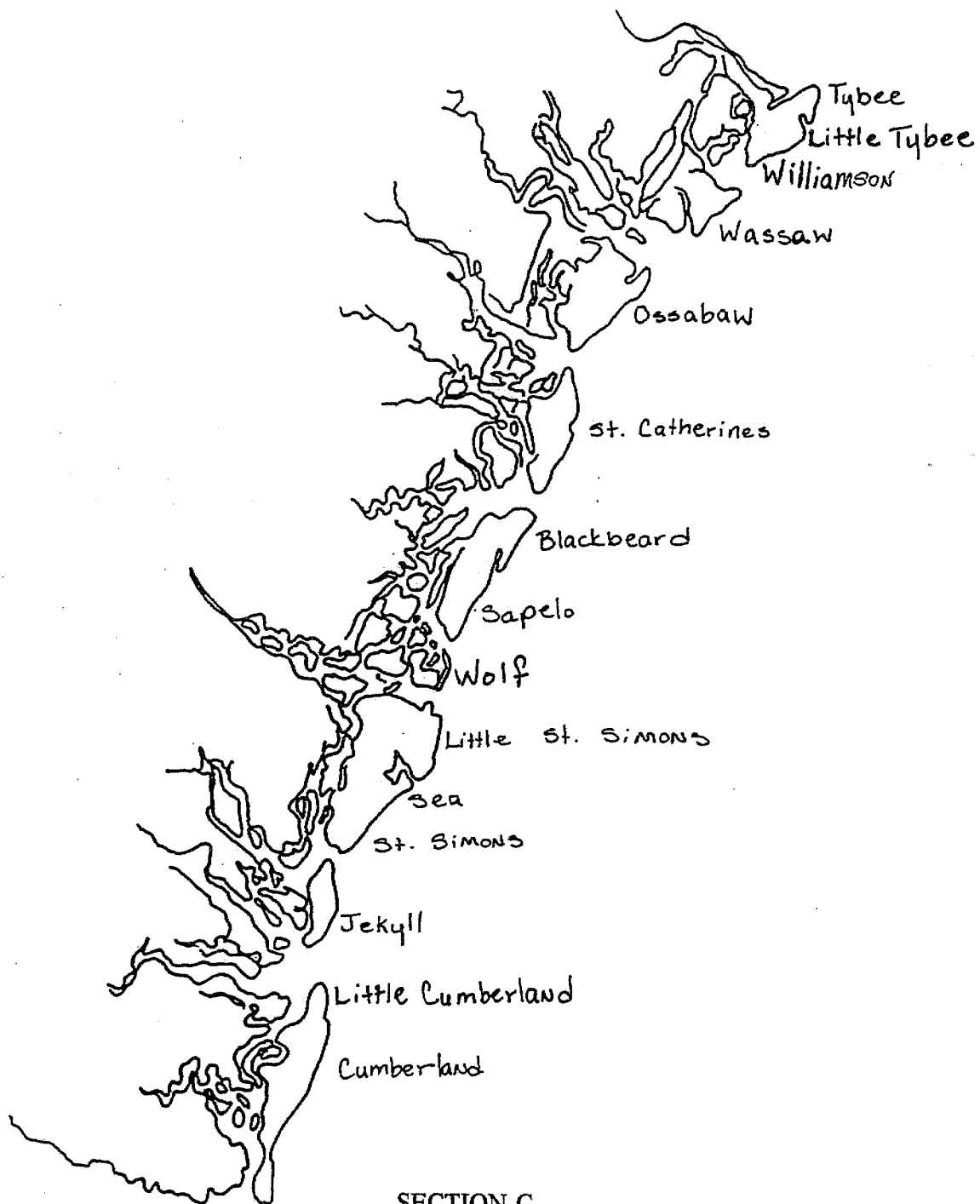


THE BARRIER ISLANDS OF GEORGIA



THE BARRIER ISLANDS OF GEORGIA

TYBEE ISLAND

Tybee Island is the farthest north of Georgia's barrier islands. It is approximately four miles long and one mile wide and was built by sands brought in by the Savannah River. Tybee's total acreage including marsh is 3,100 acres, 1,500 acres of which are non-marsh. The island has three and one-half miles of beach.

