



# Environmental STUDIES CENTER

## *Wild* **Adventures**

Fall 2022



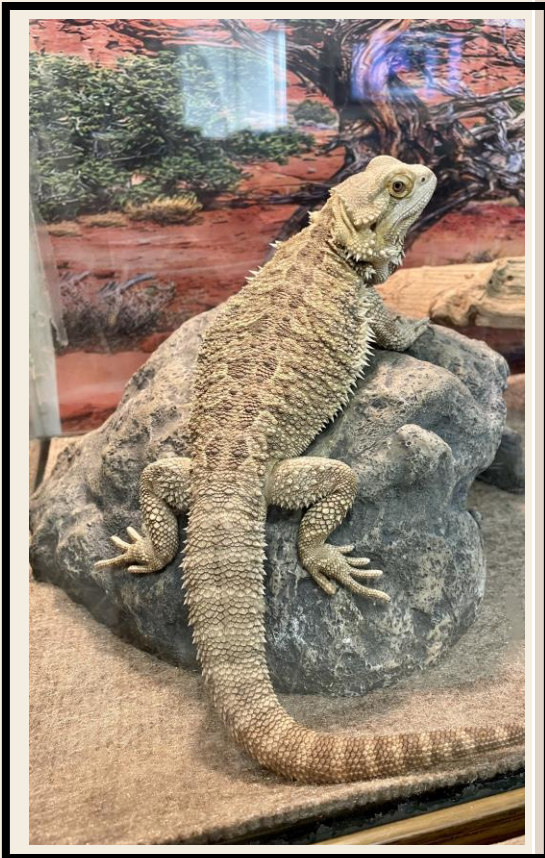
Mobile County  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

### *Critter Corner* *Meet Sydney*

Hi, my name is Sydney and I am a Bearded Dragon. I am at the Center because I was cared for improperly by my previous owner. I came to the Center with metabolic bone disease and was starved and very thin.

My owner did not know I need UV lighting, heat lamps, and a special diet.

I was lucky, but not all animals are as lucky as me to end up at the Center. I am now being used to teach people about pet responsibility. Please, make sure to research how to care for an animal before purchasing it.





# Helping the ESC

During the holidays and throughout the year, the Environmental Studies Center can always use extra help and there are several ways to do this.

The easiest way to help the Center would be to donate items from our Wildlife Wish List. There are food items, like Cheerios, sardines in water, and scratch feed. Bleach, liquid dishwasher soap, and laundry soap help to keep things clean. We can always use newspaper for the cages and pine shavings for bedding.

Adopting one of our educational animals is a fun way to support the Center. You can choose any of the animals housed at the Center and you will have a plaque placed on the cage with your name. It is \$25 and the money will go towards purchasing food for that animal. This is also a great idea to give as a gift.

Volunteering at the Center is another way to help. Volunteers must be at least 18 years old. Volunteers prepare special diets and feed and water the animals that they make the food for. We ask that you give us one day a week, either in the morning or afternoon. We will set you up with the same day and time each week.

We have forms, for all these ways to help, on our website and in the newsletter.



# Wildlife Wish List

Clip-on clamp lamp	1 cc and 3cc syringes	Chicken vegetable baby food
Pine bark mulch	Pine shavings (for cages)	Dried whole corn
Cages	Baled hay	Frozen mixed vegetables
Heating pads	Ziploc freezer bags (gallon & quart)	Fresh fruits and vegetables
Liquid laundry soap	Bleach	Raw peanuts (in shell)
Liquid dishwasher soap	Paper towels	Nuts (in shell)
Wal-Mart gift cards	Newspaper	Dry dog food (small bites)
Cheerios	Plastic wrap	Unsalted sunflower seeds
Scrub brushes	Dawn dish soap	Canned sardines in water
Cash	Animal crackers	Canned cat food
Wild Birdseed	Scratch Feed	60 watt incandescent light bulbs
Small frozen fish		

# Wildlife Adoptions

The Environmental Studies Center has a wide variety of native wildlife on display for educational purposes. The upkeep for these animals can be quite expensive. For \$25 a year you can help with the feeding, care, and shelter of one of these special animals. Not only can you adopt an animal for yourself, but you can also give an adoption as a gift. Adoption Benefits: Recognition of your adoption, with a plaque on the exhibit, and Environmental Studies Center Newsletter.

