



The Delta News

5 Rivers Delta Resource Center



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Your Delta Fun Fact for the Month:

River Otters are known for their playfulness underwater, but did you know they like to play on land as well? They sure do. They run a few steps and then slide on their bellies. One slide can be as long as 20 feet!



What's Happening in the Delta this Month!

The Bartram Canoe Trail is 200 miles of wandering water trails, and is a wonderful way to explore the Delta. With day-use trails and overnight trails, you can spend as much time as you want adventuring through the swamp. New land-based campsites are being added at Jacintoport, so keep your eyes peeled for

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Enjoy a Saturday Adventure!

Many have stopped in and asked what is becoming of the space that used to house the Cypress Gift Shop. It's a continuing work in progress, but we are converting the former retail space into an education and exhibit room for programs such as our **Saturday Adventure Series** and other delta related exhibits. We have been itching to put this space to work! Our Saturday Adventure Series kicks off this month with classes on **Predators and Tracking**, and our newest topic, **Fishy Business**. These classes are great for students who want to get an up-close look



Educator Shonda Borden helps a student identify a bird during Fun with Feathered Friends.

and a hands-on learning experience of what nature and the delta has to offer. Our fish class will even give students the chance to toss a cast net off the back deck to see what kinds of critters may be lurking under our docks! We are extremely excited to be adding to our education programming our new **"Growing Up Wild"** series for preschoolers. These programs begin in March, and are geared toward teaching our little ones about all the wonderful things found in nature through songs, games, and crafts. We'll cover



Fairhope Artist Ricky Trione teaching students to paint with their senses during the Alabama Turtles class.

everything from birds to fish to camouflage! We didn't forget the adults when it comes to our Saturday Adventure Series. In the upcoming months, there will be plenty of guest speakers and topics that range from the history of Mardi Gras in Mobile to the history of Native Americans in our area. Best of all, most of our Saturday Adventures are **FREE**, and everyone is welcome to join. To see what events we have upcoming, check us out on **Facebook**, visit us online at www.Alabama5Rivers.com or give us a call at **251-625-0814**. We hope you and your family and friends come out to join us as we find your adventure and explore your delta!

Watchable Wildlife: Painted Buntings

Passerina ciris

It has been called the most spectacular and gaudy songbird North America. The Painted Bunting, who is a member of the cardinal family, can be easily spotted while resting on hedges in yards and in scattered thickets because of its bright red, green, and blue feathers. Like many other birds, only the males have such striking feathers. The females are considerably duller. The female will have only bright olive green and yellow feathers, making her a little bit harder to spot than her counterpart.

When it comes to eating, Painted Buntings will gather insects, insect larvae, and even spiders during the spring and summer months. They have even been known to pick bugs out of a spider's web. In the fall and winter, the Painted Bunting becomes a seed eater. The males are very territorial and very aggressive.



Male Painted Bunting

Unfortunately, these beautiful birds have become a conservation concern. It is not known exactly why the bird populations have declined, but many believe it is due to destruction of their habitat, as well as being caught in Mexico for the caged bird market. Several groups have become dedicated to watching and protecting the Painted Bunting, such as the Painted Bunting Observer Team. This group of everyday people observes and catalogs sightings of the bird which helps ornithologists better understand the species and what is causing their decline.

Here at 5 Rivers, we have spotted the Painted Buntings in our woods. Stop by for an afternoon stroll to see if you can catch a glimpse of this striking bird before it makes its way back to its summer home.



Male Painted Bunting enjoying seeds for dinner.

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When it comes to defending territory they have already claimed, male Painted Buntings will flap their wings, peck and grabble, drawing blood from their opponent, and sometimes even causing death.

For us, spotting Painted Buntings is not something we can do all year round. They spend their summers along the Atlantic Coast from the Carolinas to Florida. When winter comes, they migrate to Mexico to keep warm. This time of year though, they are making their way back to their summer homes and stopping in our area for a break before they continue on their way. If you are interested in trying to entice the Painted Bunting to your yard, put white millet in your feeder, which is the round seed found in basic seed mix. This is the seed they prefer. They are shy when it comes to larger birds, so consider feeders that allow small birds in, but keep larger birds out.



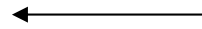
Female Painted Bunting

Mirror, Mirror on the wall... who's the fairest of them all?

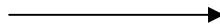
Loretta Vs. Heidi



Our own
Lovable Loretta



Germany's
Cross-eyed
Heidi



You might have heard of a certain opossum named Heidi who is gaining notoriety from a German zoo in Leipzig. Heidi has become an overnight success because of her cross-eyed cuteness. She even has a stuffed animal being made in her likeness! Here at 5 Rivers, we did not want our cute cross-eyed opossum to be left out and of course we think she is way cuter than Heidi! Here they are side by side. You decide....Loretta vs. Heidi. Who is cuter?

FEBRUARY EVENTS

Sunday Matinees: From 2- 3pm every Sunday, step inside our Tensaw Theater and catch a free film that is sure to please the whole family! Stick around afterwards for guest speakers and activities. This month's features are:

- 2/6: A Murder of Crows
- 2/13: The History of Mobile Architecture with Guest Speaker Craig Roberts
- 2/20: The Future of Food
- 2/27: The History of Mobile Carnival and Mardi Gras Day with Guest Speaker Craig Roberts

5 Rivers Outdoor Adventure Night: Two Tuesdays a month, we host groups that can help you get outside and explore the delta! It's free and you don't have to be a member to come!

- 2/1: Alabama Hiking Trail Society (6pm)
Mobile Bay Canoe & Kayak Club (7pm)
Mobile Bay Sierra Club (7pm)
- 2/8: Hunter's Education Course (6pm)
GulfCoast Association of Reptile Keepers (6pm)
Mobile Bay Audubon Society (7pm)

Saturday Class Series: Interesting subjects for all ages. All classes are free unless otherwise specified and all require registration. This month's classes are:

- 2/5: The Secret World of Predators (Gr3-5)
- 2/19: Who's Been Here? Tracking & Trailing:Gr3-5
- 2/26: Fishy Business (Gr3-5)

5 Rivers Delta Safaris Eco-tours: Believe it or not, a mild winter day is a great time to be on the *Pelican* exploring the lower delta! Daily tours, 11am-1pm Wed-Sun, are still available by reservation. Charter tours and canoe/kayak excursions also available. Call 259-8531 to plan your adventure!

- 2/5: Indian Mound Paddle (\$50pp)
- 2/13: Valentine's Day Paddle (Buy One, Get One)
- 2/17: Sunset/Moonlight Paddle (\$50)
- 2/18: Sunset Wine Tasting Cruise (\$45pp)
- 2/19: Bartram Canoe Trail Paddle (\$50pp)

StoryTime: Sit back and let us do the reading for your preschooler! 10am-11am. Arts and crafts follow the reading. This month's stories are:

- 2/1: Chickadee's Message
- 2/8: Love, Splat
- 2/15: The Feather Club
- 2/22: I Thought I Saw an Alligator!

Saturday Adventure Series: Learn and explore the natural resources Alabama has to offer. Great for all ages!

- 2/12: Author Joe Cuhaj and The Alabama Trail
- 2/13: Craig Roberts "Mobile Architectural History"
- 2/27: Craig Roberts "History of Carnival and Mardi Gras in Mobile."

Special Events! Hosted by 5 Rivers. We're happy to welcome:

- 2/10: Fresh Air Family Woods Walk: 5-6pm, free