not mean "fowl" play!



## Turtle Time

By Peggy Sagmiller

On August 9, nest #15 was laid in Pine Knoll Shores. We believe it is the nest of a Green Turtle – a threatened species that very rarely nests here. Hopefully, it will survive the hurricane season and result in a healthy hatch!

Unfortunately, our Leatherback nest, the first nest laid this year in Pine Knoll Shores, has not hatched. This nest will be excavated on August 13, if it does not hatch before then. We never give up hope, but it does not look encouraging.

On a more positive note, nests #2, 3, and 4 all hatched out beautifully!

Nest #2 boiled on August 2, and **Pat & Vic Filan** was excavated on August 5 by Vic and Pat Filan. The nest contained 124 empty shells, 4 unhatched eggs, and 15 live hatchlings. Everyone present enjoyed seeing the babies make their way into the ocean.

Nests #3 and 4 boiled on August 3. 'Babysitters' Malcolm Bone and Bill Schmid were in attendance when nest #4 boiled. They

fought valiantly against battalions of ghost crabs trying to take the hatchlings, and they WON! Every hatchling that emerged made it safely into the ocean. Bill and Malcolm left the war zone knowing they had done a great job. Thanks, guys!

When the nest was excavated (by Bill and Malcolm) on August 6, it contained 139 empty shells, 15 unhatched eggs, and one live hatchling that was released into the ocean.

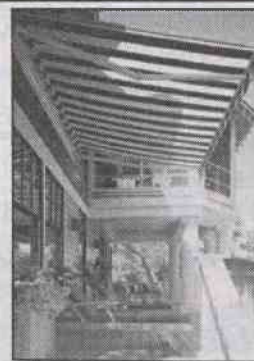
Nest #3 boiled without witnesses, and was excavated on August 7 by Trish Wallace and Chris Mohr. In the nest were 142 empty shells, 4 unhatched eggs, and one live

hatchling that was released.

Nests #2 and 3 each had an emergence success of 97%. Nest #4 was at 90%, due to the 15 unhatched eggs. These three nests have resulted in 405 Loggerhead hatchlings successfully leaving our beach so far this summer! We hope that the rest of the season turns out to be just as successful!



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