ALABAMA MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY TEACHES WATER SCIENCE AT WATERSHED FESTIVAL

New Director for Alabama Museum of Natural History • Moundville Knap-In
Civil War Lectures and Exhibit • Alligators in Museum Collections
Transportation Museum Joins UA • Biodiversity in Alabama • Living History of UA
Published periodically during the year by The University of Alabama Museums

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On the cover: Canoeist on the Sipsey River courtesy Beth Maynor Young.
Museum Chronicle • 3

spring 2015 EVENTS CALENDAR

march
2 Monday
MUSEUM MONDAY K-2nd Gr.
3:30 p.m. - 5 p.m.

4 Wednesday
EXPLORER WEDNESDAY 3rd-5th Gr.
3:30 p.m. - 5 p.m.

6 Friday
GROWING UP WILD PRESCHOOL
FRIDAY
10 a.m. - 12 p.m.

7 Saturday
SATURDAY IN THE PARK -
SHELL CARVER DAN TOWNSEND
10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

11 Wednesday
TEACH YO SELF- WHITTLING
10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

13-14 Friday - Saturday
SPRING KNAP-IN
9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

28 Saturday
SATURDAY IN THE PARK -
TAMARA BEANE POTTERY FIRING
10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

april
1 Wednesday
EXPLORER WEDNESDAY 3rd-5th Gr.
3:30 p.m. - 5 p.m.

3 Friday
CIVIL WAR EXHIBIT OPENS
Until Oct. 23

4 Saturday
GROWING UP WILD PRESCHOOL
FRIDAY
10 a.m. - 12 p.m.

6 Saturday
SATURDAY IN THE PARK -
FIBERS AND FEATHERS
10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

11 Wednesday
MUSEUM MONDAY K-2nd Gr.
3:30 p.m. - 5 p.m.

13 Saturday
SATURDAY IN THE PARK -
ARCHAEOLOGY HORIZONS
10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

18 Saturday
SANDER’S LECTURE
10:00 a.m. - 2 p.m.

25 Saturday
SATURDAY IN THE PARK -
NATURAL FIBERS
10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

26 Sunday
INNOVATION FAIR
1 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.

may
1 Friday
GROWING UP WILD PRESCHOOL
FRIDAY
10 a.m. - 12 p.m.

2 Saturday
SATURDAY IN THE PARK -
GARDEN DAY
10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

4 Monday
MUSEUM MONDAY K-2nd Gr.
3:30 p.m. - 5 p.m.

6 Wednesday
EXPLORER WEDNESDAY 3rd-5th Gr.
3:30 p.m. - 5 p.m.

9 Saturday
SATURDAY IN THE PARK -
CHIP WENTE ANCIENT COOKING
10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

14-16 Thursday - Saturday
SOUTHEASTERN ASSOCIATION OF
VERTEBRATE PALEONTOLOGY

16 Saturday
SATURDAY IN THE PARK -
NATIVE PLANTS
10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

23 Saturday
SATURDAY IN THE PARK -
ANCIENT HUNTING AND FISHING
10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

30 Saturday
SATURDAY IN THE PARK -
WEST ALABAMA BIRDING TRAIL
10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Location Key:

The Gorgas House Museum  Moundville Archaeological Park  Alabama Museum of Natural History
(205) 348-5906  (205) 371-2234  (205) 348-7550
The beautiful Lake Tuscaloosa is a part of the North River Watershed and is located just north of Tuscaloosa, in central Tuscaloosa County. This forty million gallon reservoir was created in 1970 by damming North River in response to the growing population of Tuscaloosa. Because of its close proximity to the city, Lake Tuscaloosa quickly became a favorite place of Tuscaloosians. Not only does Lake Tuscaloosa provide ample recreational opportunities for nearby citizens, but it serves as the primary drinking water source for Tuscaloosa and some of the surrounding area. Water from the lake is pumped to a water treatment facility and treated to create safe drinking water for the city. Despite its vital importance to everyday life in Tuscaloosa, few people realize the role Lake Tuscaloosa plays. Awareness and education are key elements needed to preserve and protect this treasured resource.

