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Growing up as a military brat, I've had the opportunity to live and visit many different places. I have to say that Alabama is one of the most beautiful states I've seen. Hiking up to Bald Rock on Cheaha Mountain, fishing in Little River Canyon, and eagle watching in Guntersville are things that every nature lover should take the time to do. The Mobile Delta provides stiff competition for those places when it comes to spending quality time in the wild, and it's right here in our own backyard.

The Mobile Delta is an environmental show-stopper for people of all walks of life that enjoy sight-seeing, fishing, birding, photography and boating. Formed by the joining of the Alabama and Tombigbee Rivers, the Delta is 30 miles long and 12 miles wide, second only in size to the mighty Mississippi Delta.

Within this vast and complex network of water is a variety of habitats, from cypress swamp and tupelo gum forests to hidden bayous and grass beds. Some of the cypress trees are the oldest living trees in Alabama, with individuals estimated to be more than 800 years old. The Delta plays several important ecological roles, such as filtering impurities out of the water, providing nursery ground for some of our commercial fishing species such as shrimp and blue crab, and it soaks up extra water pushed in by hurricanes or floods preventing surrounding towns from becoming inundated.

The different habitats in the Delta are home to an impressive array of wildlife. Fishing is good even in the colder winter months, with largemouth bass, bluegill and redear sunfish biting year round. Birders won't be disappointed when they catch sight of a soaring Mississippi kite, or a green heron stalking its way through the shallows in search of food. You may get lucky and see our state reptile, the Alabama red-bellied turtle, or catch a glimpse of an alligator basking in the sun. The Delta is also prime black bear roaming ground, with the population centered around Creola.

If you're a history buff, the Delta is your living, breathing text book. Humans have lived in the Delta from at least 1500 B.C. During the Mississippian Period about 700 years ago, indian mounds were built and still exist today. The Choctaw and Creek Indians once considered the Delta prime hunting grounds. Both the Spanish and the French explored the area, although the French were more successful, thus the prevalence of French names around the Mobile area, as well as the city's Mardi Gras roots.

The Mobile Register published a special report on called "A Wilderness Despite Us", and it is an excellent resource for any looking to learn more about the Delta. You can find it online at <http://www.al.com/specialreport/mobileregister/?delta2.html>. Or maybe you want to do more than read, the adventurous can take a trip and see the Delta for themselves. Enjoy this unique and vital wilderness, learn about the richness, the critters and the history, and take your children so they can learn as well. As always, feel free to contact me at (251) 438-5690 or by email at [bordesm@auburn.edu](mailto:bordesm@auburn.edu) for more information.