


# Showers, fossils and hub caps, oh my! Volunteers help clean up Drum Island marshes.

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March 23, 2025



MOUNT PLEASANT — Dozens of volunteers treaded through the tidal marshes on Drum Island, carrying trash they found back to their boats in a cleanup organized by Wounded Nature - Working Veterans.

Rudy Socha, Wounded Nature's CEO, said that about 60 volunteers showed up for the March 22 event, which was the group's first marsh cleanup of the year. The group gathered at Remley's Point at 7 a.m. — before the sun had even risen — ahead of loading into boats and heading over to the island in the Cooper River beneath the Arthur Ravenel Jr. Bridge, said board member Bri Lewandowski.

"Everybody grabbed their canvas bags, and we made our way over there and really got down and dirty into the marsh as much as we could," Lewandowski said. "People were sinking in the pluff mud up to their hips at some points."

Volunteers collected a lot of Styrofoam, treated wood and plastic, along with some other more interesting finds.



Volunteers carry trash found on Drum Island back to their boat during a cleanup event organized by Wounded Nature - Working Veterans on Saturday, March 22, 2025.

Steve Carney/Provided





Steve Carney holds up the side of a shower enclosure while Lerryn Gough stands inside it. The enclosure was found during a cleanup event on Drum Island hosted by Wounded Nature - Working Veterans on Saturday, March 22, 2025.

Komlavi Adissem/Staff

"There's a lot of fun items found — radios; I think some fossils were found, which is pretty cool; cooler tops; tires; a lot of hub caps, especially because we're near the bridge," Lewandowski said. She added that they found over 30 hub caps during their cleanup.

The volunteers returned from Drum Island around 9:30 a.m., hauling their finds up the boat landing and depositing them in a large dumpster. By then, the sun had risen and warmed up what had been a crisp morning.

People gathered at the top of the landing, talking about what they found ahead of a light-hearted contest to see who found the most interesting item. Bags of chips, sodas and some cans of Pabst Blue Ribbon were shared amongst them.

Steve Carney said the craziest thing he thought they found that morning was a fiberglass shower enclosure that they had to drag 400 yards from the woods on the island through the marsh back to the boat. His wife, Tally, found two fossilized horse teeth and ended up winning the contest for most-unique item.





Tally Carney holds out two fossilized horse teeth she found during a tidal marsh cleanup on Drum Island on Saturday, March 22, 2025.

Komlavi Adissem/Staff

Carney, who leads the resource group Veterans@Bosch at the company's North Charleston plant, said his group provides manpower for Wounded Nature's events, including a recent oyster reef build. He said he has been involved with the nonprofit's conservation events for several years.

"We get an opportunity for people to come out and give back," he said.

Socha, who served in the Marine Corps, said that he decided to take action after learning from marine animal rescue groups that tidal marshes and other areas along the coastline are vital ecosystems for wildlife.

"No one was cleaning it up," he said. "It was very important to the entire ecosystem, and so we formed a nonprofit to get out there and clean it up."





Volunteers show off their best finds during a cleanup of Drum Island hosted by Wounded Nature - Working Veterans on Saturday, March 22, 2025.

Komlavi Adissem/Staff

The organization has been around for about 15 years, Socha said. In addition to cleaning up marshes and building oyster reefs, Wounded Nature also removes derelict and sunken sailboats from the waterways around Charleston.

Socha said that this cleanup on Drum Island yielded about 3,500 pounds of trash and debris. One sailboat pulled out of the water, he said, can easily come in at double that weight, if not more.

"Every time we get a 30-foot abandoned sailboat out of the water, we're actually removing 9,000 pounds of fiberglass, lead and pollutant," he said.

Selden Mast has been an important partner in that effort, Socha said. Several employees from the sailing mast and rigging manufacturer were at the cleanup, including General Manager Jonas Berg.

He said he thinks they've gotten close to 200 sunken and abandoned boats out of the waterways.

"We do notice where we've been and we cleaned up how wildlife comes back in like in a year or two," Berg said. "And that makes me feel good."

Socha said he is grateful to Bosch, Selden Mast and other companies that have helped Wounded Nature's mission over the years. He highlighted Simply Southern, which provided prizes for the free raffle for volunteers held after the cleanup.



Rudy Socha of Wounded Nature - Working Veterans looks through the trash and debris found during a cleanup of tidal marshes on Drum Island on Saturday, March 22, 2025.

Komlavi Adissem/Staff

He said that they unfortunately did not get all of the litter out of the area but noted that once they do clear it of trash, it will stay pretty clean for about a decade. He added that keeping these areas clean is important for wildlife and locals alike.

"The tidal marshes in these rural areas is where the habitat for wildlife lives. The straws and tourist trash that's left on a public beach — that's just more semantics for the tourist industry," he said. "Whereas this is important to the next generation of seafood, shrimp and

the bird population that's down here. And it also adds to the ambience of the town being a tourist town. You can't have a bunch of trash laying around if you want to have a tourist town."