



# Environmental STUDIES CENTER

## *Wild* **Adventures**

*Fall 2023*



Mobile County  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS



### *Critter Corner* *Meet Mallory*

Mallory is a Cooper's Hawk that was admitted into our wildlife rehabilitation program as a nestling in 2012. She had fallen out of the nest and damaged her left eye. Unfortunately, the eye was so badly damaged that it had to be removed. Considering hawks need both eyes to hunt, she could not be released back into the wild and became part of our permanent exhibits.

Cooper's hawks are in the Accipiter family. These are forest dwelling hawks that are very fast and agile when flying around the trees. They primarily eat birds and because of this, they sometimes hang around bird feeders. We always tell people that if there is a hawk hanging around their bird feeder, remove it for a couple of weeks and the hawk will move on.

Mallory spends her day at the Center in her own, private enclosure near the porch. She spends her nights inside of the Center's animal care room. Be sure to stop by and see Mallory on your next visit.

# Creepy Crawlers at the ESC

On Saturday October 21<sup>st</sup>, we held our Fall Saturday “Creepy Crawley” event. Our turnout was amazing and even better than we expected. The weather was gorgeous which helped to make the event a huge success. This annual event featured our indoor classroom exhibits, outdoor animal exhibits, many walking trails, and a “Creepy Crawly” animal show. We also had the pleasure of having our friends from REACH bring their reptiles and several other animals out to the Center. Visitors were able to view and interact with the animals. Among the animals that REACH featured were a sulcata tortoise, tarantulas, and several venomous snakes. One of the highlights of the event was all our friends that participated by dressing up in their Halloween outfits. Education is the antidote to fear. All creepy crawlers have a place in our ecosystem. This event served as a fun yet educational experience for both children and adults.





# 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: \_\_\_\_\_



## *Vicki will be missed*

Vicki Dykes, our volunteer of over 16 years, passed away on September 30, 2023. She fed the animals, trained new volunteers, and helped at our open houses. One of her favorite activities was walking our Cooper's hawk, Mallory. She was such a valued part of our animal care department and will be greatly missed! We love you Vicki.





# *Reflections from the ESC....*

How effective are high school educators in putting together a remotely operated vehicle (ROV) in 20 minutes? This was just one of the activities and challenges that high school science educators engaged in during a collaborative workshop between Mobile County Public School's Environmental Studies Center (ESC) and Dauphin Island Sea Lab's Discovery Hall Program (DHP). The workshop, held in September, was the initial meeting of educators participating in the ESC's Coastal Ecology program. The goal of the workshop was to provide an opportunity for teachers to engage in a fun and educational day while learning about the opportunities both facilities offer their students.

After learning about the Coastal Ecology programs offered at the ESC and setting their field trip dates, teachers were delighted to get their hands in the sand with DHP's topography and bathymetry interactive modeling sandbox. The ROV activity became quite competitive given the time constraints which made for a fun time by the pool as the vehicles were taken out to test the success of the design. After a great lunch at May's Café, the educators enjoyed a fabulous afternoon aboard DISL's *R/V Alabama Discovery* where DHP staff gave teachers a taste of the experience their students would have aboard the vessel on a field trip.

The opportunity for a collaboration of this nature was an exciting one for these Sea Grant education programs. Since both programs share the same goal of developing an environmentally literate public and work force, to be able to play off the strengths of both programs to provide a wonderful experience for these teachers was invaluable and extremely well received.

"Everyone who remembers his own education remembers teachers, not methods and techniques. The teacher is the heart of the educational system." –Sidney Hook

*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  
Charles Harris VI  
Barton Academy

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



1<sup>st</sup> Place  
Skylie White  
Allentown Elementary



2<sup>nd</sup> Place  
Makenzie Dixon  
Shepard Elementary



3<sup>rd</sup> Place  
Kennedy Norris  
Semmes Elementary

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



1<sup>st</sup> Place  
Hailey Havens  
Collier Elementary



2<sup>nd</sup> Place  
Ashlyn Taylor  
Collier Elementary



3<sup>rd</sup> Place  
Avrielle Reed  
Calcedaever Elementary

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



1<sup>st</sup> Place  
Marley Conner  
Barton Academy



2<sup>nd</sup> Place  
Cecilia Rodriguez  
Barton Academy



3<sup>rd</sup> Place  
Deigan Sanders  
Barton Academy

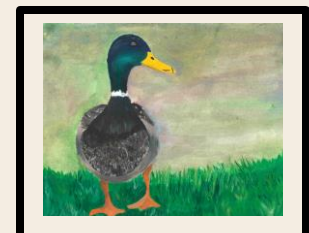
9<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Division