Four years ago, a group of organizations, all individually working to preserve and conserve our valuable resources, joined together to further the goal of water stewardship. These organizations, both state and private, partnered together to form the North River Watershed Group. With combined resources and efforts, the partnership focused on making connections, implementing best management practices, and educating the public in water resource and aquatic ecosystem importance. The Alabama Museum of Natural History (AMNH) joined as one of these partners to serve as one of the educational outreach components of the group. “Educating the public on the importance of water preservation and biodiversity is an important part of our educational mission,” said Todd Hester, Museum Naturalist at AMNH. One of the museum’s largest responsibilities as a member of the North River Watershed Group is to assist with the planning and implementation of the annual Watershed Festival. This festival provides a venue for members of the North River Watershed Group to meet directly with the public and teach about water conservation and stewardship. While the festival includes a general public forum, the largest group of participants is elementary school students.

Each year, the Watershed Festival is attended by nearly 200 fourth-graders from all over the North River watershed. Students come from all corners of Tuscaloosa and as far north as Berry, Alabama to learn from experts in watershed geography, water quality, aquatic life, biodiversity, pollution and erosion, and water conservation. While at the festival, students participate in educational modules from organizations such as the Fish and Wildlife Service, the Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM), the Forestry Department, the Geological Survey of Alabama, and even have the opportunity to tour the Jerry Plott Water Treatment Plant. They learn about everything from the importance of aquatic invertebrates to the most prevalent source of pollution in our rivers and lakes today. Several other organizations such as Tuscaloosa 311, the City of Tuscaloosa, the City of Northport, and the UA Department of Geography participate in an Information Fair in which students gain a better and wider understanding of the issues that face our watershed and how they can personally affect water preservation. Throughout the festival, students are given the tools to become educated stewards of their own local watersheds and therefore, the watershed as a whole.

Now in its fourth year, the Watershed Festival is going strong. A new group of teachers and students will join AMNH and the North River Watershed Group to become informed watershed warriors and learn how to positively affect water preservation and educate those around them. Every person makes a difference, and these warriors are just the beginning.
Dr. John Friel is trading in the below freezing temperatures that he has grown accustomed to in New York to settle in a slightly warmer climate. The ichthyologist from Cornell University will begin his new role as director of the Alabama Museum of Natural History in early March.

While Friel is new to The University of Alabama and our state, he has lived in Florida and said that he has a strong affinity for the Southeastern U.S., southern culture and the natural beauty of the area.

“I had always hoped I would be able to find a position that appealed to my love of natural history collections/museums, and would also give me the chance to once again live in the Southeastern U.S.,” Friel said. “Thus, The University of Alabama and its natural history museum seem like a very good match for me.”

With a Ph.D. in zoology from Duke University, Friel has served as the curator of fishes, amphibians and reptiles at the Cornell University Museum of Vertebrates since 1998. He has also served as the senior research associate in the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at Cornell since 2008.

“Alabama’s incredible biodiversity over the ages is the primary story that we strive to tell at the Alabama Museum of Natural History,” said Dr. William Bomar, University Museums Executive Director. “Friel’s background makes him the right person to lead the staff in telling this story.”

Friel said his background as a professional scientist working with natural history collections in a university setting has allowed him both an appreciation for the scientific value of these collections, as well as firsthand experience in the utilization of museum collections for the overall mission of universities in both undergraduate and graduate education.

“I hope to use my past experiences and strengths as an academic scientist to help lead and raise the profile of the Alabama Museum of Natural History, and work with the UA Museums staff to make The University of Alabama a national leader in teaching, research and public service through its museums. I am very much looking forward to learning more about the rich history of the various collections at UA. As a collection builder myself, I am not only amazed by the spectacular objects/specimens in the collections, but also by the stories of the past and present collectors that provided these valuable resources for the university,” Friel added.

“I cannot wait to delve deeper into the museum’s collections when I arrive in March.”

On February 2, under an agreement with the City of Tuscaloosa, The University of Alabama Museums assumed responsibility for the management of the Mildred Westervelt Warner Transportation Museum.

Executive Director of UA Museums Dr. Bill Bomar said, “I am thrilled that the Transportation Museum is once again a part of the UA Museums family. This great museum facility, with its great downtown location, expands the University’s educational outreach into the community while expanding the scope of our museum offerings into local history.”

“This partnership provides valuable support to the Transportation Museum. I look forward to collaborating with the expert staff at UA Museums again,” said Director Shaina Strom.

NEW ADDITION TO UA MUSEUMS FAMILY
Today the railroad crossing of the Coosa River in Wilsonville, Alabama is marked by a common steel bridge built atop ashlar stone pillars. Like hundreds of other trestles in the area it seems an insignificant feature of the landscape. Unremarkable as it may seem to some, this crossing was vital to the Confederacy during the second half of the Civil War for transporting supplies and materials needed by Confederate troops and the war industry.

