

ALABAMA EXTENSION FORESTRY, WILDLIFE, AND NATURAL RESOURCES TEAM



429
programs

20,886
participants

2024 Social Media Engagement

Facebook

495.1K reach

**increase
of 39%**

Instagram

4.4K reach

**increase
of 201%**

2024 Newsletter

6K subscribers

**increase
of 200%**

Working with a passion for enhancing the
lives of Alabamians through Forestry, Wildlife,
and Natural Resources education

extension
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2024 Impact Report

Highlights



Forestry, Wildlife, and Natural Resources Team

The mission of the Alabama Extension Forestry, Wildlife, and Natural Resources (FWNR) team is to provide relevant, science-based information to help Alabama residents make informed natural resource-related management decisions.

“Working with a passion for enhancing the lives of Alabamians through Forestry, Wildlife, and Natural Resources education.”

Participants in the Forestry, Wildlife, and Natural Resources program learn how to improve forest health, create and improve wildlife habitat, increase the quality and value of timber, and protect water quality.

Alabama has 64 different and documented ecosystems, and 25 are forests and woodlands covering more than two-thirds of the state. These features make Alabama the fifth most biologically diverse state in the country. You can travel by car from the mountains of north Alabama to the sandy white beaches of the Gulf Coast in just 1 day and never leave the state.

Wood products, hunting, outdoor recreation, and improved water quality significantly contribute to Alabama’s economy. For example, in 2020, Alabama ranked second in the United States in pulp, paper, and paperboard production and sixth in lumber production. Outdoor recreation activities, such as camping, hiking, boating, and hunting, generated more than 55,500 jobs and provided \$2.1 billion in wages and benefits to Alabama workers in 2020. Healthy, well-managed forests support these industries and society’s well-being.



2024 Social Media Engagement

Facebook
495.1K reach
increase of 39%
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2024 Newsletter
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Alabama Master Naturalist

Project Leader: Wesley Anderson, Emily Burchfield

Alabama Master Naturalist (AMN) is a statewide program whose goal is to help promote awareness, understanding, and respect of Alabama's natural world among Alabama's citizens and visitors. In addition, the AMN program will develop a statewide corps of well-informed volunteers providing education, outreach, and service dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas within their communities.

In 2024, we had 432 participants enrolled in the program. To become certified Alabama Master Naturalists, participants must complete the 22-module online course, attend two field days, and log 30 volunteer hours. This year, we offered ten field days in partnership with Alabama State Parks. Field day locations included Monte Sano (x2), Joe Wheeler (x2), Cathedral Caverns, Cheaha, Wind Creek, Oak Mountain, DeSoto, and Gulf State Parks. Across the ten field days, there were 241 participants.

Volunteer hours are required; however, participants may complete their hours concurrently while taking the course and attending the field days or after completing the other course requirements. For 2024, 91 participants submitted volunteer hours totaling 1,532 hours, the equivalent of \$51,306. Volunteer activities must occur in Alabama and be natural resource focused.



Number of Participants: 432 participants enrolled in the online Canvas course, working toward Alabama Master Naturalist certification

Audience: 25% Male, 73% Female, 2% Nonbinary, 93% White, 4% Black, 2% Indigenous American, 1% Asian, 2% Hispanic, 15% Veterans

Extension Collaborators: Drew Metzler, Becky Barlow, Nancy Loewenstein, Audrey Gamble, Katelyn Kesheimer, Mona Dominguez, Lynn Dickinson, Kerry Steedley, Bence Carter, Dylan Taylor

Agency Collaborator: Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources State Parks Division

Evaluation Technique: Surveys

Direct Impacts:

- 91 course participants logged volunteer hours in 2024
- 1,532 hours valued at \$51,306 were contributed by volunteers to natural resource management in the state
- Participants actively manage more than 11,000 acres in Alabama
- In partnership with Alabama State Parks and in coordination with park naturalists, we delivered 10 full-day field days to 241 participants

Beekeeping

Project Leader: William Rowe

Beekeeping focuses on bringing up-to-date management practices to Alabama's beekeepers and hive product processes to help maximize the production of honey and other edibles, wax, and bees.