1<sup>st</sup> Place  
McKenzie Wilkerson  
Baker High



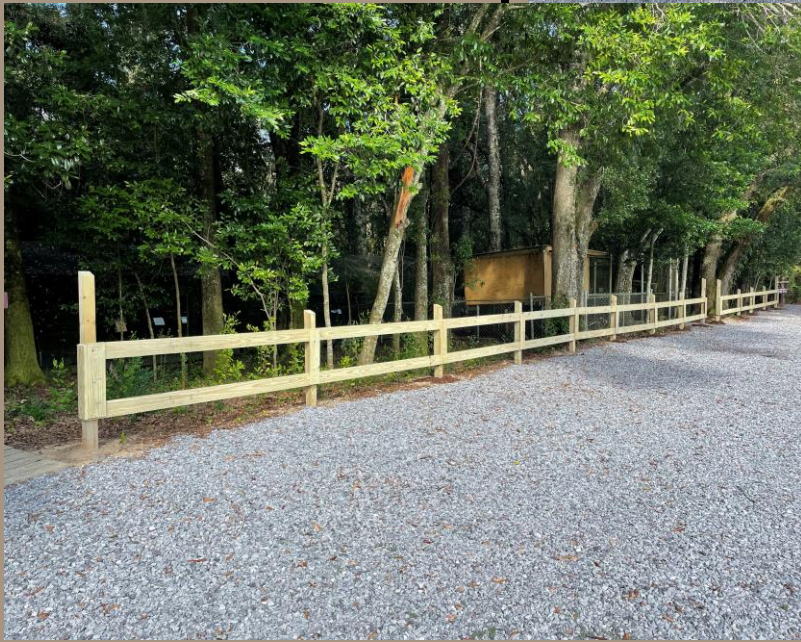
2<sup>nd</sup> Place  
Elisha Brown  
Barton Academy



3<sup>rd</sup> Place  
Jena Sayyard  
Barton Academy



# *Recent Eagle Scout Project*



We would like to thank Ethan Mims for choosing the Environmental Studies Center to carry out his Eagle Scout project. Ethan's project was to replace the fence that is along our parking lot. The old fence was removed first and then it was replaced with new fencing. It looks fantastic. Thanks, Ethan, for doing such a great job! We appreciate it!



