



Environmental STUDIES CENTER

Wild **Adventures**

Spring 2023



Mobile County
PUBLIC SCHOOLS



Critter Corner

Meet Wakulla

Wakulla, the bald eagle, came to the Environmental Studies Center in March of 2022 from Wakulla Springs, Florida. He was brought to the Florida Wild Mammal Association Rehabilitation Center in March of 2021 as a young bird that had been hit by a car. He was around 4 months old and had a badly broken wing. He could not be released because of the wing damage.

As you can see from the photo, young bald eagles do not have a white head. They get their white heads at around 5 years of age. Wakulla is 2 ½ years old now. Not only does their feather color change as they age, so does their beak and eye color. Wakulla will eventually have a gold beak and gold eyes.

We would love for you to come out and see Wakulla. He is housed with River, our 10-year-old bald eagle. You will be able to see the difference between a mature and immature bald eagle by comparing the two of them.

Illegal Trading of Diamondback Terrapins

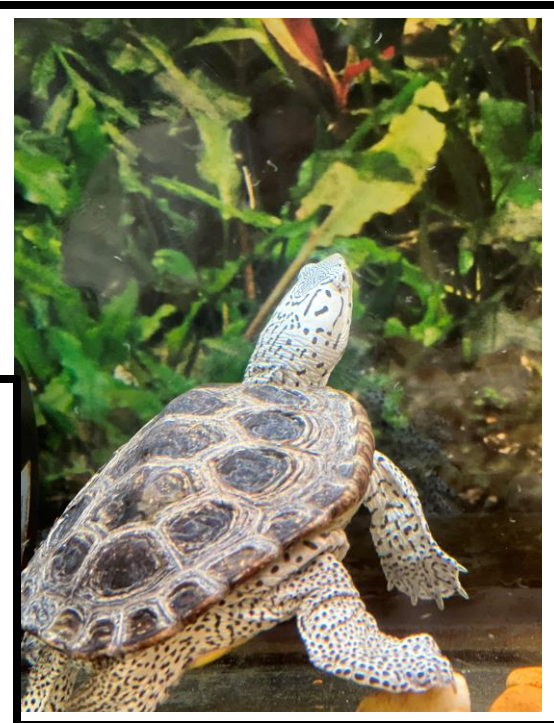
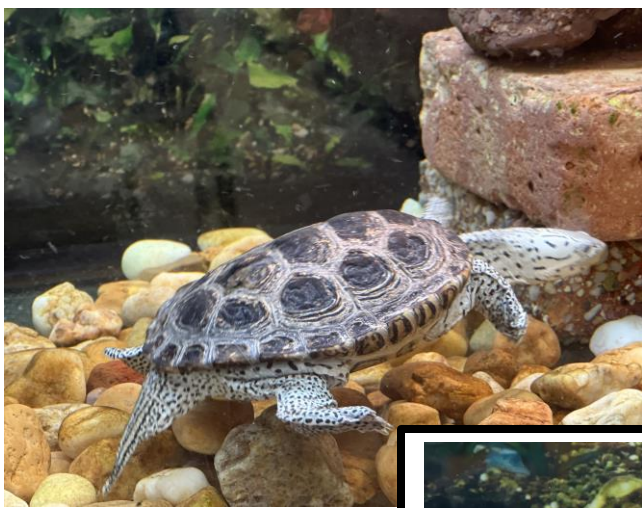
The diamondback terrapin turtle is a unique species of turtle. They are the only turtles in the U.S. that live entirely in brackish saltwater wetlands and coastal bays. This type of turtle is important to these brackish water wetland ecosystems because they are a keystone species. Diamondback terrapins are medium sized with a distinguished pattern on their shell with concentric rings and a “diamond like” pattern. Their skin is often grey or pale white with black spots. The female terrapin is usually larger than the males with an average length of 12 inches. In the wild, terrapins usually live for about 25 years but in captivity these beautiful creatures can live up to 40 years. The typical diet of a terrapin consists of snails, crabs, mussels, and plants. The boney plates in their upper and lower jaws allow them to be able to crush the shells of snails and crabs. Since terrapins are attracted to the same bait used to lure crabs to a crab trap, they are also sometimes caught in these traps. These terrapins are air breathing animals and are unable to get out and as a result often drown. Habitat loss is also another common threat to these diamondback terrapins.