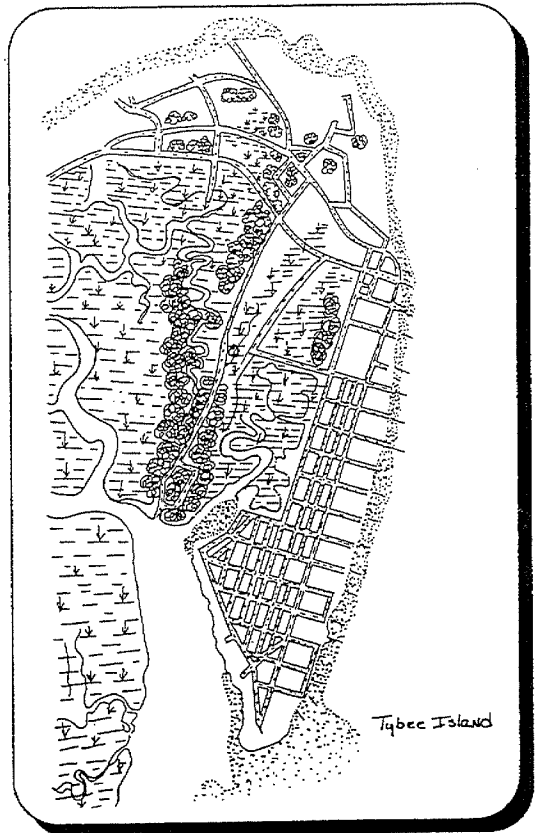
The name Tybee is an Indian word meaning salt. Historical sites include the Tybee Lighthouse (completed in 1773 and rebuilt in 1867) and its accompanying museum, and Fort Screven, which dates to 1875.

Tybee is Georgia's most developed barrier island. The commercialism on Tybee consists of hotels, year-round private residences, summer cottages, condominiums and various tourist facilities, such as public bathing beaches, fishing piers, marinas and public campgrounds.

Tybee is an excellent place to view and study an island that has been greatly altered by man's activities.

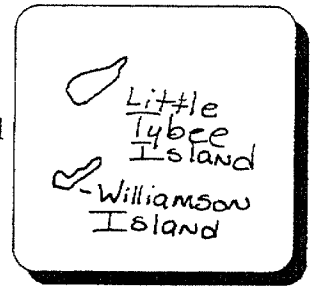
Because of man's destruction of the dunes, building too close to the ocean and the building of jetties and seawalls, Tybee has undergone a great deal of erosion. The dredging of the shipping channel of the Savannah River has starved the beach of sand and has accelerated its erosion. The landward side of the island has a great deal of marsh left but only a few areas of maritime forest and natural dunes remain.

Although there have been several recent attempts to combat the erosion, only a few cases have been successful. The jetties and seawalls that were built to prevent erosion actually increased it. Several attempts at renourishment have not been as successful as hoped. Snow fences have been added in several places and were only moderately successful in the building of new dunes. On the north end of the island attempts to grow dune plants have also been moderately successful and some small dunes are forming. In March of 1995, a series of T-jetties were placed at the south-end of the island. T-jetties have been proven to work in slowing erosion elsewhere and, hopefully, they will help Tybee.



LITTLE TYBEE

Little Tybee, once privately owned, was recently acquired by the State of Georgia, with a conservation access allowed to the Nature Conservancy. The island has approximately three and one-half miles of beach with a total acreage of 6,505 acres only 600 of which are non-marsh or upland. The only access to the island is by private boat and as yet there is no development.



WILLIAMSON ISLAND

Known as Georgia's newest island, Williamson Island was first detected around 1971 and later claimed by the State of Georgia. It formed by the growth of a sand bar or detached spit off the south end of Little Tybee and the sand is thought to have come from the erosion of Tybee. Its current length is approximately two miles. The island was named for Mr. Jimmy Williamson, a former Mayor of Darien, Georgia

WASSAW ISLAND

This seven-mile-long island is the most primitive and undeveloped of Georgia's barrier islands. In 1866, a New England cotton merchant, George Parson, purchased the island for \$2,500. Later, Parson's descendants sold it to the Nature Conservancy with the understanding that no bridge would ever be built to it from the mainland. In 1969, the Nature Conservancy deeded Wassaw to the federal government as a National Wildlife Refuge. Since 1973, the Cabretta Research Project has conducted research on population levels and habits of loggerhead turtles at Wassaw. From mid-May through mid-September, volunteers observe and tag nesting female loggerheads and relocate threatened nests to protected hatchery sites.