# Recent Patients

Nestling Terns



Terns - First day outside



Baby Terns  
2 weeks later

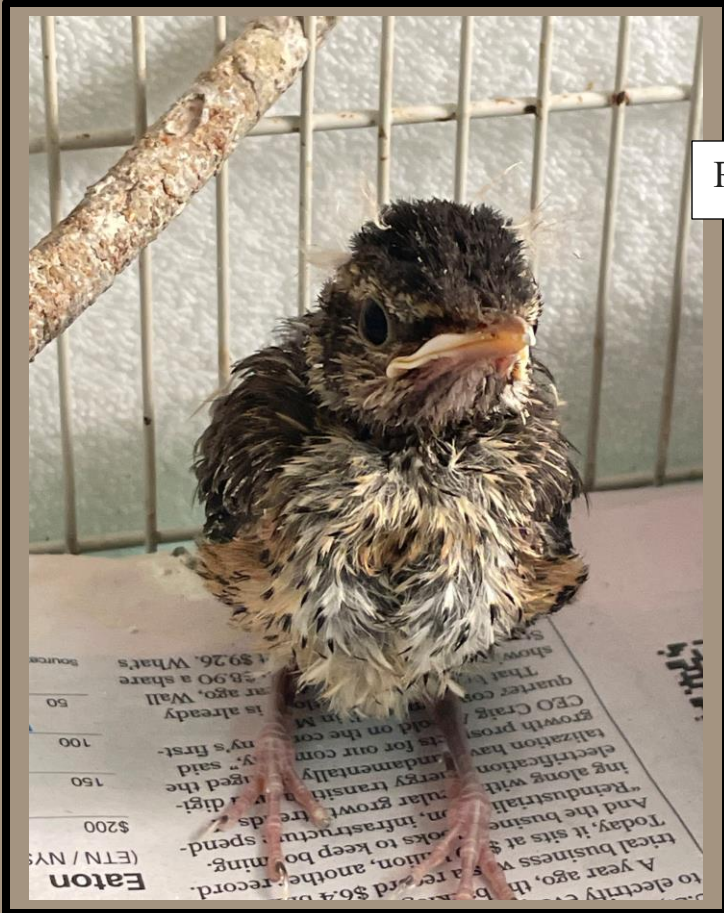


Release Day for  
the Terns





# Recent Patients



Robin Fledgling



Limpkin



Anhinga

# The Importance of Native Plants

Consider the efforts we go to in order to maintain a perfectly manicured lawn. We plant nice, evergreen shrubs that border the house and driveways. We use pesticides to control weeds and unwanted pests along with fertilizers for a rich green lawn. However, most of what we plant is not native and therefore foreign and useless to our native insects. Plants are not optional on this planet. With few exceptions, neither we, nor anything else can survive without them. Plants are the only thing that can capture the sun's energy and convert that energy into food through photosynthesis. Herbivorous insects are key to getting that energy from the 1<sup>st</sup> trophic level to other trophic levels, including us. Without these insects, which are being lost at an alarming rate, the energy transfer cannot take place thus the decline in many other animal species. For instance, 96% of all North American bird species rely on these insects for food. Pulitzer Prize winning author and renowned ecologist E.O. Wilson described insects as the "little things that run the world". Plant eating insects require plants they have co-evolved with. Nonnative or alien plants cannot and do not support insect populations due primarily to the chemical composition in the leaves of alien species. As a result, local extinction is or will become a local problem. For example, as of 2002, Delaware lost 78% of its freshwater mussels, 34% dragonflies, 20% fish species, 31% amphibian and snakes, 40% of all native plants are threatened or extirpated and 41% of bird species are rare or absent. Habitat loss and destruction, combined with the use and spread of nonnative plants, contributes to, and accelerates the loss of diversity.

We cannot keep taking space without giving something back and the solution is easy---design our living spaces to accommodate diversity through native plants. The biomass produced through native plants far outweighs that of nonnatives.

| REFERENCE: NATIVE WOODY PLANTS RANKED BY ABILITY TO SUPPORT LEPIDOPTERA SPECIES |             |                   |
|---|-------------|-------------------|
| COMMON NAME   | PLANT GENUS | SPECIES SUPPORTED |
| OAK   | QUERCUS     | 534               |
| WILLOW  | SALIX       | 456               |
| CHERRY/PLUM   | PRUNUS      | 456               |
| BIRCH   | BETULA      | 413               |
| POPLAR  | POPULAS     | 368               |
| CRABAPPLE   | MALUS       | 311               |
| BLUEBERRY   | VACCINIUM   | 288               |
| MAPLE   | ACER        | 285               |
| PINE  | PINUS       | 203               |
| HICKORY   | CARYA       | 200               |

| COMPARISON OF HOSTING CAPACITY OF SOME ALIEN PLANTS INTRODUCED TO NORTH AMERICA |                                  |                                       |                          |                                |
|---|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|
| COMMON NAME   | HERBIVORES SUPPORTED IN HOMELAND | HERBIVORES SUPPORTED IN NORTH AMERICA | YEARS SINCE INTRODUCTION | REFERENCE                      |
| OLD MAN'S BEARD   | 40                               | 1                                     | 100                      | Macfarlane & van den Ende 1995 |
| EUCALYPTUS (Black Sally)  | 48                               | 1                                     | 100                      | Morrow & La Marche 1978        |
| PAPER BARK TREE   | 409                              | 8                                     | 120                      | Costella et al. 1995           |
| PRICKLY PEAR CACTUS   | 16                               | 0                                     | 250                      | Annecke & Moran 1978           |
| PHRAGMITES (Common reed)  | 170                              | 5                                     | 300+                     | Tewsberry et al. 2002          |
| LIGUSTRUM (Privet)  | unknown                          | 1                                     | 250+                     | USDA                           |

REFERENCE: Tallamy D. W. (2009) *Bringing Nature Home* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition)



# Save the Date...



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



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



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

## Environmental Fair



**Saturday, March 16<sup>th</sup>**  
**10:00 am – 2:00 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!



Raptor Road Show  
12:00 pm



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