

St. James Turtle Basking Platforms

Turtle basking platforms have been installed by members of the St. James Conservancy (SJC) with assistance from the St. James Ponds Committee (SJPC) in three of the more than 250 ponds in St. James Plantation. This was made possible by a grant provided by the North Carolina Wildlife Federation to the St. James Conservancy. These “platforms” are actually artificial logs that are constructed of an environmentally safe and nontoxic material. They float on the water’s surface and are anchored to the pond’s bottom to keep them within a small area.



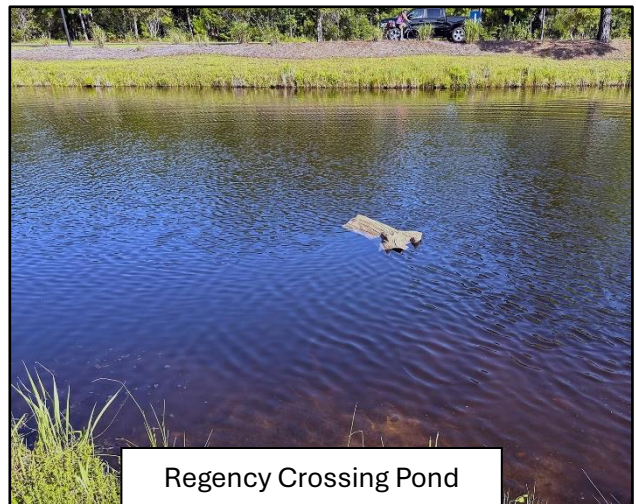
Blair Court Turtle Platform with Dave Williams (SJPC) and Duane Stewart & Rosie Tiani (SJC)

While traveling by a pond you may have seen a turtle or a group of turtles sitting on a rock, a log, or on the bank. This is often referred to as “sunning”, but turtles come out of the water and sit in the warm sun to do more than just relax and spend time with their friends. This behavior is called ‘basking’, and it is a crucial activity turtles must do as a matter of survival.

Turtles need to spend time on a dry surface each day for several reasons. Turtles are ectotherms, or cold-blooded reptiles. They absorb heat from their surrounding environment to regulate their body temperature. Turtles often suffer because of water-borne parasites, fungi, and algae, so keeping their body dry helps them get rid of these. Like humans, turtles need sunlight to synthesize vitamin D3 which is necessary to properly use calcium and other nutrients. Turtles can absorb the light through their shells, but often spread out their legs to absorb more heat and UV rays. Turtles that don't get enough light may develop weak shells and bones.



Ernie McLaney (SJC) Preparing to place platform at Regency Crossing Pond.



Regency Crossing Pond



Blair Ct. Platform with Ernie & Rosie



Maxwell Dr. at Carolina Ash Ln

While driving, biking, or walking past the ponds at Oceanic Drive and Blair Place, Regency Court and Prince Regent Court, or Maxwell Drive and Carolina Ash Lane, see if you can find the “logs”, and let the Conservancy know what you think of them. Four different platforms were obtained to determine which was more attractive and visible in the ponds. Feedback on which of the three that have been placed you prefer would be appreciated. We have one additional platform to place so if you have a location you feel would be ideal, please let us know. Also, if you see a turtle on one, please give a shout and send a photo. They were just installed on July 28th, and we are excited to know if they are being used.