This particular railroad linked Shelby Iron Works, a charcoal fired iron furnace started in the 1840s, with the ship building and armaments manufacturing facilities of Alabama and Georgia by linking with the Atlanta and West Point Railroad that ties Montgomery to the markets in the east. Shelby Iron Works was founded by Horace Ware and in 1860 it opened the first rolling mill in the state. Most iron works were limited to producing iron pigs, but the bar iron and iron sheets produced by the rolling mill became vital for military armorin of ships, rail cars, and wagons. In 1863 it produced the armor plating for the Confederate naval ships CSS Tennessee and CSS Mobile.

The transport of these materials to manufacturing facilities was of the utmost importance and protecting the rail lines, particularly the bridges, in the area was the responsibility of Major W. T. Walthall, commander of the military post at Talladega. At the Coosa and Yellow Leaf Creek crossings above Wilsonville, Walthall directed the construction of three earthworks built in 1863. The Confederacy had become all too aware of the vulnerability of its railroad bridges and these three fortifications served to protect the Alabama-Tennessee River Railroad trestles. The earthworks were “…manned during the last months of the war by reserve companies consisting of young boys and old men” according to the historical marker placed in front of Alabama Power Company’s E.C. Gaston Steam Plant in Shelby County.

Lovell H. Rousseau, a Kentucky Senator from 1860 to 1861 and Union loyalist, had successfully lobbied for attacking the railroad systems of the South by destroying bridges. In July 1864, Rousseau’s forces managed to destroy sections of track, burn railroad stations, and warehouses during their march from Decatur, Alabama to Opelika. Although notes in his report that he was “strongly inclined to destroy” the iron works, he did not deviate from his main objective and continued on to Opelika. Meanwhile, the Alabama Cadet Corps from The University of Alabama spent a portion of July 1864 clearing and building a camp on the east side of the Coosa River crossing and possibly contributing to the earthworks started there the previous year.

Following Rousseau’s success, a devastating cavalry raid was conducted by General James H. Wilson the following year. To become immortalized as Wilson’s Raid, it included the attacks on Tuscaloosa by 1,500 men under the command of John T. Croxton. Croxton’s Raiders burned the Irondale, Brierfield, and Tannehill Ironworks before burning the University of Alabama on April 4, 1865.

Confederate Major Joseph Barbiere’s Reserve Cavalry was stationed at the three earthworks on the Coosa in February 1865. On the last day of March, 1865, Union General Emory Upton’s Division of Wilson’s Raiders reached the Shelby Iron Works and burned it to the ground. They then attacked the earthworks at the Coosa crossing and a brief skirmish ensued before the Union forces successfully captured the crossing.

The earthworks remain at least partially intact. They are preserved on the E.C. Gaston Steam Plant and Alabama Power property where they are protected from uncontrolled artifact collection. Covered by years of vegetation, they are an eerie reminder of the War that divided a nation. Researching these fortifications became part of a project for the Office of Archaeological Research while assisting Alabama Power Company’s federal licensing requirements. We are indebted to them for allowing us a chance to rewalk the places where The University of Alabama Cadets once worked to serve and protect their homeland.
DISPLAY OF CIVIL WAR LETTERS AT SANDERS LECTURE

BY MARY BESS PALUZZI

During the Civil War, the primary means of communication between family and friends at home and the soldier in the field was letters. Letter writing served as a means of relief from anxiety and boredom for the soldier and his family.

News was not easily available to soldiers and they prized letters from home. As found in surviving letters held in University Libraries Special Collections, soldiers often complained in letters about their lack of news. In a letter written March 29, 1862 to his wife, John DeWolf comments, “we dont get much news only what we make up our selvs we dont know what is going on as much as you do for we dont get any papers until they are a week old (sic)...” Soldiers frequently asked those at home for news.

In one imaginative letter an uncle, John H. Poor, wrote his niece Fanny describing his day-to-day life in camp. The undated letter did not explicitly state which army Poor served in, however there are several clues that indicate he was a Union soldier and a John H. Poor served in the 10th Vermont Regiment. The soldier comments that he slept on the ground with only a blanket for cover and his gun by his side. He started his day building a fire over which he used a stick to cook a piece of meat. Poor describes crackers (a common name for hard tack) and relates that he had access to coffee, a precious commodity to a soldier. The uncle wrote in simple words and clever stick-man drawings of soldiers seated on the ground to eat a meal. The letter closes light-heartedly with “goodbye from your uncle with a BIG NOSE.”

