



Environmental STUDIES CENTER

Wild **Adventures**

FALL 2021



Mobile County
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Critter Corner *From Jasper to Jessie*

Jasper, the great-horned owl, came to the Center in the spring of 2000 after he was hit by a car. He had a broken wing and some head trauma. After he healed from his injuries, he was found to be unreleasable and he became an educational animal at the Center. When the Raptor Road Show was created in 2011, he became one of the first birds trained for the show and the mascot for the Center. Earlier this year, Jasper started developing arthritis in one of his feet. Because of the arthritis, it became difficult for him to hold onto the glove and it was determined that it was time for Jasper to retire. Jasper's final program was at the Alabama Bird Festival on October 9. Jasper is now off exhibit in a special retirement cage.

Jessie, the great-horned owl, came to the Center in 2013 with a wing injury. We started training her for the Raptor Road Show several months ago. She had her program debut on October 18 and did a wonderful job. She takes over for Jasper as the ESC mascot.

Great-horned owls are the largest owls found in Alabama. They get their name from the hornlike tufts of feathers on their head. They eat rats and mice along with other small mammals.

Happy retirement Jasper and welcome to the program Jessie!

Jasper



Jessie



Alligator Exhibit Improvements

This year, major improvements were made to our alligator exhibit with funds from the Mary Josephine Larkins Foundation and donations made in the memory of Katie McCreadie. The exhibit was expanded by adding more area to the inside and adding an inside gate that could be used to keep Delta on one side of the exhibit or the other if needed. In addition, perimeter fencing was added to the exhibit. The other improvement was to the pond. The old, broken plaster was removed and then new plaster was installed. The exhibit looks amazing now and Delta is very pleased! Thank you to everyone who made this possible.



Wildlife Wish List

Clip-on clamp lamp	1 cc and 3cc syringes	Chicken vegetable baby food
Pine bark mulch	Pine shavings (for cages)	Canned dog and cat food
Cages	Dried whole corn	Frozen mixed vegetables
Baled hay	Nuts (in shell)	Fresh fruits and vegetables
Liquid laundry soap	Bleach	Raw peanuts (in shell)
Liquid dishwasher soap	Paper towels	Canned sardines in water
Wal-Mart gift cards	Newspaper	Dry dog food (small bites)
60-watt light bulbs	Cheerios	Unsalted sunflower seeds
Scrub brushes	Dawn dish soap	Non-automatic shut off heating pads
Cash	Raw peanuts (in shell)	
Wild birdseed	Scratch feed	
Small frozen fish	60 watt incandescent light bulbs	

Wildlife Adoptions

For a \$25 annual donation, you can help with the feeding, care, and shelter of one of the native wildlife housed here at the Environmental Studies Center. Not only can you adopt an animal for yourself but, you can give an adoption as a gift. Adoption benefits include: photograph of your animal, plaque on the exhibit recognizing your adoption, and Environmental Studies Center e-newsletter.

Complete the information below and mail it to the Center with your payment. Make checks payable to the Environmental Studies Center.

Animal Adoption

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____

Zip Code: _____ Phone: _____

Email Address: _____

Please choose one: ☐ Raccoon ☐ Deer ☐ Pelican ☐ Seagull ☐ Alligator

☐ Barn Owl ☐ Canada Goose ☐ Black Vulture ☐ Turkey ☐ Coyote

☐ Red-Tail Hawk ☐ Bald Eagle ☐ Skunk ☐ Turkey Vulture ☐ Screech Owl

☐ Barred Owl ☐ Great-Horned Owl ☐ Great Blue Heron ☐ Other: _____



Imagine a World Where...

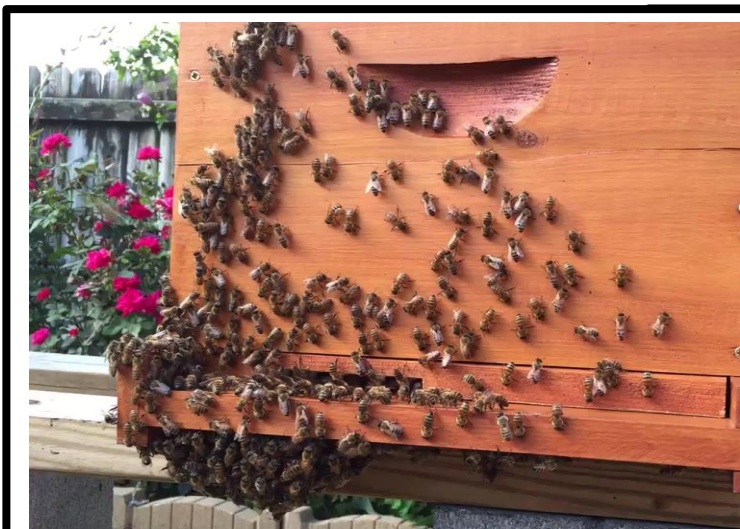
It is no secret that here at the ESC we are very fond of our honey bees. One of our goals is to make every citizen aware that bees are essential to the health of our planet. In addition to the health benefits of the honey, and even venom they produce, they play a vital role in our food production. They are the most dominant pollinators of wild plants and crop plants. Without them, much of the fruit, nuts, and vegetables we enjoy would not be available.