## Animal Adoption

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_

Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please choose one:  Raccoon  Deer  Cooper's Hawk  Seagull  Alligator  
 Barn Owl  Canada Goose  Black Vulture  Blue Jay  Red-Shouldered Hawk  
 Red-Tail Hawk  Bald Eagle  Brown Pelican  White Pelican  Screech Owl  
 Barred Owl  Great-Horned Owl  Great Blue Heron  Other: \_\_\_\_\_





# *American Beautyberry*

American Beautyberry is a native deciduous shrub of the Southern United States. It is found growing wild in a variety of habitats including wet slopes, low rich bottomlands, the edge of swamps, in woodland areas, coastal plains, and bottomlands. Flowers appear in late summer turning into bright, purple clusters of berries in September. It is one of the first plants to herald the fall and can grow up to nine feet under ideal conditions. The berries are an important food source for birds and other animals including armadillos, raccoons, opossums, squirrels, foxes, and some rodents.

Beautyberry is not only an important food source for wildlife, but it also provides many medicinal uses. The leaves can be crushed and rubbed on the skin to repel mosquitos and ticks or made into a lotion or salve. Beautyberries also have antibacterial, antifungal, and antiviral properties. Other uses include treatment for colic, dysentery, fever, malaria, rheumatism, and stomach pain.

The berries grow in tight clusters along the length of the branch making them easy to scrape off into a bucket held below the cluster. The raw berries are edible but only in small amounts as they will cause stomach aches, however, there are many recipes on the internet for making jelly and pies out of the properly cooked berries. The jelly turns a beautiful magenta color and has a wonderful flavor similar to cherry pie. The next time you are looking for a fall project, consider looking for the Beautyberry and try your hand at making some jelly.



# Reflections from the ESC....

*“Education is for improving the lives of others and for leaving your community and world better than you found it.” —Marian Wright Edelman, an American activist for civil rights and children's rights.*

In keeping with our goal of reducing the amount of pollution in our coastal environment, the Environmental Studies Center (ESC) recently hosted a workshop for our teachers participating in the Sea Grant funded Coastal Ecology classes. The workshop, held at the Mobile Recycling Center, offered the teachers a glimpse of what real time recycling looks like in Mobile County, Alabama and provided some options for teaching students about the problem.

Our focus in the Coastal Ecology classes is specifically the reduction of plastic pollution. In this workshop we modeled ways to reduce the use of plastics. The workshop started with a breakfast provided by the ESC that showcased environmentally friendly alternatives such as water served in aluminum cans, biodegradable paper plates, and compostable utensils. After the meal, Sara Boccoardo, Director of Sustainability at the Mobile County Recycling Center, gave a presentation on how much waste is produced in our county, country, and worldwide. She outlined what types of materials can be recycled and what made an item excluded from the process. After the presentation, teachers were given a tour of the recycling center. They were able to go behind the scenes to see how materials were sorted and packaged to be sent off for recycling.

The afternoon activities included a presentation from Evelyn DeAngelo from the Keep Mobile Beautiful and Love Your Community programs. She outlined how both organizations could be valuable to teachers and their classes by providing ways to promote trash awareness. Don Bates from the Osprey Initiative also spoke to teachers about how the company helps to clean up area waterways and how the data they collect helps to determine the source point of the pollution.

The teachers enjoyed this event and spent time brainstorming ways to start recycling programs within the schools. It was our goal that the pollution awareness presentations and the up-close tour of the recycling process would give the teachers the tools they need to make a difference in the way they discuss the issue of pollution to the students. We firmly believe it is never too early to plant the seeds of better environmental awareness with our students.

As decorated humanitarian and philanthropist Steve Maraboli stated, “What we instill in our children will be the foundation upon which they build their future”. Armed with a proper education, hopefully this future will be one with a lot less trash in the environment.

*Dr. Tracy H. Jay  
Academic Supervisor*





# Art Contest

The annual student art contest winners were announced during the fall semester. Winners are as follows:



Director's Choice  
Jackson Lindman  
Barton Academy

K - 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade  
Division



1<sup>st</sup> Place  
Taylor Conner  
Holloway Elementary



2<sup>nd</sup> Place  
Rosemary Gulley  
Dauphin Island Elementary



3<sup>rd</sup> Place  
Maycee Gage  
Leinkauf Elementary

4<sup>th</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Division



1<sup>st</sup> Place  
Rayne Sheffield  
McDavid Jones Elementary



2<sup>nd</sup> Place  
Timmathy Holliman  
Hollinger's Island Elementary



3<sup>rd</sup> Place  
Gage Ferguson  
Dauphin Island Elementary

6<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Division



1<sup>st</sup> Place  
Bree Levins  
Barton Academy



2<sup>nd</sup> Place  
Lola Fedor  
Barton Academy



3<sup>rd</sup> Place  
Willow Lewis  
Barton Academy

9<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Division



1<sup>st</sup> Place  
Adrianna Benefield  
Theodore High



2<sup>nd</sup> Place  
Lynassia Crumpton  
Montgomery High



3<sup>rd</sup> Place  
Lila Moss  
Montgomery High



NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION'S

# Backyard BIRDS CHECKLIST

See if you can spot these common backyard birds:

**1 AMERICAN CROW**

American Crows will gang up on a predator to chase it away. If you see a mob of crows harassing a larger bird, you might get a glimpse of a hawk or an owl.

