



## Hudson Named Southeastern Wildlife Biologist of the Year



Keith Hudson

Keith Hudson of Florence has been named Wildlife Biologist of the Year by the Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (SEAFWA). Hudson, an employee of the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, is currently the North Alabama Nongame Wildlife Program Coordinator for the Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries (WFF).


SEAFWA presents the Wildlife Biologist of the Year award to a single person from the 17 member agencies at its annual meeting. It is the organization's most prestigious wildlife award. This is the second consecutive year that a biologist from Alabama has won the award.

Hudson earned his bachelors and masters degrees in Wildlife Management from Auburn University, and began his wildlife career in 1980 as part of the non-tenure faculty at Auburn. Hudson began his career with WFF in 1985 as the Lauderdale Wildlife Management Area wildlife biologist. In 1991, Hudson shifted job duties to become part of the WFF Nongame Wildlife Program as wildlife biologist for north Alabama, a position he currently holds.

Hudson has built an impressive resume during his tenure with WFF. His accomplishments include participation in the successful restoration efforts of both bald eagle and wild turkey populations in Alabama. Hudson established the first statewide ongoing comprehensive survey of the state's bat population, and is now considered a regional authority on the subject. Hudson is also a Master Hunter Education Instructor, having graduated more than 1,000 students from the WFF hunter education program.

According to WFF Director Corky Pugh, Hudson's wealth of knowledge and experience is an asset to the division. "Keith's willingness to embrace new challenges and his vision for advancing new ideas has produced an exemplary body of work during his time with the division," Pugh said. "Keith has spent a lifetime in true service to the resources of Alabama and its citizens."

Hudson has shared his extensive wildlife knowledge with the public by publishing more than 100 articles on conservation for popular media. He has also published nine articles in scientific and technical journals including the *Journal of Mammalogy* and *Journal of Wildlife Disease*.

In addition to his work with the WFF, Hudson is a Certified Wildlife Biologist with The Wildlife Society, and teaches as an adjunct professor at the University of North Alabama. 



## Conservation Employee Saves Life of Coworker

Alabama Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries (WFF) employee Jesse Holifield was recently honored for saving the life of biologist Jeff Garner. Holifield was presented with an award for his bravery during a ceremony held at WFF headquarters in Montgomery.


Presenting the award was Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Commissioner Barnett Lawley who praised Holifield as a hero. "We are thankful to have someone of Jesse's caliber in the department," Lawley said.

On July 22, 2009, Holifield was assisting Garner with a mussel sampling dive in the Tennessee River just south of Guntersville Dam. Garner experienced a diving equipment malfunction in 15 feet of water that cut off his surface-feed air supply. The bulky diving harness made it difficult for Garner to reach the surface. Fortunately, Holifield was able to pull Garner to the surface with the tether-rope, which allowed him to breathe as he was lifted into the boat.

According to Garner, the task of tending the boat while a diver is in the water can be monotonous. However, Holifield remained alert and attentive to his duties during Garner's dive, which is what ultimately saved his life.

"Without Jesse's alertness, attention to duty and substantial strength I would have surely drowned," Garner said. "I'm very thankful to have had Jesse with me that day."

Fisheries Section Chief Stan Cook echoed Garner's gratitude. "The fact that Jeff is alive is a testament to Jesse's character," Cook said. "I'm certainly appreciative of Jesse."

Holifield is a native of Marion, Ala., and has been employed by Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries for almost three years. 

## Fisher Named Shikar-Safari Alabama Officer of the Year




**Conservation Officer Bryan Fisher, Shikar-Safari Club International representative Philip Jackson and Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division Director Corky Pugh**

Officer Bryan Fisher has been named Wildlife Officer of the Year by the Shikar-Safari Club International (SSCI). Fisher is a Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Conservation Enforcement Officer, a position he has held since 2006.

WFF Chief Enforcement Officer Allan Address is proud of Fisher's accomplishments. "He has proven himself to be a dedicated professional who focuses on the enforcement of serious,

resource related offenses," Address said. "He has also demonstrated his enthusiastic support for the department's community outreach programs, such as hunter education, youth dove hunts, youth turkey hunts, challenged outdoorsmen events, and community fishing programs."

In addition to his work as a conservation enforcement officer, Fisher is an active member of the National Wild Turkey Federation, Ducks Unlimited and the Fraternal Order of Police. Officer Fisher is currently assigned to Walker County.


The SSCI is an international conservation organization that funds and supports a variety of conservation projects and scholarships around the world. In addition to recognizing outstanding officers in wildlife conservation, the SSCI also provides a \$20,000 death benefit to the officer's family in the event the officer is killed in the line of duty. 

## Divisions Recognized for Helping Reduce Turtle Mortality

The Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources' Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries and State Lands Divisions are among several recipients of the 2009 Environmental Achievement Award from the Baldwin County Commission. The award was given in recognition of efforts to protect the endangered Alabama red-bellied turtle from road-kill mortality along portions of the Mobile Bay Causeway.

The Alabama red-bellied turtle is restricted to the extreme lower portion of Mobile Bay drainage in Mobile and Baldwin counties. It was designated the official state reptile by the Alabama Legislature in 1990.

Over the past three years, temporary and then permanent fencing has been installed along the causeway to keep the turtles from reaching the road. The results have been very successful and resulted in a 75 percent reduced mortality to the turtles.

Other recipients of the award include Dr. David Nelson, University of South Alabama; Alabama Department of Transportation, Ninth Division; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Daphne Ecological Services Office; The Nature Conservancy of Alabama, Coastal Programs Office; Bill Finch, Mobile Press-Register and Dr. Matt Aresco, Nokuse Plantation. 