One of the most surprising threats to the diamondback terrapins though is illegal capturing and trading. The unique coloring and friendly temperament of these animals makes it a very desirable pet. In the last few years, wildlife officials along the U.S. coast have apprehended poachers illegally capturing wild terrapins for commercial trade. In 2020, investigators in the U.S. busted an international diamondback terrapin smuggling ring in which 1,500 terrapins were being smuggled to China. They were valued at more than 2.2 million dollars. Not only are these turtles being captured and sold in the pet trade, but they are also being sold in markets for their meat. In some countries, turtle meat is a prized food. “The turtle, which is an Asian icon of longevity, happiness and wisdom, is now being annihilated and headed toward extinction in Asia” (<https://www.savecoastalwildlife.org/save-diamondback-terrapins>). Since the turtle populations in some countries have been exhausted, poachers are turning to the U.S. to meet these demands. Due to this, the diamondback terrapin is listed as an endangered species in Rhode Island, a threatened species in Massachusetts and is considered a "species of concern" in Georgia, Delaware, Alabama, Louisiana, North Carolina, and Virginia.

<https://myfwc.com/wildlifehabitats/profiles/reptiles/freshwater-turtles/diamondback-terrapin/>

https://www.vims.edu/research/units/legacy/sea_turtle/va_sea_turtles/terps.php

<https://biologicaldiversity.org/w/news/press-releases/diamondback-terrapin-among-10-species-threatened-wildlife-trade-2020-12-18/>



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)
60-watt light bulbs	Plastic wrap	Unsalted sunflower seeds
Scrub brushes	Dawn dish soap	Canned sardines in water
Cash	Animal crackers	Canned dog and cat food
Wild Birdseed	Scratch Feed	Cheerios
Small frozen fish		

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: adoption certificate, photograph of your animal, fact sheet about the species, recognition of your adoption on the exhibit, 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 Great Blue Heron Seagull Alligator

Barn Owl Canada Goose Black Vulture Great-Horned Owl Barred Owl

Red-Tail Hawk Bald Eagle Brown Pelican White Pelican Screech Owl

Other: _____

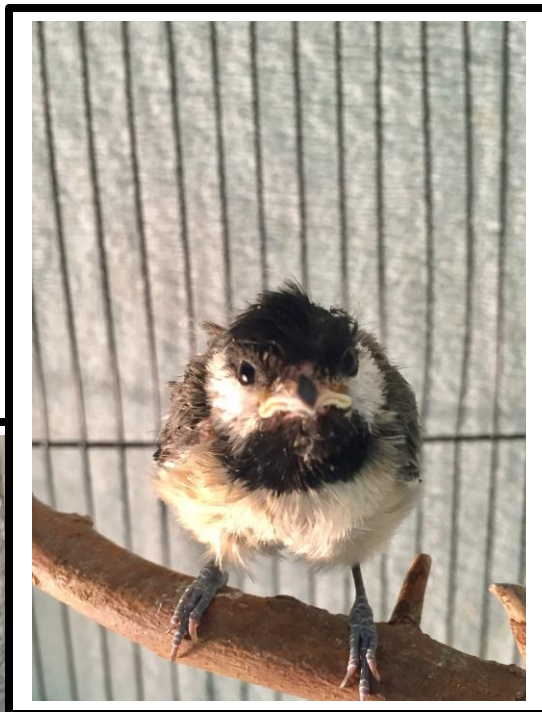


Wildlife Rehabilitation Department is

Back to Normal!

For several months we were limited to the types of birds we could rehabilitate by order of the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. The order was lifted on April 1, 2023, and we are now allowed to take in all species of migratory birds again.

Please contact the Center before bringing in any bird though. It is baby season and most of the time babies do not need to be brought to us. We don't want you to waste a trip to the Center if the bird does not need to be brought in for care. For further information call us at 251-221-5000, ext. 3.



Reflections from the ESC....