Soldiers wrote letters home describing their experiences and reassuring their families of their personal safety. Few had more than a basic elementary education and as such did not write legibly or spell properly. Soldiers from rural areas may never have attended school and were often dependent on their comrades to write and to read their letters to and from home.

The University of Alabama Library’s Special Collections has hundreds of letters written by Confederate and Union soldiers and sailors. Some of the letters were eloquently written though most were written by those who were only semi-literate. Spelling in even the most eloquent letters followed no standard.

An exhibit of items from Special Collections is being planned for display at the JCC Sanders Lecture on April 4, 2015. The two letters cited were donated to University Libraries by Dr. Wade Hall of Union Springs, Alabama.
Where Alligators exist in Alabama, they indicate a key component in the health of watershed ecology. *Alligator mississippiensis* is a top predator that helps keep invasive species such as nutria and wild pigs in check, allowing native species to proliferate with less competition. They also feed on alligator gar (*Atractosteus spatula*), a protected, predatory fish that preys on popular game species.

Alligators are important because they open up marshlands by creating "gator holes." These holes are dug during periods of cold weather dormancy, and serve as refuge and a food source for many species of animals, including fish, birds, mammals and other reptiles or amphibians. In some watersheds where the water level fluctuates, alligators build tunnels or hollows which fill with water and help regulate the gator’s body temperature in periods of heat and cold. These tunnels are reused by other wildlife once the alligator has vacated them. A healthy watershed ecosystem relies on diverse natural resources which the alligator helps maintain.

Searching through the UA Museums’ collections for a mounted alligator specimen made me aware we have a shortage in the herpetology sector! However, I was able to find a nice alligator skull, some teeth, and a comparative skull of the alligator gar fish, whose resemblance to the reptile is striking, hence its name.

Alligators have between 74 and 80 teeth at one time, and can have as many as 3000 teeth in the course of a lifetime... constantly replacing them as they wear down. The lower jaw has a fourth large tooth that fits into a cavity in the upper jaw, making it undetectable when the mouth is closed. This is a distinguishing feature that separates them from the crocodile.

My first encounter with Alabama alligators in the wild was announced by a sign at Gulf Shores State Park... a campground where the residents have made concessions to coexist!

If anyone is looking to donate a nicely mounted (and legal) alligator specimen, please contact me, Mary Beth Prondzinski, Museum Collections Technician, at (205) 348-5625.
JOHN R. MITCHELL COLLECTION DONATED TO UA

BY BILL ALLEN

John R. Mitchell amassed an extensive collection of archaeological artifacts from the Tennessee River and the hills of Northern Alabama while in high school during the 1950s. That collection, numbering well over 13,500 individual artifacts, is now undergoing curation at the Erskine Ramsay Archaeological Repository, the result of a generous gift from the late Mr. Mitchell’s family.

Mitchell, who won a Gold Medal for an archaeological display at the Cullman Science Fair in 1957, was a member of the Alabama Archaeological Society, and worked with James Cambron, then vice president of the Society and author of a number of works on Southeastern Native American archaeology. Along with the artifacts, the Mitchell Collection included documentation in the form of his original maps and field notes on a number of archaeological sites in the state, some of which are not yet recorded in the Alabama State Site File.

After graduating high school, Mitchell attended Maryville College in Tennessee, worked with the Peace Corps in Liberia, and attended graduate school at the University of Tennessee, which “was difficult for me,” he once wrote, “because I was an Alabama Crimson Tide fan, long before Bear Bryant came to save the day.” He was a Professor of English at Augsburg College in Minneapolis from 1968 until his death in 2006.

The University of Alabama Museums would like to extend its sincere thanks to Jean Mitchell and her children Judith and Nathan for this kind donation. Thanks as well to Eugene Stewart and Van King, for performing the initial inventory, analysis, and photography of the collection.

The John R. Mitchell Collection was developed over a period of years prior to the passing of the Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979. Today, state and federal lands are protected by law from artifact collectors to preserve history for everyone.

Images courtesy the Longboots Group.

Morrow Mountain Point from Limestone County, AL.

Pine Tree Point from Limestone County, AL.

Copena Triangular Point from Morgan County, AL.
This Spring, The Alabama Museum of Natural History has partnered with the Gorgas House Museum to develop a series of sessions aimed at teaching students a particular traditional skill. The first session in the Teach Yo Self series was held at the Gorgas House Museum on January 14th, 2015 and was open to all University of Alabama Students. This first session, taught by AMNH Education and Outreach Coordinator, Allie Sorlie, focused on the skill of arm knitting. The second session to be held in March at the Alabama Museum of Natural History will teach attendees how to whittle. That session will be taught by longtime AMNH volunteer, Dr. Bing Blewitt.