**2 AMERICAN GOLDFINCH**

Thistle is an important source of food and nesting material for the American Goldfinch. It can cling to narrow stems and delicate seed heads, sometimes upside down.

**3 AMERICAN ROBIN**

Cocking its head from side to side, the American Robin seems to be listening for worms. Actually it spots them by sight and pulls them from the ground.

**4 BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE**

The Black-capped Chickadee may become quite tame and can learn to eat from your hand. It's named for its call, which sounds like "chick-a-dee."

**5 BLUE JAY**

The Blue Jay can be noisy and aggressive at feeders. It also has a habit of robbing other birds' nests and eating the eggs and young birds.

**6 COMMON GRACKLE**

Though the Common Grackle looks black from a distance, its feathers shimmer in glossy blue, purple, bronze, and green.

**7 DOWNY WOODPECKER**

The Downy Woodpecker is the smallest woodpecker in North America, similar in size to a Chickadee with which it often flocks.

**8 EUROPEAN STARLING**

The most common songbird in North America, the European Starling travels in large groups, often with blackbirds and grackles.

**9 HOUSE SPARROW**

The House Sparrow is a noisy and aggressive bird that will steal nest sites from native hole-nesting birds.

**10 MOURNING DOVE**

The Mourning Dove's wings and tail make a whistling sound during flight, especially when the bird takes off.

**11 NORTHERN CARDINAL**

A male Northern Cardinal will fiercely defend his feeding territory. You may see him fighting his reflection in a car mirror or window, trying to scare off the "other" bird.

**12 RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD**

The male Red-winged Blackbird can hide his red feathers when he searches for food. It eats mostly insects, as many as a trillion a year.

**13 TUFTED TITMOUSE**

The Tufted Titmouse lines its nest with fur, sometimes plucked from living animals.



FROM  
National Wildlife  
Federation's  
**World of Birds**  
(ISBN: 978-1-57912-950-9)  
by Kim Kufki, available  
at bookstores everywhere  
on June 6, 2014.





# *Announcement from the Wildlife Rehabilitation Department*

Friends,

For many years it has been our privilege to serve our community as a federal and state certified wildlife rehabilitation program. This is a job we take very seriously. We operate, as all legally certified rehab programs do, under guidance and permits from the State of Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. We have recently received new directives that will severely limit the types of birds we are able take here at the Center.

This is not specific to the ESC and will affect all wildlife rehab programs in the state.

We ask that you please **CALL BEFORE BRINGING AN ANIMAL**. By calling first, we will be able to save you a trip if warranted. For more information, you can contact the Alabama Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries at 334-242-3469 or 251-626-5474. We will update the public as soon as this changes.

Please share this information. We greatly appreciate your understanding.

Tracy Jay, Director

Susan Clement, Biologist

251-221-5000 x 3





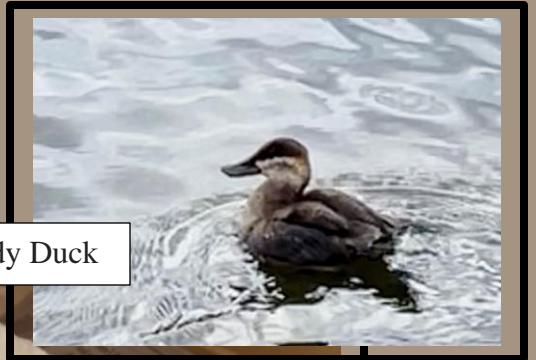
# Recent Patients



Bald Eagle



Belted Kingfisher



Ruddy Duck



Clapper Rail Baby



Northern Flicker Fledgling



Common Tern

# *Gopher Tortoises, Why are They Important?*

The gopher tortoise is a large land turtle that burrows underground. It is the only native North American tortoise species east of the Mississippi River. Gopher tortoises are grayish brown with large flipper like scaled front legs. They have strong toenails used for digging as well as large hind legs used for pushing ahead or pulling back. Their dome shaped shell can grow as large as 15 inches from front to back. Once they reach adulthood, they have very few predators and can live to be over 90 years old.

Gopher Tortoises prefer dry sandy soil that receives lots of sunlight. These turtles dig burrows or dens 20-30 feet long and up to 9 feet deep with a large chamber at the bottom. Gopher tortoises spend at least 80% of their time in their burrows. These burrows provide the tortoise with escape from the summer heat and a location for hibernation in the winter. Gopher tortoises and several other animal species depend on these borrows for protection from predators and escape from the elements. The tortoises are considered keystone species on which other species depend. According to The Nature Conservancy, "At least 300 other species also use their burrows, including rare species such as the Eastern indigo snake, gopher frog, Florida mouse, and hundreds of rodents and invertebrates".