Despite an early threat of rain, the day turned out pretty and unusually warm for a March afternoon. On one side of the campus children played in a “mud kitchen” where mudpies were top of the menu. On the other side of the campus, a red-faced little boy pulled his mother’s hand eager to get to the shark specimen on display. In the cool of the building, an adult was getting guidance on how to care for his newly acquired reptile. On the trails, another family was pretending to be on safari with the children on the search for a wild animal sighting.

All of this occurred as a part of the Environmental Studies Center’s 2023 Environmental Fair. The ESC was joined at the event by several of our Sea Grant colleagues from Mississippi State University, The University of Southern Mississippi, the Marine Education Center, and the Discovery Hall Program of the Dauphin Island Sea Lab. These exhibitors had several different displays regarding the work they do here along the coast in education. They were very popular with the guests.

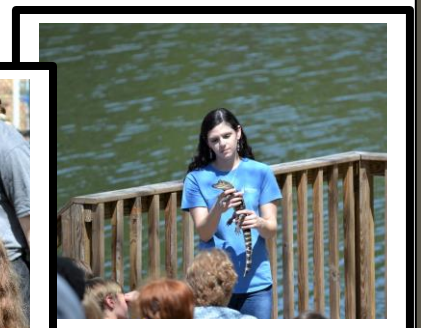
The event served to provide awareness of our native environment living here on the northern gulf coast. Along with exhibits of native reptiles, bats, and other marine life, the ESC hosted an open beehive exhibit which allowed the participants to see the inner workings of a beehive safely. An outreach show called “Wildlife of Mobile” was also presented to guests showcasing various animals in the area including our native reptiles and raptors. The ESC’s mascot, great horned owl Jessie, made an appearance as did the fan favorite bald eagle, Leuco. Other exhibits included programs designed to get children outside to play and local vendors of earth based organic products.

Over 400 participants joined the ESC on that day. It is the biggest fundraiser of the year, and we were grateful for all the participants and those who came to support us as exhibitors. We were especially glad to be able to showcase our Sea Grant colleagues and the great things they do in their programs.

Catholic priest and cultural historian Thomas Berry stated, “Teaching children about the natural world should be seen as one of the most important events in their lives.” We completely agree.

It is the goal of the Environmental Studies Center to be a place where children of all ages can come and learn about the ecosystems around them. The annual Environmental Fair is one of our favorite ways to engage our community and hopefully foster in our guests a love of the outdoors and therefore the need to protect it. The next weekend event is scheduled for October and the next Environmental Fair is scheduled for March of 2024.

