



The Delta News

5 Rivers Delta Resource Center



Volume II, Issue IV

April 2010

Your Delta Fun Fact for the Month:



Did you know Butterfly wings are actually clear? The colors and patterns we see are the reflections of the tiny scales covering the wings!

What's up in the Delta this Month?



Most folks think of April as a time for SHOWERS...

But around here, April means FLOWERS!

Come out to 5 Rivers this month and experience the marsh in full bloom.

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Coming to 5 Rivers! May 1, 2010



2010DeltaExpo.com

Last spring, 5 Rivers and the City of Spanish Fort partnered to produce the first Delta Woods & Waters Expo, a 3-day festival focused on outdoor awareness and celebrating the rich outdoor experiences in our shared backyard—the Mobile-Tensaw River Delta. The first Expo was so much fun that we have teamed up to do it again in 2010! Students from Daphne and Spanish Fort schools will be given guided tours of the Expo's eight key exhibitors on April 29th and 30th. On Saturday, May 1st from 9am-4pm the lineup expands as the Expo opens to the general public. The Expo is a **free, family-friendly event**, so mark your calendar to join us.



Dr. John Hall as William Bartram

Once again this year, the Expo will be headlined by Dr. John Hall, Curator for the Black Belt Museum at the University of West Alabama in Livingston. Dr. Hall will appear as William Bartram, the early naturalist and explorer who traveled through our Delta in the 1770s. While in character, Dr. Hall will give spectators insight into the life of the early settlers. You won't want to miss this great opportunity!

There will be plenty to do and see at this year's Expo, including:

- & Canoe & Kayak Demonstrations
- & Casting & Fly Tying
- & Deer & Turkey Calling
- & Boy Scout Village
- & Archery Demonstrations
- & Retrieving Dog Demonstrations
- & Reading the Sky
- & Recycling Exhibits
- & Kite Making & Kids Crafts
- & Alabama's Black Bears
- & Marine Police Boater Safety
- & Wildlife Division Virtual Range
- & Hiking, Birding & Woodland Walks
- & Live Music & Affordable Food
- & \$5 Boat tours aboard The Pelican
- & And everything 5 Rivers has to offer!

Come join us! For more info, visit 2010DeltaExpo.com or call 5 Rivers at 625-0814.



Alabama's premier land acquisition program reflects on its early successes

Alabama's Forever Wild Program turns 18 this year. That's probably not considered old, since most 18 year olds are just getting started and have their whole life ahead of them. But 18 could symbolize the twilight years for Forever Wild, as its funding is scheduled to cease in 2012. When the program was created in 1992, it was given 20 years to prove itself effective in preserving public lands throughout Alabama. As such, the Alabama Legislature has until 2012 to decide whether it is worthwhile to continue funding Forever Wild. Recently, the Forever Wild Board of Trustees produced a progress report for the citizens of Alabama that outlines the program's accomplishments during its first 17 years. Printed copies of the report are available at the 5 Rivers Delta Resource Center or you can download it at www.AlabamaForeverWild.com. We encourage you to read the report and decide for yourself whether you think this program is worth renewing.



What is Forever Wild? The Forever Wild Program was established in 1992, by constitutional amendment, to provide for the purchase of public conservation lands throughout Alabama. The program was designed to acquire and protect land for a variety of public uses, including hunting, fishing, backpacking, hiking, canoeing, bird watching, and more.