We focus on in-person events, a newsletter, and a webinar series. In-person events include a 1-day symposium covering the whole state, beekeepers association events, beekeeping workshops, school events, Extension Master Gardener meetings, and participation in the Alabama Beekeepers Association and Alabama Master Beekeepers annual conferences.

Number of Participants:

In-person events: 1,063

Newsletter subscribers: 1,049

Webinar viewership: 2,019

Audience: 55% Male, 45% Female, 96% Non-Hispanic, 84% White, 2% Black, 4% Hispanic

Impact Assessment: Extension beekeeping efforts are expanding in Alabama with more programming and training for professional and hobbyist beekeepers. Beekeeping as a hobby and a small business has expanded exponentially in Alabama.

The honeybee has never been more valuable, with package bees (4 pounds of workers with a mated queen) now regularly costing more than \$200 to \$300. Nucleus colonies, small working colonies used to quickly start a full-sized hive, now cost between \$150 and \$200 for Alabama beekeepers. Alabama experiences about a 23 percent loss of managed honeybee colonies per year. Complex health and habitat issues now make beekeeping more intensive and challenging.

Auburn & Extension Collaborators: Geoffrey Williams, Allyson Shabel, Bronson Lubresky, Jake Kelley

Evaluation Techniques: Zoom poll, Qualtrics poll, paper survey

Direct Impacts:

- 92% of attendees report intending to implement practices taught.
- 58% of attendees report potential savings between \$50 and \$200. The average potential savings is \$60 per beekeeper.





Community Forestry

Project Leader: Georgios Arseniou

This project aims to enhance the health, safety, and resilience of Alabama's urban and community forests, focusing on education and professional development. It seeks to achieve this by improving the expertise of commercial and municipal tree-care professionals while also equipping homeowners with the knowledge to manage the trees on their properties more effectively.

Alabama frequently experiences severe storms, including hurricanes, tornadoes, and thunderstorms, which pose significant risks to people and infrastructure. The state experiences a hurricane approximately every 2.5 years with a direct hit every 9 years, and an average of 63 tornadoes annually in central and northern regions. Storm-related tree failures are a persistent concern. These failures can damage homes, disrupt utilities, block roads, and create hazardous conditions during cleanup, making proper tree management essential for reducing risks and enhancing community resilience. In 2024, the Community Forestry team offered the following:

- 12 workshops in tree care management and tree maintenance to prepare municipal and homeowner audiences for maintaining healthy trees and evaluating potentially dangerous trees.

