

## **Spring or Fall It's Still Clean**

*By Bruce Julian*

On November 1<sup>st</sup>, Eleven Volunteers met at Little Island City Park, where all groups going into False Cape State Park meet. There were 5 Women and 6 Men who showed up for the 9 mile bus trip into the park. On this trip, we had Diana Ramsey, Nancy Pruden, Faye Bailey, Mark Connolly, Mike McCarthy, Milton Beale, John Gillikin, with Jane & John Oakes and Margaret & Bruce Julian. We met at 2:00 P.M. and we were on our way in by 2:30 P.M., along with all the food and gear that we would need for the 5 day trip. Because of the distance that you travel through Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge and then the six miles, half-way through the False Cape State Park, you always need to bring everything that you need; so that you don't need to run back out to pick-up forgotten items. Once we get to False Cape, who wants to leaves anyways, it is a little paradise with the Atlantic Ocean on one side and Back Bay on the other side, with large Sand Hills covered with Loblolly Pines and Live Oak Trees, tucked away in the Southeast corner of Virginia.

On this volunteer trip; we painted, cleaned, cut limbs, pressured washed, nailed, raked, hiked and ate. In the Environmental Education Center (EEC), where we stayed, we had some great meals each day prepared by different volunteers for each meal. You need to eat well to work hard, and we did. On our first day of work, we had a little rain in Paradise, so we headed to the Visitor Center (VC) to do some painting inside, some cleaning and then we oiled the rocking chairs on the front porch. It may not be Spring Cleaning but that's what we did for our VC, because we sometimes get as many visitors in the Winter as we get in the Summer, so we want to look good year-round. The second day, the rain stopped, so we worked outside washing windows and screens in the VC.

We had divided into two groups, with some going to the pump house to pressure wash and paint the building, which turned out looking great. The third day we sent two Volunteers back to the VC to finish up on some of the work that wasn't done on the day before, and the rest of the group picked up rakes, loppers and hedges trimmers to do some Trail Maintenance. We started with the Maple Leaf Trail, 0.7 miles long from Back Bay across the park to the Atlantic Ocean. This trail gives visitors a chance to see the different ecosystems with the tall Pines and the Hardwood Trees changing over to shorter bushy Pines and Live Oak Trees, with dark dirt changing to all-white sand within the short distance of the 0.7 mile trail.

The next trail was the South Inlet, where Visitors hike the 0.3 mile out to a platform which overlooks the waters of Back Bay. After our Lunch Break, we headed towards the Cemetery Trail. It is one of the most used trails in the Park, starting where the park tram makes it most Southern stop. Visitors can hike 0.5 miles to the Church Site, where for over 80 years, the people of Wash Woods attended Church. School Groups also use this trail to enjoy hiking through the park and out to the ocean. The next and final trail we worked on was the Maritime Trail where the Cemetery Trail ends. This 0.7 mile trail is all sand, with areas of Live Oak and Pine Trees, going by one of our tallest platforms, where when you are on top of it, you can see a view of Back Bay and you can see miles and miles of the Ocean. After our Breakfast on Thursday, two of our group drove back to the VC, to do one last job while the rest of us packed our gear and cleaned the EEC. It was another great time for all of us Volunteers, and we enjoyed our stay at the old Swan Hunt Club (the EEC). We are looking forward to our next stay and we would like to say "Thanks" to all of the Park Staff.