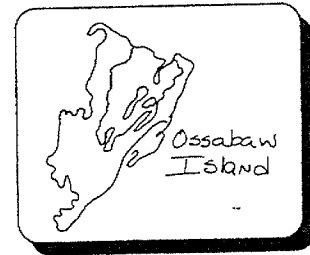


2,500 of Wassaw's 10,050 total acres are upland and the island has six miles of beautiful unspoiled beaches. One of Wassaw's most interesting features is the "boneyard beach" on the northeast end of the island. Here hundreds of live oaks, pines and cabbage palm trees have fallen prey to erosion and now their "skeletons" line about a mile-long stretch of the beach. Erosion at the north end has also partially exposed the remains of an 1898 fort to the tides. Another interesting feature is the 50-foot-high dune line, which was created by the hurricane of 1890. Hundreds of gulls, herons, egrets, migratory songbirds and shorebirds use the beaches, marshes and freshwater ponds as breeding and nesting grounds.

Seasonal deer hunting is allowed by permit only and most of the island is open to the public during the daylight hours. The middle 180 acres of the island are still owned by the Wassaw Island Trust and are not open to the public. Access to the island is by private or commercial boat charter.

OSSABAW ISLAND

Ossabaw Island is 10 miles long and two miles wide with an area of 25,000 total acres, 11,800 of which is upland. It has nine and one-half miles of beaches.



Ossabaw is extremely rich in history and was once a favorite hunting and fishing ground of the Indians. Skeletal remains of Indians dating back 4,000 years have been found there. Early colonists hunted the island as early as 1687. The island was bought by the Torrey family in 1924. Mrs. Eleanor Torrey West and her husband founded the Ossabaw Island Project Foundation in 1961. The foundation invited artists, authors, ecologists, musicians, sculptors and scientists to work on the island and share their ideas. In 1978, Mrs. West sold the island to the State of Georgia as a Natural Wildlife Refuge and in May of that year Ossabaw became Georgia's first Heritage Preserve under the Heritage Trust Act of 1975. As a Heritage Preserve, Ossabaw can be used only for natural, scientific and cultural purposes. Mrs. West still lives on the island in her family mansion and works with the DNR in the management of the island.

In the Wildlife Refuge section of the island, seasonal hunting is permitted. There is no bridge to the island and public visitation is very limited. Special permission for primitive camping or to stay in Mrs. West home can be obtained however, through Mrs. West or the DNR.



ST. CATHERINES ISLAND

St. Catherines is a 23-square-mile island with a total acreage of 14,640 acres and 11 miles of natural beaches. The total upland acreage is 6,870 acres.

Once the capital of the Guale Indian Nation, St. Catherines was also the site of Santa Catalina de Guale, the first Spanish mission in coastal Georgia (1566). The first book written in Georgia was an Indian grammar book written at St. Catherines by a Jesuit friar in 1568. Button Gwinnett, one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, bought the island in 1765 and lived there until 1771. His 19th century family home and slave cabins are still standing.

St. Catherines is currently owned by the private non-profit J. Nobel Foundation. Since 1968, the St. Catherines Foundation, along with the American Museum of Natural History and the New York Zoological Society, has conducted archaeological and zoological research and rare and endangered wildlife breeding there. Breeding colonies of nearly extinct species from several continents have been established, including cockatoos, gazelles, Madagascar turtles, heartbeests, and parrots.

Visitation to the island is by private boat and by invitation only, due to the sensitive nature of the research being conducted there.

BLACKBEARD ISLAND

Blackbeard Island's total acreage including marsh is 5,618 acres. It has 3,900 acres of uplands, 9 miles of beach, and is two and one-half miles wide at its widest point.

