



Governor Riley Announces Opening of Aquatic Biodiversity Center



JERRY DE BIN

Governor Bob Riley recently announced the opening of the new \$2 million Alabama Aquatic Biodiversity Center located in Marion, Ala. After the announcement, the governor helped release snails into the Cahaba River to aid in clean water efforts. The Biodiversity Center houses the largest state aquatic wildlife restoration program in the United States.

Garner Leaves Legacy of Boating Safety




Former Marine Police Division Director William "Bill" Buddy Garner passed away April 7, 2006. Garner was an active and involved member of the boating safety community for more than 40 years. He served the industry in many different capacities and contributed to the growth and development of essential safe boating initiatives. Much of his life and career was dedicated to law enforcement, marine safety, and towards improving the recreational boating experience.

Garner joined the Marine Police Division in 1962 as a water patrolman in Guntersville. He was appointed District Supervisor in 1964 and Chief Law Enforcement Officer in 1966. In October 1977 he was appointed Marine Police Division Director, a position he held for more than 25 years.

In addition to his involvement and commitment to boating safety organizations, Garner was instrumental in instituting an engine cut-off switch law in Alabama in 1979, which resulted in a 60 percent reduction in fatalities from falls overboard.

In 1994, he recommended and assisted in drafting legislation to require a boat operator's license and increased penalties for boating under the influence violations. Called the Boating Safety Reform Act of 1994, this legislation has resulted in a reduction in boating fatalities by more than 40 percent.

Bill Garner was a true champion of boating safety and will be missed by many. 



Heath Honored as 2005 Enforcement Officer of the Year

The Southeastern Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies has named Mike Heath as Alabama's 2005 Enforcement Officer of the Year. The award was presented at the association's annual meeting in St. Louis, MO. SEAFWA is an organization whose members are the state agencies with primary responsibility for management and protection of the fish and wildlife resources in 16 states.

Heath began his career with the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources as an officer with the Marine Resources Division in 1989. He then transferred to the Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division, where he was assigned to Monroe and Covington counties. He has been in Barbour County since 1994.

As a strong supporter of teaching youth the values and traditions of



Mike and Kathy Heath

the outdoors, Heath has taught more than 600 students in hunter education classes. In 1998, he helped start the Barbour County Wildlife Management Area Youth Squirrel and Coon Hunt, which has grown in popularity over the years. In 2003, he started a youth

fishing event at Blue Springs State Park, organizing prizes, food, fish and support personnel for the event. That event, too, has continued to grow in popularity. Heath also works with Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, clubs, schools and church groups.

As an officer, Heath enforces the law fairly and impartially. He has a genuine concern with helping hunters and landowners solve game and fish related problems. According to his supervisor, Captain Donald L. Herring, Heath works well with other law enforcement agencies and is respected by his peers. "Mike sets the example of what a professional Conservation Enforcement Officer should be," he said. "He brings credit upon himself and the Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division of the Department of Conservation." **DA**

Fishing Reef Dedication Honors T. R. "Buddy" Beiser

Alabama's newest inshore artificial fishing reef is named in honor of T. R. "Buddy" Beiser. The Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and the Alabama Wildlife Federation dedicated the reef at a ceremony on May 4, 2006.

Beiser, a resident of Fairhope, served as a combat pilot during World War II, earning high honors for his outstanding military service, including the Distinguished Flying Cross with Oak Leaf Cluster, Air Medal with three Oak Leaf Clusters, and Distinguished Service Award. He later served with NASA as chief of quality control for the flight control computer aboard the Saturn 5 rocket used on the Apollo missions to the moon.

"Mr. Beiser served his country admirably during combat, and now he is serving the people of Alabama through his support of our reef building programs," said Vernon Minton, Director of the Alabama Marine Resources Division. "His legacy will enhance our fishing heritage for generations."

As a lifelong angler, Beiser values the inshore fishing opportunities of

Mobile Bay and the years of enjoyment they have provided to him. He recognizes the benefits of the inshore artificial fishing reefs and their promise of great fishing for generations to come. In honor of his efforts and support to construct appropriate inshore reefs, a fishing reef has officially been named the T. R. "Buddy" Beiser Reef. The reef is located at 30° 35.269' North Latitude, 87° 57.002 West Longitude.

"We appreciate Mr. Beiser's enduring interest in fishing the waters of Mobile Bay," added Conservation Commissioner Barnett Lawley. "His generosity and support of our artificial reef program will assure that future anglers will enjoy great fishing for years to come."

"Fishing in the Mobile Bay area has



Buddy Beiser, center, was honored by a reef dedication in his name.

been a lifelong passion for Mr. Beiser, and he's doing what we at the AWF would like to see all sportsmen and women do — he's become actively involved in ensuring future generations have the same opportunities he did," said Tim Gothard, Executive Director of the AWF. "It's our honor to work with him and the Department on this project and our hope that the passion Mr. Beiser has for this undertaking will inspire others to get involved as well." **DA**

2006 Alabama Coastal BirdFest

By D. Fran Morley

The 2006 Alabama Coastal BirdFest, October 19-22, will provide insight into how birds and other wildlife deal with hurricanes and give birders a new way to track their favorite birds.