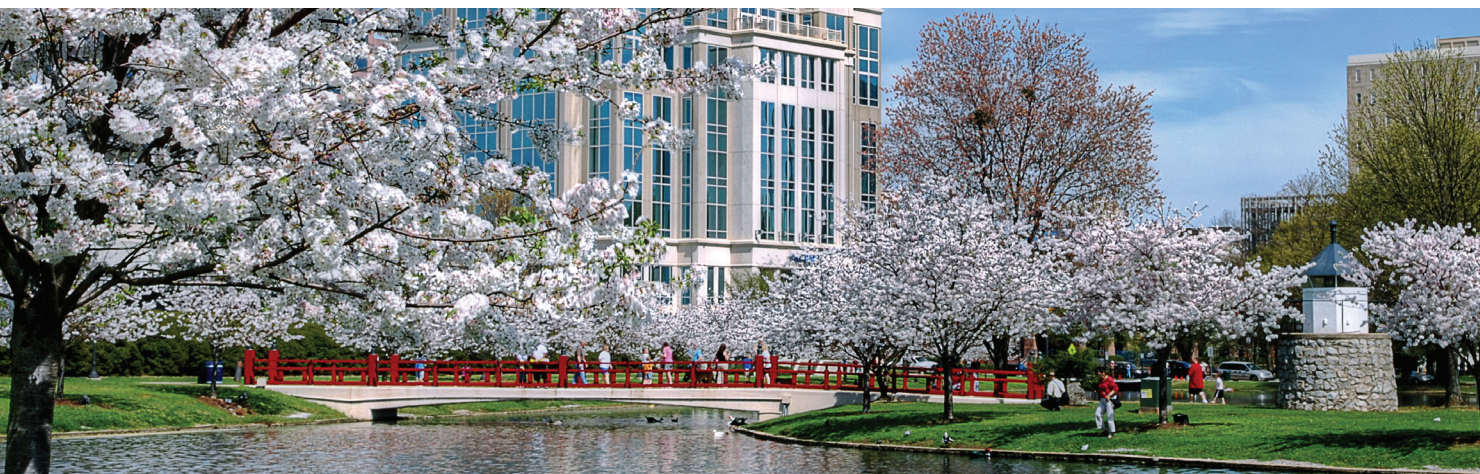
- 5 chainsaw safety workshops to prepare municipal and homeowner audiences for operating chainsaws in the aftermath of storms.
- 3 workshops to prepare candidate arborists for the International Society of Arboriculture certification test.
- 4 youth 4-H classes to raise awareness about the importance of urban trees among students in Alabama.
- 9 webinars on urban forestry and arboriculture topics through the City Forests webinar series.
- 7 educational videos about urban forest ecosystem services published through the Alabama Extension YouTube channel.
- Alabama RFD-TV included segments on urban forest ecosystems and the stormwater uptake benefits of urban trees, increasing public awareness of urban forestry.

Number of Participants:

In-State: 915; Out-of-State: 1,000; Total: 1,915

Audience: 92% Male, 8% Female, 17% Black, 74% White, 9% Other

Extension Collaborators: Jack Rowe, Joel Potter, Beau Brodbeck, David West, Kerry Steedley



Community Forestry (continued)

Agency Collaborator: Alabama Association of Resource Conservation and Development Councils

Evaluation Technique: Post-event evaluation

Direct Impacts:

- 90% experienced a change in knowledge.
- 82% plan to implement knowledge gained.
- 67% plan to purchase and wear personal protective equipment.

Attendee Comments:

"Great presentation/presenters"

"Very informative and great presenters"

"I appreciate the time our speakers dedicated to preparing. It was very professional and educational."

"Great program, and I liked the urban tree walk"

"I think it was an interesting program."

"Thank you for including Master Gardeners"

"Thank you for the training/class—very helpful"

"Overall, very informative, and I enjoyed the class"

"Beneficial workshop!"

"It was an informative workshop."

"I thoroughly enjoyed this workshop!"



Environmental Education Through Citizen Science

Project Leaders: Wesley Anderson, Kerry Steedley

Environmental Education through Citizen Science is a program that encourages conservation-focused volunteerism while teaching participants about Alabama's natural resources. The flagship initiative of this program is the Marble Bowl.

The Marble Bowl is an online competition pitting fans of Auburn University versus fans of the University of Alabama using the iNaturalist.org platform. Over college football season, teams compete to log biodiversity observations. The winning team is determined by a combination of unique observers, unique observations, and total number of observations. Observations must occur within the state of Alabama.

This year, the video produced in 2023 by the Alabama Extension Communications team was awarded Gold in the Promotional Materials category by the Association of Natural Resource Extension Professionals. The Auburn University team won the 2024 competition, but it remained competitive throughout. This is the third year of the Marble Bowl and the goal is for it to remain an annual event. The total number of observers (498), species recorded (5,723), and observations (49,648) were the highest values for a single competition since it began in 2022.

Number of Participants: 498 observers (260 for Auburn University and 238 for the University of Alabama)

Collaborators: Alabama Museum of Natural History; Auburn University Museum of Natural History; Auburn University's College of Forestry, Wildlife and Environment

Social media: Facebook posts had 10,500 views and 435 interactions, Instagram posts had 3,800 views, 129 interactions, and a reach of 2,200.