In the early 1700s Edward Teach, the famous English pirate popularly known as "Blackbeard," was thought to have buried treasure on Blackbeard Island. Sapelo's Allen Green, who at one time worked on Blackbeard, once discovered a large chain around a live oak tree. The chain extended into the ground near a tidal creek. Could this chain have been attached to Blackbeard's treasure? We will never know.

In 1800, Blackbeard Island was purchased by the U. S. Navy Department at public auction as a source of live oak lumber for shipbuilding. From August 14, 1880 to 1910, the island served as a quarantine station where ships left passengers that were thought to have yellow fever. A hospital was built on the southern end of the island because of the lack of standing water. It consisted of a large wooden storehouse and several large tents. Tents were used because they could be burned easily after infestation with the disease.

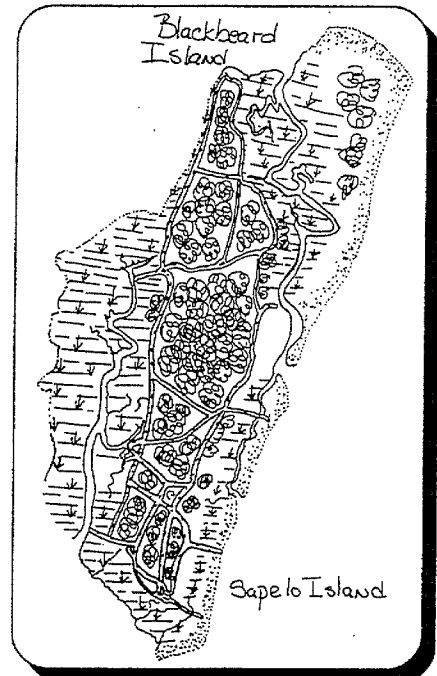
In 1924, Blackbeard Island became a preserve and breeding ground for native birds when it was placed under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Biological Survey which later became the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. In 1940, it was proclaimed as the Blackbeard Island National Wildlife Refuge.

Blackbeard is open to the public for daytime recreational activities and bow hunting is allowed during bow season with the proper permits. Freshwater fishing is allowed from March 15th to October 25th with a Georgia fishing license. Access to the island is by boat only and the government dock on Blackbeard Creek is accessible during all tides.

SAPELO ISLAND

Sapelo is about 12 miles long and two to four miles wide with a total area of 17,950 acres, making it the fourth largest of Georgia's barrier islands. Sapelo has 10,900 acres of uplands and five and one-half miles of undeveloped beaches. Sapelo's Nannygoat beach is noted for having the most extensive undisturbed natural beach dunes of any of Georgia's barrier islands.

Sapelo Island is jointly owned by the State of Georgia, the R. J. Reynolds Foundation and the residents of the Hog Hammock Community. Sapelo is a National Estuarine Research Reserve



and Wildlife Refuge. The Department of Natural Resources, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the R. J. Reynolds Wildlife Refuge share the management duties of the island. At the south end of Sapelo, the University of Georgia Marine Institute conducts research in barrier island formation and salt marsh ecology. Primitive camping and short term lodging is offered through the residents of Hog Hammock and the DNR.

See **Sapelo History** for more detailed information about Sapelo and its history.

WOLF ISLAND

Wolf Island is located just south of Sapelo at the mouth of the Altamaha River. It has a total of 5,126 acres, of which only 250 acres are high ground including beach and dunes. Three and one-half miles of beach line the ocean side of the island.



In 1930, Wolf Island was purchased by the federal government. Wolf Island National Wildlife and Natural Wilderness system includes not only Wolf Island but Egg and Little Egg Islands as well. Access to the island is by boat and only limited public recreation activities are allowed in order to protect the nesting grounds of the least and royal terns, shorebirds, wading birds, migratory waterfowl and loggerhead turtles.