Each of the skills taught in the Teach Yo Self series are meant to introduce skills to students that would have been an important part of life in the past. Arm Knitting is a variation of knitting, but rather than regular needles, the knitter utilizes his or her arms instead. Knitting was commonly practiced in nineteenth century homes. Whittling pays homage to Dr. Eugene Allen Smith, second State Geologist and the namesake of AMNH building, who was an avid whittler. Teaching these skills gives students the chance to connect to local history and keep the practices alive in a modern context.

Left to Right: Student Desirea Owens, AMNH Educator Allie Sorlie, and Student Miranda Chauncey arm knit at the Gorgas House.

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to hear a figure from history speak in person? To actually get to ask them questions about their lives and their work? Well, this April you will finally get to ask those questions at the Alabama Museum of Natural History and the Gorgas House Museum. On April 25, 2015 from 1 p.m. until 4 p.m., the two sites will be hosting the first ever Living History Festival.

During that day, come to the museums and join a guided tour to travel back in time and learn from these fascinating figures from Alabama history.

Appearances include: Dr. Eugene Allen Smith, Ann Elizabeth Hodges, Michael Toomey, Winnie McGlamery, Dr. Walter B. Jones, William Bartram, General William Crawford Gorgas, General Josiah Gorgas, and Amelia Gorgas. Visitors will also get the chance to see a pictorial history of UA Museums, play games, and have the chance to buy shirts and other museum related gear. Admission is $4.00 per person.

If you have any questions/comments please contact Jeff Hirschy at jhirschy@bama.ua.edu or Lydia Ellington at lrellington@ua.edu.
THE GORGAS HOUSE MUSEUM DEVELOPS NEW CIVIL WAR EXHIBIT

BY LYDIA ELLINGTON

The Gorgas House Museum will display a new exhibit on the Gorgas Family and their experiences during the Civil War beginning April 3, 2015, the day before the 150th anniversary of the burning of The University of Alabama campus by Union forces. The exhibit is entitled North and South: the Gorgas Family, the University of Alabama, and the Divisions of the Civil War and will feature research by University of Alabama students. It will also showcase original artifacts such as General Josiah Gorgas’ coat and ceremonial sword.

The exhibit explores the themes of division in the Civil War. Josiah Gorgas became estranged from his family because of his choice to serve his wife’s State of Alabama instead of his native Pennsylvania. The exhibit also discusses the hardships of Gorgas being separated from his wife and six young children because of his war time duties. Josiah Gorgas served the Confederacy as the Chief of Ordinance, but because of his position in the Confederacy, the end of the war brought with it the end of his military career.

The exhibit will also feature information and artifacts related to the Civil War in Tuscaloosa including items recently unearthed by the Office of Archaeological Research staff, as well as artifacts from Jefferson Hall, a dormitory on The University of Alabama’s original 1831 campus. Jefferson Hall was burned by Union forces in 1865. The exhibit will be on display in the Gorgas House Museum until October 23rd.

Below: Joe Meany, a PhD student in the Department of Chemistry, teaches three young scientists about early life on Earth through chemistry experiments.

SCIENCE SUNDAY: A DIVERSE EARTH

BY ALLIE SORLIE

On a chilly November afternoon, the most recent installment of Science Sunday was held at the Alabama Museum of Natural History. This event titled A Diverse Earth explored early Earth and the advent of the varied and complicated life found here.

AMNH was joined by five University departments and two student groups all presenting on their area of expertise. The over one hundred visitors were greeted with meteorite demonstrations, three dimensional mapping of geologic formations, fossils of prehistoric creatures, live reptiles and amphibians, chemistry demonstrations, and a special exhibit about the Hodges Meteorite event, celebrating its 60th anniversary.

Special guest speakers John Hall and Billy Field told the history of the Hodges Meteorite event, recounting eyewitness stories. It was an afternoon filled with scientific tales of the past and a glimpse of how our present was shaped.
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By being part of our extraordinary community of donors, you play a vital part in furthering The University of Alabama Museums’ mission to broaden the knowledge of natural sciences and cultural heritage through collections and quality programs of research, instruction and service.

For this, we say, “thank you.”
On Thursday, February 12, 2015 the Alabama Museum of Natural History took part in this year’s Darwin Day activities. Darwin Day commemorates the anniversary of the birth of Charles Darwin and has become an international movement. The mission of Darwin Day as stated on DarwinDay.org is, “to inspire people throughout the globe to reflect and act on the principles of intellectual bravery, perpetual curiosity, scientific thinking, and hunger for truth as embodied in Charles Darwin.”