Bees are very productive and efficient at what they do and could not do it without some sort of organization. Bees belong to a group of insects known as social insects. This means they are divided into castes which includes the queen, sterile workers, and drones. They are unique in there are different generations of bees all living together in harmony and each with a specific purpose. Each bee has its own unique job to do and every job is designed for the greatest good of the entire hive.

The division of labor make these insects so important as it relates to the health of the colony. The workers are almost entirely responsible for the long-term success of the colony through their various activities and duties. This includes taking care of the larva, cooling and heating the hive, housekeeping, removing sick and dead bees, guarding the hive and bringing in resources such as nectar, pollen, and water. It is in the DNA of the bee to provide for the entire colony without concern for self. In fact, if the bees within the colony only considered themselves and not the needs of the colony, then they would all die. A worker honey bee will even sacrifice its own life to ensure the survival of the colony.

Imagine if we lived in a world where we considered how our actions, decisions, and attitude affected those around us. Imagine if everything we did was to the benefit of everyone in the “colony” that is our planet and not just ourselves. If we lived our lives with the same attitude and determination that social insects such as honey bees do, then society and the world in general would be much better off. We have so much to learn from honeybees.

If an insect can figure this out, why can't we?



Reflections from the ESC....

In 1625, philosopher and statesman, Sir Francis Bacon, published a group of essays. In one of the essays he retold the story of Mohammed, the founder of the Islamic religion. Out of this story came a famous quote, "If the mountain won't come to Mohammed, Mohammed must go to the mountain." This proverbial phrase can be interpreted as if one's will cannot prevail, then one must search out and submit to an alternative. This idea has certainly been prevalent at the Environmental Studies Center (ESC) and has guided our instruction this year.

The 2020-2021 school year was certainly a difficult one at the Center with our doors and gates being closed for over nine months due to the COVID 19 pandemic. Students were sent home and much of the school year was virtual instruction. We eagerly anticipated the 2021-2022 school year only to be faced with the Delta variant of COVID. Despite this new threat, the goal of the school system is to keep students in school rather than go virtual. As an extra layer of security, most principals have elected to restrict students from attending field trips. While we were sorely disappointed in these decisions, we certainly understand the need to keep students safe and support the decisions of the administrators.

As a result of these unusual circumstances, the staff of the ESC had some crucial discussions on how we could best continue to serve our students and teachers without involving more screen time. We firmly believe that in order to begin to value our planet and its inhabitants, students must be fully engaged and that is difficult behind a computer. As a result, we modified our programming to include programs we can take directly to the students in the schools.

The ESC offers five outreach programs to public, private, and parochial schools. These programs are also available for civic groups and other organizations. They include, The Raptor Road Show, The Wildlife of Mobile Road Show, The Remarkable Reptile Road Show, The Nocturnal Animal Road Show, and The Honey and Hives Road Show. In addition, we can customize any of our regular on-site programs to meet the needs of the teachers at the schools.

We are so grateful to report the outreach programs are well received by the students. We function best outdoors so many of these programs are held outside where social distancing can be maximized. The teacher response has been positive, and they seem to appreciate the new programming.

We recently had the opportunity to hear Cade Kistler, the Interim Director for Mobile Baykeeper, speak at one of our teacher professional developments. He noted that regarding our local ecosystem, "With great biodiversity comes great responsibility". This really resonated as one of our primary goals is to empower students to make choices as adults that make the most sense for the environment. We are so grateful that we have been given the opportunity to go to the mountain and continue to serve our students and teachers in this new and exciting way.