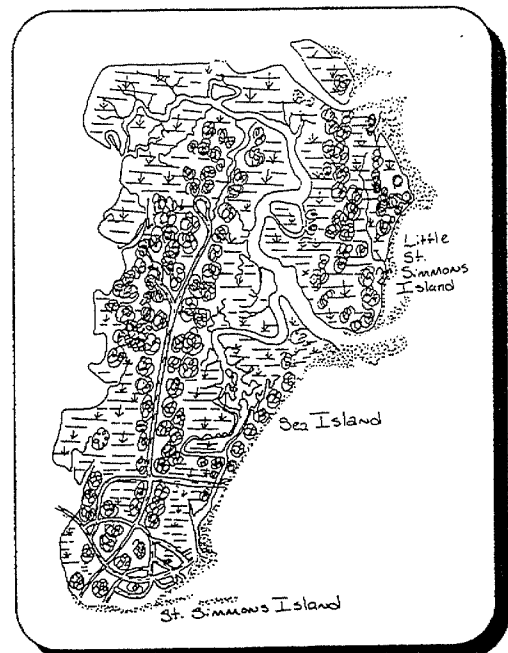
LITTLE ST. SIMONS

Little St. Simons Island is the last family-owned island on Georgia's coast. One of its most famous owners was Pierce Butler and his wife Fanny Kemble, who grew rice there during Georgia's plantation days. It was purchased in 1908 by Philip Berlzheimer and his descendants still own the island and operate a retreat where overnight guests are invited to visit to fish, hunt, horseback ride, canoe, take nature tours, and enjoy its six and one-half miles of beaches.

The island has a total acreage of 8,840 acres including marsh. 2,300 of these acres are uplands. The island has excellent examples of fresh and brackish water ponds that serve as habitats for more than 200 species of birds.

SEA ISLAND

Sea Island is connected by causeway to St. Simons Island and is a privately owned beach resort with hotels and private cottages and residences. Development of Sea Island began in 1926 when Howard Coffin bought five miles of beach front and established the Sea Island Co. to



develop a first-class resort. The five-star Cloister Hotel opened in October of 1928. Today the island has five and one-half miles of beach and 2,000 total acres including the marsh. The upland acreage is 1,200 acres. Because of its private ownership, there is no public access to the beach from the mainland.

ST. SIMONS ISLAND

St. Simons is the only one of Georgia's larger barrier islands that has never been privately owned. St. Simons consists of 27,300 total acres including the marsh. It has 12,300 upland acres and three miles of beach. St. Simons and Sea Island together are 13 miles long and 4 miles wide.

St. Simons is extremely rich in history, having been inhabited first by the Creek Indians and then by the Spanish, British, and finally by southern plantation owners who grew sea island cotton and live oak timber. Historic points of interest include Fort Frederica, Fort St. Simons, Christ Church, Bloody Marsh, Hamilton Plantation, Hampton Plantation, Cannon's Point Plantation, and Retreat Plantation and the St. Simons Lighthouse. The lighthouse, first constructed in 1810 and rebuilt in 1871, is one of the nation's oldest continuously working lighthouses. After the Civil War, St. Simons became a much-loved resort. The causeway was built in 1924 and the airport in 1934. The Coast Guard Station which closed in 1996 was built in 1937. Today most of the island is privately owned residential homes and low-key commercial hotels and condominiums. Its fishing pier attracts visitors from miles around and serves as the center for many of the activities of the local village.



JEKYLL ISLAND

Jekyll Island, the smallest of Georgia's major barrier islands, is 10 miles long and one and one-half miles wide at its widest point. It has 5,700 total acres, 4,400 of which are uplands. It has eight miles of beach.

Jekyll was first used as hunting and fishing grounds by the Creek Indians who called the island "Ospo." In 1562, the island was claimed by the French Huguenots and the name was changed to "Ile de la Somme." In 1566 Spanish Jesuit priests established a mission there. In 1736, after claiming the island for Britain, General James Oglethorpe established an outpost and renamed it Jekyll after his friend Sir Joseph Jekyll. In 1738, Oglethorpe placed the island in the care of his aide Captain William Horton. In 1742, after the defeat of the Spanish, Jekyll

was held as a military reservation until it was added to the Parish of St. James by the Georgia legislature in 1765. In 1766, the island was granted to Clement Martin, who sold it to Richard Leake in 1784. In the early 1790s the island was purchased by Christopher Poulain duBignon. The island remained in the duBignon family for nearly a century and was used to grow sea island cotton. In 1886, Jekyll was purchased by a group of northern millionaires including the Rockefeller, Morgan, Pulitzer, Vanderbilt, Gould, McCormick, Goodyear, Aston, Baker, Biddle, Whitney, Armour, Crane, Macy and Bliss families for use as a winter resort. In 1947, the state of

Georgia bought Jekyll for use as a state park. The causeway and bridge were built in 1954, allowing easy access for the general public to enjoy year-round recreational activities.