## Dothan Community Archery Park Now Open



BILLY POPE

Alabama's third community archery park is now open in Dothan, Ala. The Dothan facility joins archery parks in Athens, and Cullman, Ala. A fourth park will open in Demopolis in 2010.

The range was developed through a partnership between the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division (WFF), the City of Dothan, the Archery Trade Association (ATA), and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Students from Rehobeth High School's agriscience program contributed to the project by building the target frames and were present for the ribbon cutting ceremony.

WFF Director Corky Pugh said the opening of the range is a monumental occasion for both the State of Alabama and the City of Dothan. "What we are creating is an opportunity for young people to learn life skills that will stay with them throughout their life," Pugh said. "Archery is one of those great sports that you don't have to be an athlete to excel in."

In a continued partnership with Dothan Leisure Services, WFF will assist in the creation of school and recreational archery programs for Dothan and

surrounding communities in Houston County. "We are looking forward to enhancing our programming by providing archery related activities for students and citizens of Dothan and Houston County," said Elston Jones, Dothan Leisure Services Director.

Alabama's archery parks are user funded at no cost to taxpayers. The parks are also made possible through the Community Archery Program, which was developed in 2005 by the ATA to grow archery and bowhunting participation nationwide.

The Dothan archery park features eight youth targets from 5-20 yards; 11 adult range targets from 15-80 yards; and an elevated platform that simulates bowhunting situations with targets from 10-40 yards.

The Dothan archery range is open to the public during daylight hours except on Wednesdays. All participants ages 16 to 64 must have a hunting or wildlife heritage license in order to shoot. All shooters must sign in and out at the Eastgate Lodge. No broadhead points are allowed and users of the elevated platform must wear a full body harness.

The park is located in Eastgate Park, 2049 Sanitary Dairy Road, Dothan, Ala., 36305. [DA](#)



## Forever Wild Secures 61,138 Acres within Cahaba River and Mulberry Fork WMAs

Forever Wild and Molpus Timberlands Management, a timberland investment management organization headquartered in Jackson, Miss., have concluded a year-long negotiation for the purchase of a 93-year recreational lease within two of the state's largest and most heavily used Wildlife Management Areas. The project will net over 61,000 acres of recreational land in four counties of central Alabama.

The transaction provides for approximately 27,858 acres within the Bibb and Shelby County portions of the Cahaba River WMA, and 33,280 acres within Tuscaloosa and Walker counties for the Mulberry Fork WMA. Both areas have been part of the state's WMA system for the last decade, and will now be secured under the long-term lease negotiated by Forever Wild. These two units represent heavily utilized public hunting areas adjacent to the greater Birmingham metropolitan area.

"Alabamians love the outdoors and want it to be protected. What's especially important about this conservation action is how close these protected lands are to the largest municipality in the state. Everyone from hunters to hikers will benefit and be able to enjoy this area for generations," said Governor Bob Riley.

"This Project has been crucial in our efforts to advance the long-term protection of recreational lands in

central Alabama," said Barnett Lawley. Lawley serves a dual role as Commissioner of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and Chairman of the Forever Wild Land Trust Board of Trustees.

"We are pleased to play a role with Forever Wild in such a unique transaction, and we look forward to working with the State of Alabama to provide public land utilization opportunities for its citizens. I believe that other states will follow Alabama's lead," said Dick Molpus, President of Molpus Timberlands Management.

Ken Sewell, Chief Operating Officer of Molpus Timberlands Management, said, "Recreational opportunities abound within a well-managed, working forest and this agreement makes these opportunities available to be enjoyed by an increased number of people. Hopefully, this is the first of several such transactions we are able to play a role in developing."

In addition to completing the successful purchase of the recreational lease, Forever Wild now has protected over 200,000 acres of land for long-term habitat protection and recreational use. State Lands Director Patti Powell added that, "the project demonstrates the flexibility of the Forever Wild Program at a time when many government programs are being challenged with unique economic circumstances." In recogni-

tion of the forethought of our state legislators' actions 17 years ago when they created Forever Wild, Alabama is benefiting from some unique land opportunities at a time when other options are extremely limited. "No other program can deliver these large recreational opportunities for our citizens, providing for an enhancement of our quality of life in Alabama," concluded Powell.

The project also has a significant economic benefit to the state of Alabama. Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries' Director Corky Pugh indicated, "Forever Wild has been monumental in securing affordable, accessible hunting opportunities for the rank and file citizens of Alabama, now and into the future. The value of these opportunities for healthy, family-based recreation is of growing significance, and hunting is an economic engine in Alabama that generates \$1.4 billion of annual economic impact throughout the state."

The Forever Wild Land Trust has secured 205,372 acres for habitat protection and public recreation since the program began in 1992. These lands and their interests were purchased through 72 individual transactions in 22 counties. They are managed under the principles of multiple-use. To learn more about the Forever Wild Program, visit [www.alabamaforeverwild.com](http://www.alabamaforeverwild.com). **AA**

## Montgomery Man Wins Outdoor Alabama Canoe

Paul Hodges of Montgomery, Ala. is the winner of the 2009 Outdoor Alabama Canoe Giveaway. Hodges' name was drawn from approximately 1,800 people who registered for the canoe at the Alabama National Fair in Montgomery.

Hodges and his youngest son Paul III will soon be fishing from the canoe in their newly stocked 7-acre pond. "This is a very welcome and unexpected early Christmas present," Hodges said. "My son and I are very excited to get this canoe in the water."

The Pelican canoe was donated by Academy Sports + Outdoors in Montgomery specifically for the fair giveaway. "We are extremely grateful to Academy for the canoe," said *Outdoor Alabama* Editor Kim Nix. "We wanted to give away something that would help people enjoy the outdoors, and the canoe is a perfect fit."

Hodges also received a one-year subscription to *Outdoor Alabama* magazine. **AA**