This year the museum worked with the Evolutionary Studies Club and the Evolutionary Studies Working Group at The University of Alabama to host a series of lectures dealing with different aspects of evolution presented by students and faculty members at The University of Alabama with a keynote talk by Dr. Kilian Garvey, an evolutionary psychologist from the University of Louisiana, Monroe.

The event also featured a Darwin birthday cake decorating contest and a Darwin parody song contest that was advertised in local schools. Events took place on Thursday, February 12th in Smith Hall 100 and the Atrium Gallery. All events were free and open to the public.

Left: The prize-winning cake was a delectable replica of “The Origin of Species”.

Above: Paleontologist Dr. Dana Ehret poses with a Darwin Day postcard.
RECENT DONATIONS TO PALEONTOLOGY COLLECTIONS

BY DANA EHRET

In the month of January, the Paleontology Collections received two important donations. Dr. Jim Lacefield, author of “Lost Worlds in Alabama Rocks,” generously supplied the first donation. Fossils donated to the museum included many specimens figured in the book. Most notably, Lacefield donated a large slab of shale containing the footprints of a small anapsid reptile, which has been named Notolacerta missouriensis that came from Walker County, Alabama and is approximately 315 million years old. Other specimens that Lacefield donated included many late Pleistocene fossils from Greene County, Alabama such as a juvenile Colombian mammoth tooth, a bison long bone, multiple horse teeth, and even a beaver molar! These specimens are a welcomed addition to our collections and a few will be displayed in our new Fossil History of Alabama exhibit currently being installed in the Smith Hall atrium gallery.

The second donation to the Paleontology Collections came from Mr. George Martin of Auburn, Alabama. Martin has been a long time supporter of the University of Alabama Museums, previously donating a partial sea turtle skeleton and a partial duck-billed dinosaur jaw to name a few specimens. Most recently, Martin donated two plesiosaur paddle bones collected in Lowndes County, Alabama and some other interesting bone fragments. The more complete paddle that Martin donated may belong to a rare type of short-necked plesiosaur called a leptocleidid and has already attracted the attention of a researcher at Marshall University, who will be visiting our museum collections in May to view and possibly describe the specimen!

Above: Late Cretaceous plesiosaur paddle-bone donated by Mr. George Martin.
Left: Baby mammoth tooth donated by Dr. Jim Lacefield.
Background: Pennsylvanian trackway donated by Dr. Jim Lacefield.

SATURDAY IN THE PARK RETURNS FOR THE SEASON

BY AMANDA MORROW

The Saturday in the Park series is getting started again here at Moundville. Visitors are invited out to the park to learn from experts almost every Saturday this Spring! We have a very diverse menu of programs coming up including an Archaeology day, a special Mother’s Day craft, visiting Birds of Prey and more!

Please check the calendar here in the Chronicle and keep up to date on all our events on the Moundville Archaeological Park Facebook page.

Saturday in the Park is always included in your admission price and frequently involves a make-and-take craft for the kids! All programs run from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and are structured so that visitors can attend at whichever time during that period is most convenient. We look forward to seeing you spend your Saturdays at Moundville.

A family decorates gourds at one popular Saturday in the Park program.
ALABAMA’S REMARKABLE NATURAL DIVERSITY

BY DOUG PHILLIPS

If you are among those who keep up with environmental news, you might have noticed there has been a rush of new interest in Alabama during the last decade or two. Indeed, world-leading scientists have begun, almost with surprise at times, to point to Alabama and proclaim that Alabama is one of the most naturally diverse regions on earth.

Well, this of course is certainly not news for Discovering Alabama, nor for many Alabamians for that matter. Alabama’s remarkable natural diversity is the foundational basis and main rationale for creating the Discovering Alabama series back in 1985. As we today celebrate our 30th year, it is welcome company to now have the ringing endorsement of world renowned scientists who recognize the profound natural diversity in our state. For some of these scientists, such as Alabama native and Harvard professor, Dr. E.O. Wilson, the natural wonders of Alabama have long held special appeal. Dr. Wilson even keeps a complete set of Discovering Alabama programs at his Harvard office.