Awards: Gold award for Promotional Materials at the 2024 Association of Natural Resource Extension Professionals biennial conference

Direct Impacts:

- 49,648 unique observations
- 5,723 unique species
- 498 unique observers
- Approximately 2,482 volunteer hours contributed with an approximate value of \$83,136



Forest Business Resources

Project Leader: Adam Maggard

The focus of this project is to enhance the livelihoods of Alabama residents by improving forest management and business practices, increasing opportunities for producing income. Specifically, the information and tools focus on temporary or small-scale income-producing opportunities and owning and operating a value-added business to assist private forest owners in achieving their goals and objectives. This project educates landowners on the benefits of healthy forests and how practicing forest management can enhance the health and resiliency of forests and provide opportunities to generate income from forests that can be used to support the costs of forest management practices. This includes climate-smart and resilient forestry education for professionals through train-the-trainer workshops, demonstrations, and online modules.

Number of Participants:

26 events, 1,920 participants

Audience: 35% Female, 65% Male, 88% White, 11% Black, 1% Other

Extension Collaborators: Bence Carter, Norm Haley

Collaborators: FWNR Extension Agents, County Extension Directors, County Forestry Planning Committees, Alabama Forest Owners Association, Alabama Forestry Commission, Alabama Forestry Association, Alabama Treasure Forest Association, Forest Landowners Association, Forest Landowner Foundation, ALFA, Alabama Forests Forever Foundation, College of Architecture, Design and Construction, Samuel Ginn College of Engineering, Offices of Sustainability, University Architect, and industry collaborators from forestry, architecture, engineering, building construction, green business, and economic development.

Evaluation Techniques: Post-event surveys, follow-up discussions, live webinar polling, Qualtrics surveys

Delivery Modes/Format: In-person, online, hybrid

Number of Publications Produced:

- Extension: 8 (includes peer reviewed, timely information, and newsletter articles)
- Research: 2 (peer reviewed)

Direct Impacts:

- Approximately 8,754,582 forestland acres owned and/or managed by participants of forest business resources workshops and events
- Estimated \$4.4 million in improved forestland value, recovered loss, economic development, and financial decision-making based on information learned

The 2024 post-program evaluation summary is based on 501 participants with 8.4 million forested acres:

- 98% of participants surveyed reported an increase in knowledge of the subject material
- 67% of participants surveyed reported they would implement something learned on their forestland





The Sustainable Future of CLT in the South: Grow. Design. Build. Conference:

Project Leader: Adam Maggard

A 3-day conference held October 7-9, 2024, in Auburn, Alabama, brought participants and experts from across the country and as far away as Finland who converged to share the latest cross-laminated timber and mass timber research, trends, and developments. The conference's goal was to provide synergy and opportunities for learning and discussion and to discover pathways to grow this emerging industry to benefit Alabamians and beyond. CLT is a prefabricated wood product gaining popularity in building construction. With abundant southern pine in Alabama and the region, CLT is positioned to grow in the southern United States, benefiting the forest industry and the region's economy.

Number of Participants: 198

Overall Impact:

- Audience: Forest landowners, foresters, policymakers, business leaders, architects, engineers, builders, economic development professionals, students
- Participants from 14 states and 2 countries
- 100% of participants surveyed reported an increase in knowledge
- 88% of participants surveyed reported they would use something learned from the conference



Forestry and Wildlife Education Programs for Youth (Alabama 4-H)

Project Leader: Emily Nichols

Alabama Cooperative Extension System and Alabama 4-H are committed to promoting statewide awareness of native species and habitat management through a suite of program offerings, capacity building, and outreach publications. This includes the statewide coordination of Project WILD in conjunction with the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, the Wildlife Habitat Education Program (WHEP) as part of the National WHEP, the Alabama 4-H Forestry Program as part of the National 4-H Forestry Invitational, and the delivery of other natural resources–related educational lessons used widely in classrooms. Our efforts build the capacity of adult volunteers, informal and formal educators, and industry professionals to engage a youth audience with hands-on learning.