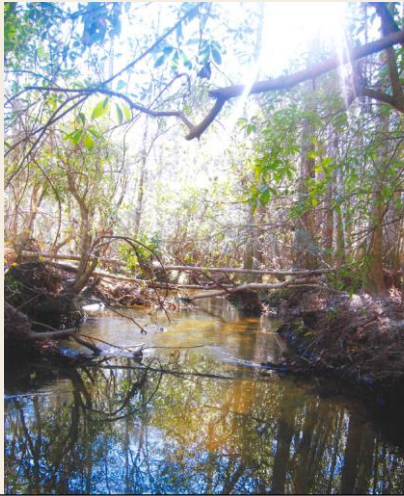
Dr. Tracy H. Jay
Academic Supervisor



2021 Wild Mobile Photography Contest

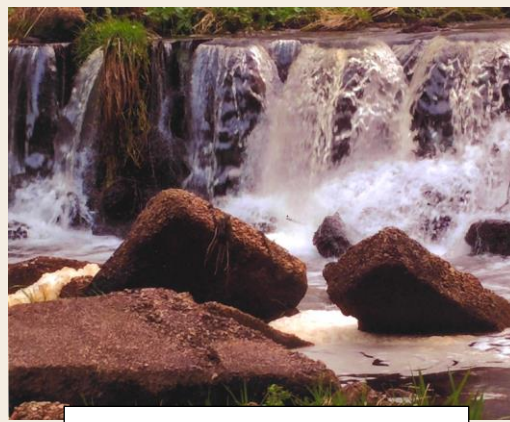
The annual student photography contest winners were announced during the spring semester. Winners are as follows:

K – 2nd Grade Division



John Mark Dunn
St. Dominic Catholic School

6th – 8th Grade Division



Douglas Chestang
Phillips Preparatory

Honorable Mention



Marley Davis
Phillips Preparatory

3rd – 5th Grade Division



Abigail Healy
Griggs Elementary

9th – 12th Grade Division



Britney Wilks
Baker High

Recent Eagle Scout Project

We would like to thank Grant Foster for choosing the Environmental Studies Center to do his Eagle Scout project. He rebuilt the amphitheater stage and railings in July. The amphitheater overlooks the lake and is used for outdoor programs. It looks fantastic now. We appreciate the time and work it took to do this project. We are grateful for you!



Uncommon Patients



Magnificent Frigate Bird



Sooty Tern

Brown Noddy



Purple Gallinule

Out with the Old...In with the New Pollinator Garden

Have you visited the ESC recently? If you have, you most certainly noticed all the improvements that have been made on our grounds over the last year. One of the most noticeable is located immediately off the front porch of our main building. Our old butterfly garden is gone and it has been replaced with a brand new pollinator garden. This needed improvement was possible through a grant from the F. Allen and Louis K. Turner Foundation. The Foundation has been so good to the ESC over the years. They have contributed to many different projects. This garden is the most recent contribution from the Foundation. We have honored the Foundation by naming this garden the “F. Allen and Louise K. Turner Foundation Pollinator Garden”. Every plant in the garden has been chosen carefully because of its importance to the

pollinators that live around us. We hope you get a chance soon to search for pollinators in the new garden.



New High School Program has a Focus on Water Pollution

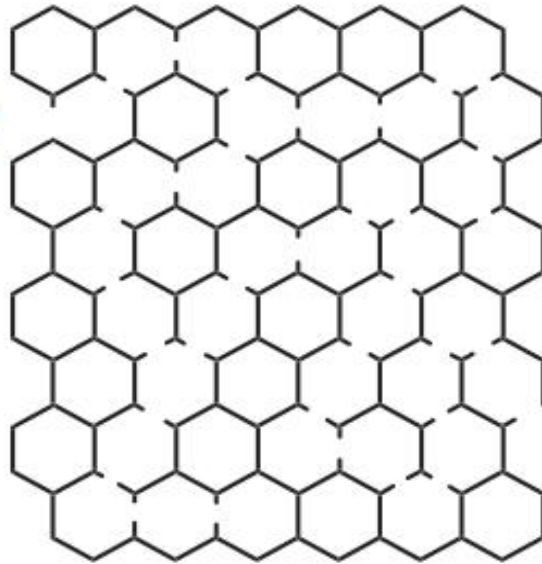
High school students visiting the Environmental Studies Center this school year will get to experience a new environmental program. Our new Coastal Ecology II program is currently being implemented this fall semester. We are excited to feature this programming as an extension of our already successful Coastal Ecology I program. Like Coastal Ecology I, our new program will receive funding from the Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium. The focus of our Coastal Ecology II program is on water pollution with an emphasis on microplastics. Microplastics are small plastic pieces that are less than 5 mm in length. These pieces can be found in the environment as a result of plastic pollution. Students will have the opportunity to tour our watershed to see where the water goes beyond our lake in order to gain an understanding of how a watershed works and why pollution is so destructive. Students are also able to test various water samples from the Mobile area to filter out and observe microplastics in these water sources. We then discuss the harm these microplastics cause. With water pollution remaining as a top environmental concern, we wanted to bring awareness and discuss possible prevention with our students. The classes that we have seen so far this year really seemed to enjoy our new program.



Fun for our young reader!

Back to the hive

Can you help this bee get back to the honeycomb through the maze?



honeycomb

Food in nature

Can you name the natural food sources on the top row and the foods on the bottom row? Then draw a line to show which are connected. One has been done for you.



maize



cooking oil



Activity courtesy of toddleabout.co.uk and the Nature Activity Book.

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, butterfly 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.



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