Dr. Tracy H. Jay
Academic Supervisor



Recent Patients

Nesting Barred Owl



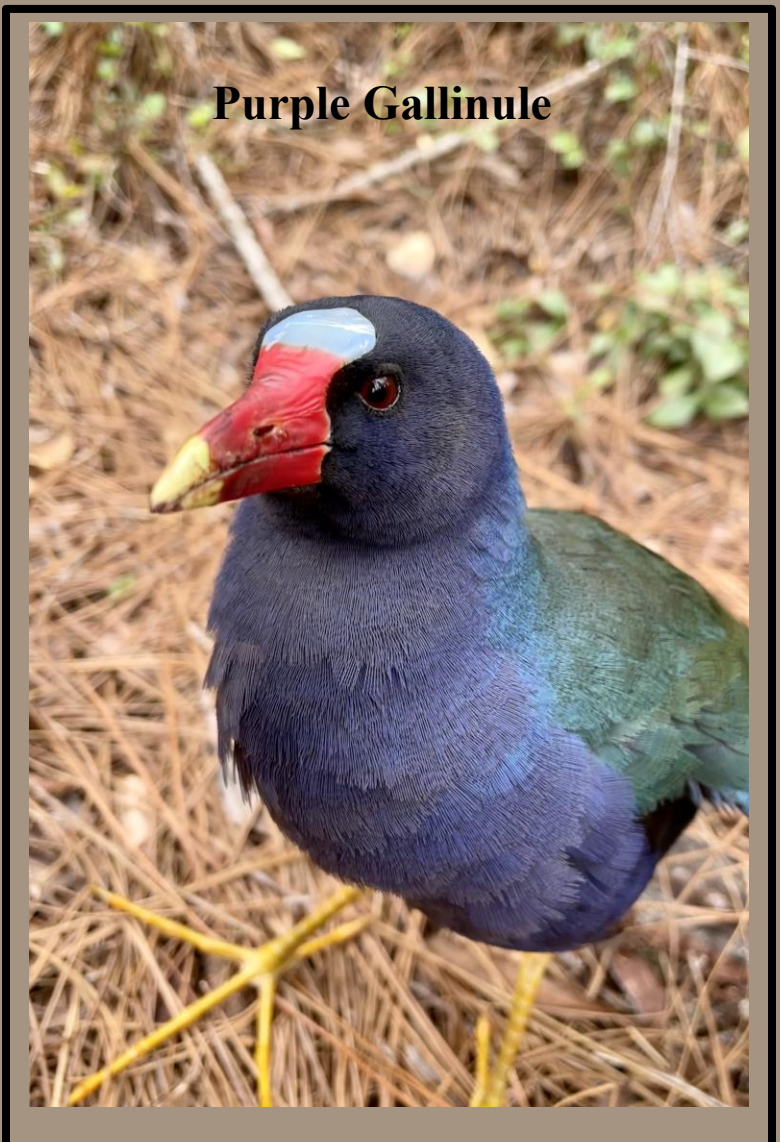
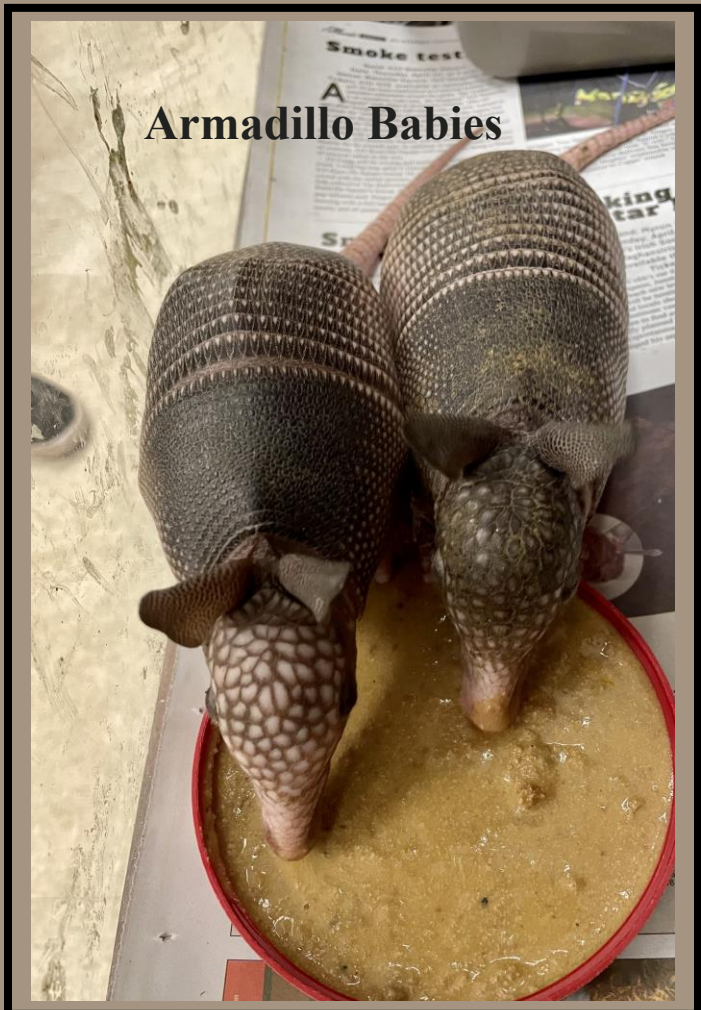
Screech Owl



Yellow Bellied Sapsucker



Recent Patients



The Gum Pond

The Gum Pond is one of several different habitats found at the Environmental Studies Center. It's named after the many Sweet Gum and Black Gum trees scattered throughout the area. The Gum Pond is a vernal pool rather than a true pond.