So, what exactly is so remarkable about Alabama’s natural diversity? Isn’t our state, as many folks from other regions believe, home only to magnolia trees, old colonial revival houses, and vast cotton plantations? Yes, of course, Alabama has magnolia trees, several different species of them in fact. And sure, across the state you can find a number of old colonial structures, many of which are significant artifacts of American history. And yes, Alabama has magnolia trees, several different species of them in fact. And sure, across the state you can find a number of old colonial structures, many of which are significant artifacts of American history. However, most of these today comprise vast stands of forests. But the thing that is gaining the attention of many scientists today is Alabama’s much grander world of natural wonder.

From Discovering Alabama’s perspective, there is no state with natural wonders comparable to Alabama. Admittedly, we at Discovering Alabama harbor a slightly biased view. Still, it can be rightly boasted that with regard to natural diversity Alabama is easily the top state in many respects and, in other respects, matched by only a few states. Alabama’s geological diversity is greater than almost every other state. Our state has five major geological regions and thirty-seven sub regions, providing a diverse foundational basis for more than 300 soil types in the state, including some of the richest soils in the world.

While many Alabamians tend simply to see the state’s forests as being either hardwoods or pines, Alabama has over 70 different forest communities. And the state is home to roughly 200 tree species – actually, more than 400 when tree-like shrubs are included - adding up by some counts to be a greater number of tree species than in any other state.

With over 70,000 miles of rivers and streams, Alabama competes strongly for having more aquatic biodiversity than is found elsewhere across the nation. For example, there are 354 fish species in the state. Only Tennessee argues a comparable number.

Add to all this the state’s myriad ecosystems, habitats, and countless associated flora and fauna, and Alabama ranks not only as a profound realm of natural diversity on planet earth but, from Discovering Alabama’s perspective, Alabama’s uniquely rich and abundant natural diversity is a “profound realm of life in the universe.” At least, that’s the way we like to sum it up, slightly exaggerated perhaps, to emphasize the remarkable significance of our state’s truly special natural heritage.
A PIRATE’S LIFE FOR ME

By Allie Sorlie

Around this time each year, the Alabama Museum of Natural History transforms. With some clever setup and a lot of imagination, it has been an international terminal with flights to the departments of Chemistry, Biology, Geology, Theater, and more. Most recently, the museum was dressed as a three story pirate ship exploring the high seas of UA. This maritime adventure was all a part of the 4th Annual Hands-On Family Night event hosted in conjunction with the Graduate Parent Support group and the Graduate Student Association. The event was originally created by the Graduate Parent Support group as a way to show the children of graduate students what their parents did at school. It has since grown to a Tuscaloosa community-wide family event enjoyed by hundreds each year.

This year’s event brought graduate departments from all across UA together to showcase who they are and what they do. Families joined over twenty University departments such as Biology, Chemistry, Book Arts, History, Kinesiology, Modern Languages, English, Theater, and many more all dressed in their pirate best for a night filled with interactive displays, pirate lingo, and fun! Visitors used their trusty treasure map to navigate the high seas and found the pirate boot camp, a cove to fish for rhyming words, a pirate music dance hall, plenty of pirate shanties, chemistry demonstrations, reptiles and amphibians, and the opportunity to learn a pirate phrase or two. After their long journey, pirates were given the coordinates to a treasure chest full of door prizes donated by local businesses. As they ventured through the event, the newly inducted pirates learned about science, math, history, literature, and language. Over 500 pirates sailed on the S.S. Smith Hall for the 4th Annual Hands-On Family Night and brought with them their curiosity and sense of adventure!

NEW STAFF AT MOUNDVILLE ARCHAEOLOGICAL PARK

Russell Frost has worked for Moundville Archaeological Park for four years now, both as a cashier in the museum and as a part of the maintenance crew, but he recently changed roles to become the new Admissions Cashier at the park’s Administration Building.

Frost enjoys having the opportunity to meet guests and loves telling them about all the wonderful features of Moundville Archaeological Park. His duties also include managing building rentals, coordinating park calendars, and assisting the park’s Director.

We are very lucky to have such an enthusiastic person on board here at Moundville.
Flintknapping is an ancient technology used by nearly all Stone Age people. Native Americans made most of their weapons and many of their tools from stone prior to Europeans arriving in the New World. Very quickly, native people set aside flintknapping in favor of metal implements to the point where the technology was almost lost. In the last 25 years, however; hundreds, if not thousands of people have revived the process, passing their knowledge down from one person to another in much the same way as the ancients did.

Other outdoor demonstrations and displays include ancient hunting and fishing equipment. Visitors will also get a chance to test out a spear thrower or toss rabbit sticks in the nearby target range. Demonstrations of basketry, firemaking, and textile weaving are also on the schedule.