Jekyll offers an excellent environment in which to study island erosion and accretion. Due to the dredging of the St. Simons Sound, the north end of Jekyll is experiencing rapid erosion. The south end, however, is experiencing accretion, including the building of a beautiful dune field.

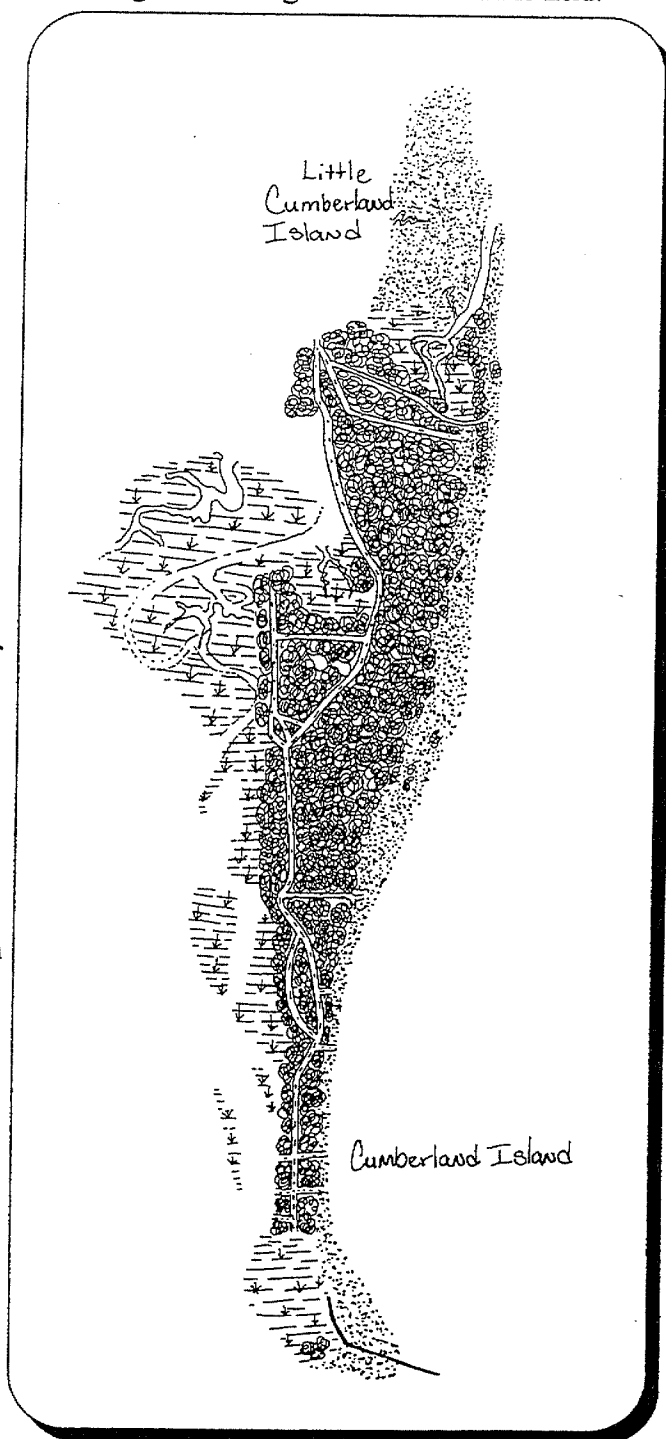
LITTLE CUMBERLAND ISLAND

Little Cumberland Island is owned by a private homeowners association. The island has two and a half miles of beach and 2,400 total acres, 1,600 of which are uplands.

CUMBERLAND ISLAND

Cumberland Island is the southernmost and longest of Georgia's barrier islands. Including the marsh, it has a total acreage of 23,000 acres, 15,000 of which are uplands. The island is one and a half to three miles wide and has 17.5 miles of beach.