Gopher tortoises live in sandy upland habitats ranging from southeastern South Carolina and Georgia, the peninsula and panhandle of Florida, and the southern parts of Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana. "In Alabama, gopher tortoises are protected by federal and state laws and found in the following counties: Choctaw, Washington, Mobile, Baldwin, Barbour, Bullock, Butler, Clarke, Crenshaw, Coffee, Conecuh, Covington, Dale, Escambia, Geneva, Henry, Houston, Monroe, Montgomery, Pike, and Wilcox. Small populations occur in Autauga and Macon counties where they were introduced by man". (James Altieri, Outdoor Alabama).

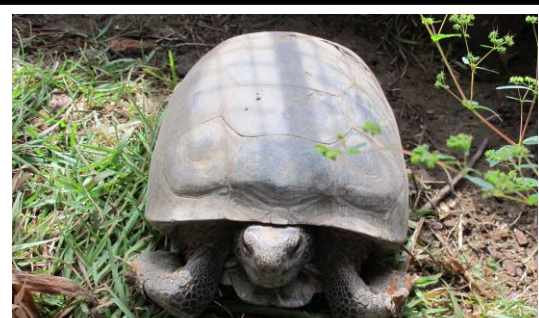
The main threat to gopher tortoises is habitat loss. Today, the Gopher Tortoise is listed as "Threatened" under the Endangered Species Act in the long leaf pine range including parts of Alabama. The habitats they prefer are also preferred by man. Urban development as well as several other factors has caused a decline in Gopher Tortoise habitats. Gopher Tortoises have an outsized impact on their environment. As they are a keystone species, protecting the Gopher Tortoises and their habitat also protects several other species of animals. It is illegal in Alabama to disturb or move a Gopher Tortoise without a permit. Doing so can result in fines up to thousands of dollars. If you do have Gopher Tortoises on your property that need to be moved, you must undertake the process of applying to the United States Fishing and Wildlife Services to obtain a relocation permit. The current price for relocating a turtle is around \$1,300 per tortoise (The Land Journal).

The grounds of the ESC is home to many of these animals. Their burrows can be seen as you drive up the driveway and on the grounds around the building. If it is a sunny day, you may even see them out grazing. They are wonderful animals, and we are grateful to share the land with them.

<https://www.outdooralabama.com/turtles/gopher-tortoise>

<https://www.nature.org/en-us/get-involved/how-to-help/animals-we-protect/gopher-tortoise/>

<https://blog.thelandjournal.net/how-to-deal-with-gopher-tortoises-on-your-property>





# Save the Date...



**Environmental  
STUDIES CENTER**  
6101 Girby Road  
Mobile, AL 36693



Featuring animals  
and exhibits from  
local  
non-profits and  
environmental  
organizations!

## Environmental Fair



**Saturday, March 25<sup>th</sup>**  
**10:00 am – 3:00 pm**

Admission: \$3 per person

Children under 2 free

Cash or check preferred

All proceeds go to the care  
of the animals housed at  
the ESC!



Wildlife of Mobile  
Road Show  
12:30 pm



Tour the grounds,  
walk the trails, and  
visit with resident  
animals!



Park at Burns Middle  
and ride the shuttle



Mobile County  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

251-221-5000

[www.mcpsesc.com](http://www.mcpsesc.com)



Contact us at 251-221-5000  
www.mcpsesc.com

# Come Visit Us...

Open Monday-Friday 8:00 am – 4:00 pm

Individual admission: \$3 per person

Group Tours: Reservations required – Call 251-221-5000 for pricing and availability



The Environmental Studies Center is a natural sciences education facility designed to provide unique learning experiences. In addition, wildlife rehabilitation plays a vital role each day here at the Center. With over 500 acres of rich woodlands, the Center affords teachers, students, and the general public an opportunity to experience firsthand the natural environment. Natural resources include pine and bay forests, swamps, freshwater streams, carnivorous plant bog, and a twenty-acre lake.

Man-made resources include numerous nature trails, covered pavilions, live animal exhibits, pollinator garden, and native plant garden. Indoor facilities include an auditorium, gift shop, and classroom containing live reptile exhibits, a saltwater aquarium, and numerous preserved specimens native to Alabama.

The Environmental Studies Center houses a wildlife rehabilitation program that is dedicated to the care and potential release of injured and orphaned native wildlife. The wildlife rehabilitation program receives around 800 wild patients a year. These animals all need food, care, and shelter to survive. The program relies upon donations from people like you for its operation and success.



**Environmental**  
STUDIES CENTER

6101 Girby Road  
Mobile, Alabama 36693

**Sea Grant**  
Mississippi-Alabama