Vernal pools, also called ephemeral or seasonal ponds, are relatively small, temporary, isolated water bodies that form in woodland depressions when the spring rains come. These temporary bodies of water provide breeding habitats for amphibians (frogs and salamanders), and macroinvertebrates (insects and crustaceans). Animals that inhabit these pools are free from fish predators.

Vernal pools are hotspots of life and biodiversity. Certain species of amphibians and crustaceans need vernal pools to complete their lifecycles. Although they spend most of their lives on dry land, these species would not be able to survive without mating, laying eggs and developing in vernal pools. For that reason, they are called “obligate” species, meaning they are required — or obligated — to use a vernal pool. Other species like spring peepers, turtles, dragonflies, and caddisflies use vernal pools but can also survive in other wetlands. The animal life in vernal pools is also a food source for predators, including great blue herons, racoons, and insects.

The greatest threat to vernal pools is habitat destruction in the form of land development. These areas are filled in and paved over for buildings, parking lots, etc. thereby eliminating a vital breeding ground to some of the most environmentally sensitive animals in our area.

The next time you are at the Environmental Studies Center, be sure to walk the trails and visit our Gum Pond, pitcher plant bog, and other sensitive areas along the way.

<https://www.naturalheritage.state.pa.us/vernalpools.aspx>



2022 Patients

BIRDS

Common Name	Total # Received	Common Name	Total # Received
Bald Eagle	4	Red-bellied Woodpecker	2
American Coot	3	Red-headed Woodpecker	1
American Crow	1	Red-shouldered Hawk	4
American Goldfinch	1	Red-tailed Hawk	3
American Kestrel	1	Red-winged Blackbird	5
American Robin	1	Rose-breasted Grosbeak	1
Barred Owl	12	Royal Tern	2
Belted Kingfisher	1	Ruby-throated Hummingbird	5
Black Vulture	1	Ruddy Duck	1
Blue Jay	3	Rufous-sided Towhee	1
Broad-winged Hawk	2	Sora	2
Brown Pelican	6	Tricolored Heron	1
Brown Thrasher	4	Tufted Titmouse	2
Canada Goose	2	Turkey Vulture	2
Carolina Wren	5	Virginia Rail	1
Cedar Waxwing	2	White-winged Dove	2
Chimney Swift	1	Wood Duck	9
Chipping Sparrow	4	Wood Thrush	4
Common Loon	2	Yellow-crowned Night Heron	1
Common Nighthawk	2	Yellow-rumped Warbler	3
Common Yellowthroat	1	Non-Migratory Birds	12
Cooper's Hawk	1	Bird Total	222
Double-crested Cormorant	1		
Downy Woodpecker	1	MAMMALS	
Eastern Bluebird	4	Common Name	Total # Received
Eastern Screech Owl	2	Cottontail Rabbit	21
Great Blue Heron	4	Opossum	174
Great Crested Flycatcher	2	Mammal Total	195
Great Egret	1		
Great Horned Owl	2	REPTILES	
Herring Gull	2	Common Name	Total # Received
House Finch	2	Aquatic Turtles	11
Kentucky Warbler	3	Box Turtle	70
Laughing Gull	22	Non-venomous Snakes	2
Least Tern	2	Reptile Total	83
Mallard	2		
Mississippi Kite	4	GRAND TOTAL	500
Mourning Dove	15		
Northern Bobwhite	1		
Northern Cardinal	14		
Northern Gannet	2		
Northern Mockingbird	5		
Osprey	2		
Ovenbird	1		
Painted Bunting	1		
Pileated Woodpecker	1		
Purple Gallinule	1		
Purple Martin	1		