Cumberland was once inhabited by a Florida tribe of the Timucuan Indians who called the island Missoe which means sassafras. The island was renamed San Pedro by the Spanish who settled, set up a mission and occupied the island for more than a century. It was named Cumberland in 1734 by Chief Tomochichi in honor of his friend William Augustus, Duke of Cumberland. In 1738, the British built Fort William or Prince Williams Fort at the lower end of the island and Fort St. Andrews at the northern end. General Oglethorpe built a hunting lodge near Fort William and named it Dungeness after the royal county seat upon the "ness" in the County of Kent. Between 1765 and 1768, James Cuthbert, Jonathan and Josiah



Bryan, John Smith and James Habersham were given royal grants on the island. After the Revolutionary War, Cumberland became part of Camden County.

For several years, Cumberland was used as a hideout by smugglers and one small neighboring island is still known as Hush-Your-Mouth Island. During the plantation days (approximately 1780s - 1860) several plantations prospered including the Stafford Plantation and Dungeness (home of General Nathaniel Greene). These plantations fell into ruin after the Civil War and were deserted until 1882, when a large part of the island was sold to Thomas Carnegie of Pittsburgh. The Carnegie family rebuilt the Dungeness mansion in 1880 and other family members built Plum Orchard in 1898, the Stafford Place and Grey Field in 1901. Around 1900, W. P. Bunkly built the Hotel Cumberland on the northern end of the island called High Point. This property later became the property of the Candler family of Atlanta.

Portions of Cumberland were donated to the National Parks Service in 1970 and by an Act of Congress in 1972 it became a National Seashore. In 1982, the northern half of the island was added to the National Wilderness Preservation System. Today the island is managed by the National Parks Service and day trips and short-term camping are available. No more than 300 people are allowed to visit the island per day. There are still several private residences on the island and the Grey Field Inn, a private commercial facility, offers overnight accommodations.

HOW DOES SAPELO COMPARE?

PURPOSE: To compare Sapelo Island with the other barrier islands of Georgia in total acreage, acreage of uplands, acreage of marsh, and miles of beach.

MATERIALS: Fact Sheets on The Barrier Islands of Georgia and Sapelo History

PROCEDURE:

1. Use the information in the fact sheets to fill in the data table.
2. Answer the questions in the observations.

OBSERVATIONS: Use the information in your data table to answer the following questions.
(NOTE: To calculate the marsh acreage you must subtract the upland acreage from the total acreage)

1. How many total miles of beach do the islands listed have? _____
2. How many total acres of uplands exist on Georgia's barrier islands? _____
3. How many total acres of marsh exist on Georgia's barrier islands? _____
4. Which island has the most miles of beach? _____
5. Which island has the most total upland acreage? _____
6. Which island has the most total marsh acreage? _____
7. Which island has the least total upland acreage? _____
8. Which island has the least marsh acreage? _____
9. Which island is the longest? _____
10. Which is the shortest island? _____
11. How many islands can be reached by automobile? _____
Name them. _____
12. Which islands are developed commercially? _____
13. Which islands are privately owned? _____
14. Which islands cannot be developed further commercially because they are protected by state or federal government ownership? _____
15. On which islands is research being conducted? _____
16. Which islands can be visited by the public? _____
17. How does Sapelo compare to the other islands in: (rank as 1st, 2nd, 4th, 5th etc.)
length? _____
total acreage? _____
miles of beach? _____
acres of marsh? _____
acres of uplands? _____
18. Who owns Sapelo? _____
19. Can Sapelo ever be developed commercially? _____ Explain your answer.

DATA TABLE:

Island	Total acreage	Length of island	Acres of uplands	Acres of marsh	Miles of beach	Amount or type of commercialism	Access to island by:	Owned by:	Interesting facts (use back if necessary)
Tybee									
L. Tybee									
Williamson									
Wassaw									
Ossabaw									
St. Catherine's									
Blackbeard									
Sapelo									
Wolf									
L. St. Simons									
Sea Island									
St. Simons									
Jekyll									
L. Cumberland									
Cumberland									
TOTALS									



CONCLUSION: Summarize how Sapelo compares to the other islands along Georgia's coast. The coasts of the states above and below Georgia have become very commercialized and many of the marshes and natural areas have been destroyed. Using the information gained from this activity and your knowledge of the importance of marshes, explain why it is important for Georgia to preserve its coastline.