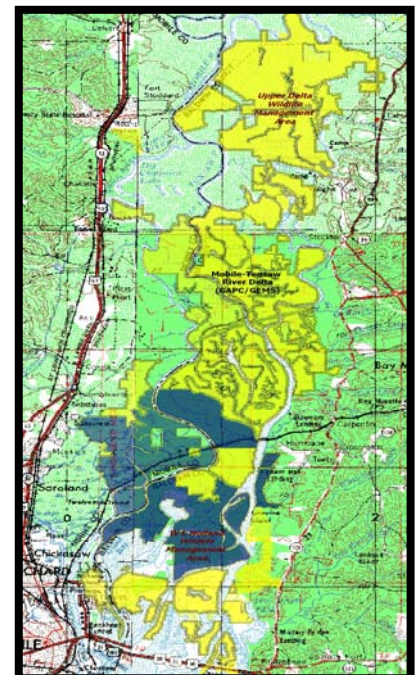
How do we pay for this? You might be surprised to learn that Forever Wild does not use tax dollars for land acquisition. The Program's funding is derived from a percentage of interest income earned from State royalties from offshore natural gas production. These public trust royalties make up the Alabama Trust Fund. The Forever Wild amendment allowed a small portion of these interest proceeds (10% annually; not to exceed \$15 million in any year) to be utilized for land acquisition throughout the state. The detailed amendment also established a Board of Trustees to implement the Program, established protocols to follow when acquiring lands, and established the Alabama Natural Heritage Program to inventory natural assets throughout the state and provide long term stewardship of all Forever Wild Lands.

Types of Forever Wild Property: Land acquired by the program must fall into at least one of four categories: Nature Preserves, State Parks, Wildlife Management Areas, and Recreation Areas. Typically, a tract fits multiple categories and is managed with multiple interests in mind. Another very important aspect is that Forever Wild land can only be purchased from *willing sellers at fair market value*. Most of the Forever Wild lands are available to the public for hunting, fishing and recreation. They are now part of our legacy.

Is it working? As of January, 2010, Forever Wild has secured 74 tracts, totaling over 212,792 acres. These new public lands, which have a combined value of over \$142 million, can be found in 23 counties throughout Alabama. And that's just the Forever Wild part of the story... It's also important to understand that Forever Wild funds have been used as matching funds to leverage over \$40 million in federal land acquisition funds. Lands have also been added through private partnerships and donations. In a nutshell, Forever Wild has provided a steady funding source and organizational structure to guide the vast majority of Alabama's recent land conservation efforts.

Anywhere you go in Alabama, you're probably not far from a Forever Wild tract. The coastal counties are no exception as significant acquisitions have been made in the Mobile-Tensaw River Delta, Perdido River corridor, Splinter Hill Bog, Weeks Bay Reserve, Blakeley State Park, and Grand Bay Savanna. These land acquisitions have fueled the academic, educational, and recreational programs at 5 Rivers and the Weeks Bay Reserve.

We encourage you to visit a Forever Wild tract this spring and directly enjoy your legacy. We also hope you will pick up a copy of the Forever Wild Report and support this program's renewal by 2012.



Mobile Delta: Most of the area in yellow (app 50,000 acres) has been preserved by Forever Wild.

Watchable Wildlife: Herpetofauna

Springtime is here, with new growth and new opportunities for the new year. Birding has always been a popular pastime with visitors and locals alike...but have you ever tried herping? Just like birding, it takes an observant soul, a good ear, a few simple tools and a spoonful of patience.

Herping is a term used for those that love to get outside and search for those sometimes overlooked critters – herpetofauna such as frogs, toads, salamanders, turtles and snakes. Yes, even snakes! Alabama is rich with critters such as these, having some of the highest diversity in the nation and some species that are found nowhere else in the world.



You can go herping anytime, night or day.

Do a little research before you go to find out what common herps may be in your neck of the woods. To find reptiles like snakes and turtles, you may try a sunny day when they'll be basking to regulate their body temperature. Often you may come upon a snake totally unexpected while walking through the woods, and almost trip over it as it's stretched across a sunny spot in the path. An aquatic turtle will crawl up on a log to catch some rays during the day, and if you're quiet and careful, you may see more of it than just a "plop!" and some ripples as it drops back into the water.

Finding toads and frogs can be more challenging, but a lot of fun. The hunt often begins at dusk on a warm night following rain. Frogs and toads are amphibians, so are they closely associated with freshwater. With all the rain we get in South Alabama and all of our local waterways, a close puddle, ditch, pond, river, lake or stream is easy to find! Take a flashlight and wear shoes you don't mind getting dirty, and keep your ears open. You will most likely **hear** the frog or toad long before you see it – a trill, croak, click, twank, or even a baaa that sounds suspiciously like a sheep in pain. Sometimes, if you're really lucky and conditions are just right, you may find yourself in the middle of a full chorus of frogs, deafening and joyful! Just like with birding, you can listen to frog calls of individual species from many online sites. Each species has its own call, so with a bit of practice you can impress your friends and tell what kind of critter it is without ever laying eyes on it. Don't worry if you hear a call you don't know—part of the fun can be solving the mystery!