At the opening night reception on Thursday, October 19, a panel of three distinguished ornithologists will discuss "Hurricanes and Habitat: How Wildlife Survives." Speakers include Dr. John Dindo, assistant director and a senior marine scientist at the Dauphin Island Sea Lab, Roger Clay, nongame wildlife biologist, ADCNR Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division, and Eric Soehren, terrestrial zoologist, ADCNR Natural Heritage Section, State Lands Division.

Dr. Dindo will speak about the nesting patterns of herons, egrets, and ibises on Cat Island, a tiny but important island in the Mississippi Sound that is now mostly under water; Roger Clay will discuss the hurricane impact on Mobile Bay's Gaillard Island, Alabama's most important site for colonial nesting shore birds, with over 5,000 brown pelican nests; and Eric Soehren will discuss the challenges of bird migration after hurricanes. The opening night reception is planned for the Gulf

Coast Exploreum in Mobile.

On Friday night, as part of the BBQ & Seafood Social at the Nix Center in Fairhope, Dr. Sidney Gauthreaux, Centennial Professor of Biological Sciences at South Carolina's Clemson University, will present a program on using Doppler radar to identify and track migratory birds.

Although the topic sounds complicated, Dr. Gauthreaux said interested bird watchers could learn the process Friday night and put to use Saturday morning. "There are several good Internet sites where you can get real-time information from Doppler radar. I believe that after hearing my presentation, people will have the skills to monitor bird migration the same as I do. There is a significant relationship between what you see on the radar one night and what you see in the woods the next morning."

A native of New Orleans and graduate of LSU, Dr. Gauthreaux has studied using weather radar to track migrating birds since the 1970s. In 1990, he established the Clemson University Radar Ornithology Laboratory (CUROL). In 1995, with support from the Department of Defense, CUROL began archiving bird movements



using a national network of Doppler radar sites. This database has aided in the development of national and regional maps of bird migration and maps of important migration stopover areas.

Birdfest features over 20 guided tours along the Alabama Coastal Birding Trail, two evening events, and a free daylong Bird and Conservation Expo at Faulkner State Community College Fairhope Campus with speakers, films, exhibits, workshops, kids' activities and more.

Advance registration is required for the tours and evening events. For more information, call 251-929-0922 or visit www.alabamacoastalbirdfest.com. 



Rhododendron



KIM NIX

Camping Life names DeSoto State Park Second in Nation

DeSoto State Park in northeast Alabama has been named the second favorite camping spot in the United States by *Camping Life* magazine. The magazine cites DeSoto's waterfalls, hardwood forests and wildflowers as among the special attractions of this park.

DeSoto offers 78 improved campsites and 20 primitive sites. Two comfort stations with restrooms and showers are located in the campground. In addition, the resort offers a motel, chalets and cabins. A full service restaurant is also on the premises. Day use areas include a picnic area, playground and swimming pool.

Approximately 12 miles of hiking trails are available at DeSoto, including the Azalea Cascade Boardwalk Trail, which can be enjoyed and traveled by people of all abilities. During the spring, wild azaleas, trilliums, pink lady slippers and rhododendrons are among the blooming plants that can be seen along the trails. In the fall, the hardwood forest puts on a beautiful display of colors. Several waterfalls can be viewed along the trails. Nearby attractions include DeSoto Falls and Little River Canyon National Preserve.

DeSoto State Park is located eight miles northeast of Fort Payne. Follow Alabama Highway 35 South from Interstate 59, Exit 218. On top of Lookout Mountain, turn left on County Road 89. **GA**

Alabama Named Family-Friendly Hunting State

The National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF) has listed Alabama in its Top 20 states for hunting families to live in and visit.

Lawmakers in Ohio and Pennsylvania recently eliminated legal barriers—minimum age restrictions and coursework mandates—that once prevented some families from hunting together. Those two states now join Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, Washington and West Virginia as safe, family-friendly oases for residents of everywhere else.

Doug Painter, president of the National Shooting Sports Foundation, said, “The new laws in Ohio and Pennsylvania created opportunities for another 10 percent of America’s hunters to enjoy our country’s greatest outdoor tradition with youngsters. And that’s just counting residents of those states. We’re predicting that all 20 of today’s family-friendly states will become more and more popular destinations for non-resident hunters, too.”

Across the country, sales of non-resident hunting licenses, tags, stamps and permits have risen 41 percent over the past 10 years. The average hunter now spends \$1,638—mostly trip-related expenses—on their sport annually, up 11 percent over the past 10 years.

Painter says these statistics show that hunting families today are more mobile than ever, and more willing to spend hard-earned dollars traveling wherever they need to go for a quality hunting experience.

A year ago, NSSF partnered with the National Wild Turkey Federation and U.S. Sportsmen’s Alliance to launch “Families Afield.” The program encourages states to restructure hunting laws to accommodate more family participation. Research shows that states without minimum age restrictions or coursework mandates are more likely to engage youths, maintaining healthy hunting culture, conservation funding and economic benefits in the future.

With the success in Ohio and Pennsylvania, Families Afield legislation has now passed in two of three states. The third bill appears stalled in Wisconsin. More state efforts will be launched later this year.

To learn more about resident and non-resident hunting license requirements in each state, visit www.wheretohunt.org. The site is one of many service-oriented sites managed by NSSF, a trade association that works to keep hunters and shooters safe and active. **GA**