Summer Activities at the ESC



Environmental STUDIES CENTER
6101 Girby Road
Mobile, Alabama 36693

*\$75 for parent & child
\$50 for each additional child
in this class.*

June 13-15
Or
July 25-27
9 am - 11 am


Little Animal Explorers

Parent & Me Class for
Preschool Children



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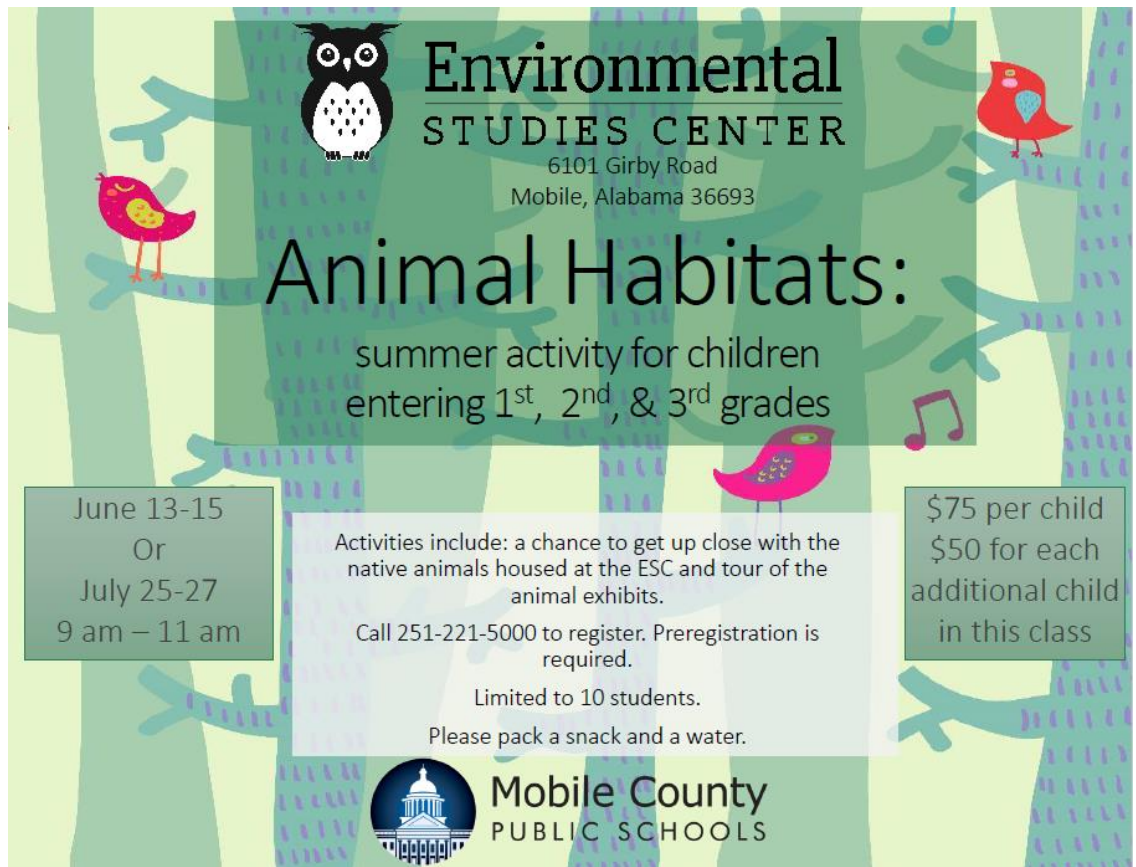
*Exploring different animals each day.
Topics include: Farm Animals, Ocean Animals, and Woodland Animals.
Students must be 3, 4, or 5 by August 1st to participate. Parent or responsible adult must accompany the child. Call 251-221-5000 to register. Classes are limited to 10 children.
Please pack a snack and a water.*



Environmental STUDIES CENTER
6101 Girby Road
Mobile, Alabama 36693

Animal Habitats:


summer activity for children
entering 1st, 2nd, & 3rd grades



June 13-15
Or
July 25-27
9 am - 11 am

Activities include: a chance to get up close with the native animals housed at the ESC and tour of the animal exhibits.
Call 251-221-5000 to register. Preregistration is required.
Limited to 10 students.
Please pack a snack and a water.

*\$75 per child
\$50 for each additional child
in this class*



Mobile County
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Rabies & Nail Clipping Clinic

Benefiting the Environmental Studies Center's
wildlife rehabilitation program.

Saturday, June 3
1:00 – 5:00

Griggs Elementary School
6001 Three Notch Kroner Road

\$10.00 per rabies shot

\$10.00 for toenail trimming

Cash or check only

For more information call: 221-5000



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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Sea Grant
Mississippi-Alabama