While you're out exploring, keep safety first in your mind and always pay attention to where you put your hands and feet. Make sure to get permission before going onto private property. Remember too, these are wild animals, so take only pictures and leave with great memories.

Frogs and toads have a variety of calls within each species, and often times it's the male that calls. A call could mean:

Watch out!



Yay! It's Raining



Hey baby, what's your sign?



No, really dude, get off me before I go ninja on you



The World According to Loretta



Ever since Loretta asked to have a box in front of her cage for people to ask her questions, she's been busier than ever trying to get all the great questions answered. This is just a sampling of the great questions she has gotten so far. To see all the questions and answers, check out our Facebook page or stop by the Apalachee Exhibit Hall to see her question and answer book. If you have a question you would like to see Loretta answer, be sure to drop by her cage and write it down! Trust us, she reads all the questions.

What do opossums drink? Do they drink orange juice?

While orange juice would be a great tasty treat, I only drink water. I do indulge in oranges every once in awhile.

How old are you? Are you 100 years old?

I'm wise now, but think of how much wiser I would be if I was 100! I will be celebrating my first birthday in May.

How many opossums are in there?

I am the only lucky opossum to have this wonderful penthouse. Great question Camellia M!

What is 1,000 + 10

I see, trying to stump me with math. The answer is 1,010.

Where were you at 2:30pm?

This is an easy one. I was watching, "Let's Make a Deal" with my feet up, bunny slippers on, and curlers in my hair. I never miss an episode! I just love that Wayne Brady, makes me laugh every time!

Why do you dress up your opossum?

While I have to admit some of those outfits are styling, they do serve a specific purpose. Opossums who live in cages are more likely to be overweight than opossums found in the wild. Those outfits are really harnesses that attach to a leash when we go out for walks. This way I get exercise and snazzy outfits all in one! Great question Henry G.

A Quick Glimpse of April's Events:

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| 4/6/10 Alabama Hiking Trail Society Meeting | 4/13/10 Hunter's Education Class |
| 4/6/10 Mobile Bay Canoe and Kayak Club Meeting | 4/17/10 Mobile Bay Kayak Fishing Association Fishing Seminar |
| 4/6/10 Gulf Coast Amphibian and Reptile Keepers Meeting | 4/17/10 5 Rivers Delta Safaris Sunset Wine Tour |
| 4/6/10 Sierra Club Meeting | 4/17/10 Saturday Class: Alabama Turtles with a Turtle Release; Grades 3-5 |
| 4/8/10 Alabama Coastal Foundation Battle of the Roux Gumbo cookoff | 4/18/10 "Rollin' on the River" for Literacy |
| 4/10/10 Saturday Class "imPRESSive" Plants Grades 5-7; 9am to 12pm | 4/18/10 Sunday Matinee: "Life of Birds: Meat Eaters" followed by owl pellet examination |
| 4/10/10 Saturday Class "imPRESSive" Plants Adults; 1pm to 4pm | 4/18/10 Bottle Creek Indian Mound Lecture and Tour |
| 4/10/10 5 Rivers Delta Safaris Bottle Creek Paddle and campout #1 | 4/24/10 Earth Day Celebration at Museum of Mobile |
| 4/11/10 Blakeley State Park Guided Hike | 4/27/10 Last day for 2010 Marine Resources Division Calendar Artwork Exhibit |
| 4/13/10 Audubon Society Meeting | 5/1/10 Woods and Water Expo Family Day |
| 4/13/10 StoryTime for little ones | |

For more information on any events, please call us at 251-625-0814, visit our website at www.Alabama5Rivers.com or check us out on Facebook. To join the newsletter mailing list, email Shonda.Borden@DCNR.Alabama.gov.