There are about as many different ways to knap as there are flintknappers. Some knappers use only tools made out of stone or bone to fashion their points. Others use copper covered, lead weighted billets they call “boppers” to hammer on their stone. Lapidary knappers use rock saws and heavy duty grinders to reshape their pieces prior to removing flakes.

Visitors can be sure that all of the event’s demonstrators and exhibitors will be glad to see them! They love what they do and enjoy sharing their knowledge with other people. Visitors over the age of 12 are encouraged to sit down and learn to make a stone point. All the tools needed, safety gear and rock are available for purchase. And, of course, there is a huge variety of stone points, knives, wooden display cases and other handmade items for sale as well as a raffle held to benefit the Education Office at Moundville.

For more information, call 205-371-8732. We hope to see you there!
UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA MUSEUMS MEMBERSHIP
GIVING LEVELS & BENEFITS

Much of the natural beauty of Alabama is found among its many rivers. To recognize the vital role these rivers play in making our state unique, The University of Alabama Museums has designated gift membership levels with the names of some of Alabama’s best-known and beloved rivers. All membership levels are important to the Museum. We hope you will be as generous as your circumstances allow.

Note: Each membership level receives the benefits listed plus all benefits of levels that precede it.

Alabama River ($40–$99)
- Unlimited admission (except for special events) to Moundville Archaeological Park, Alabama Museum of Natural History, Gorgas House and Paul W. Bryant Museum
- Membership newsletter
- Discounts on Museum programs and Summer Expedition
- Membership card and decal
- Recognition in newsletter
- Invitations to special member events

Black Warrior River ($100–$249)
- Discovering Alabama DVDs
- 10% discount at University of Alabama Museum Shops

Cababa River ($250–$499)
- Free admission to Moundville Native American Festival
- Unlimited admission to Museums for five guests
- A one-year gift membership at Alabama River level
- Additional 10% (20% total) discount at University of Alabama Museum Shops

Coosa River ($500–$999)
- Unlimited admission to Museums for two additional guests (seven total)
- Reduced rental rates for Museum facilities

Sipsey River ($1,000–$2,499)
- Unlimited admission to Museums for three additional guests (10 total)
- Two additional one-year gift memberships (three total), all at Black Warrior level

Douglas E. Jones Society ($2,500–$4,999)
- Unlimited admission to Museums for two additional guests (12 total)
- Special recognition in Smith Hall Foyer
- Three one-year gift memberships upgraded to Cahaba River level

Eugene Allin Smith Society ($5,000+)
- Book on natural history from The University of Alabama Press
- Unlimited admission to Museums for three additional guests (15 total)

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Yes, I/we want to support The University of Alabama Museums.

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Credit Card Number ____________________________ Expiration Date ____________________________
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Box 870340, Tuscaloosa, AL 35487
205-348-9826 • giving.ua.edu
Alabama Museum of Natural History
Summer Programs 2015

June –
8-13 Museum Expedition 37 – Middle School Camp - $350 for week
15-20 Museum Expedition 37 – High School Camp - $350 for week
22-27 Museum Expedition 37 – Public Camp - $350 for week

July –
10 Shark’s Tooth Creek Fossils - $25
11 Bear Creek Canoeing - $25
14 Tubing the Little Cohaba River - $25
16 North River Canoeing - $25
17 Coosa River Canoeing - $25
18 Shark’s Tooth Creek Fossils - $25
20-24 Science Day Camp (5th-8th grade) - $150 for week
27-31 Art Day Camp* (3rd-5th grade) - $85 for week

August –
1 Shark’s Tooth Creek Fossils - $25

For more information or to register for any of our programs, please contact us at 205-348-7550 or museum.programs@ua.edu

*Art Day Camp will only be a half day camp.

Not Your Ordinary Summer Camp!

Three Exciting Sessions

Looking for something different and exciting to do this summer? Join us as we set out on an expedition to uncover the mysteries of Alabama’s early geologic history. The Museum Expedition combines science and history with the fun and adventure of the outdoors. This year, you are invited to work side by side with scientists on a paleontological field research project at sites in Alabama’s black belt. This is a rare opportunity to gain insights into the life and environment that once thrived in Alabama during the Cretaceous Period. No experience is necessary to participate!

Middle School Camp June 8-13
High School Camp June 15-20
Public Camp June 22-27

Space is limited so sign up soon!

* Work side-by-side with scientists in the field of paleontology. Enjoy the natural wonders of Alabama while having fun and forging friendships that will last a lifetime.

ALABAMA MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
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