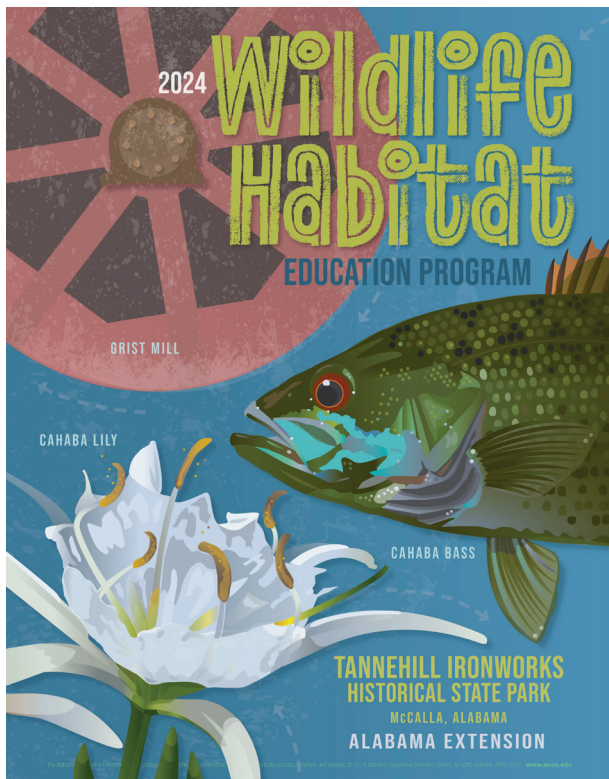
In the summer of 2024, we partnered with the Tannehill Historical Ironworks State Park and ADCNR WFF to conduct the Alabama WHEP Contest and deliver natural resources outreach and education. We also partnered with the Nockalula Falls Park and the Alabama Forestry Commission to conduct the Alabama Forestry Contest and deliver forest management education and outreach. The Auburn University Museum of Natural History helped train the Cullman County wildlife team in species identification to prepare for the national contest, and Alabama Extension personnel delivered wildlife management training.

Extension Collaborators: Danny Cain, Drew Metzler, Nancy Loewenstein, County Extension Directors, 4-H Extension Agents, Extension Agents, 4-H Agent Assistants

Collaborators: Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (ADCNR) Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division, Auburn University Forest Health Cooperative, Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, Auburn University Department of Horticulture, Auburn University Museum of Natural History, National Wildlife Habitat Education Program, Tannehill Historical Ironworks State Park, Nockalula Falls Park, National 4-H Forestry Invitational, Alabama Forestry Commission, and certified volunteers

Number of Participants: 34,772 youth and adults reached through education and outreach, in-person and virtual training, activities, and events.





Direct Impacts:

- 22 educators certified in Project WILD
- 54 educators and volunteers trained in forestry and wildlife best management practices
- 122 participants from 6 counties involved in the Alabama Forestry Contest; 52 youth demonstrated how to implement management techniques in forested uplands
- 96 participants from 6 counties were involved in the Alabama WHEP Contest; 39 youth demonstrated how to provide habitat that attracts native species in urban riparian areas
- 6 participants to represent Alabama in the national wildlife contest in Texas
- 34,617 youth involved in community-based forestry and wildlife learning
- Published *Introduction to Aquaponics for Educators* Canvas course
- Published *Identifying Common Trees Used in Alabama 4-H Forestry: Conifer, Broadleaf, Broadleaf Simple* (4HYD-2545)





Natural Resources Webinar Series

Project Leaders: Norm Haley, Kerry Steedley

This webinar series provided free, biweekly virtual outreach and education to citizens, agencies, and organizations throughout Alabama on various natural resources–related topics. This project also focused to maintain and build upon the Alabama Extension FWNR team relevance and awareness throughout the state, the Southeast, and the nation. The wide breadth of topics was aimed to create appeal, interest, and benefits to broad audiences while also creating a following behind reliable, convenient, and easily accessible programming. A total of 25, 1-hour webinar sessions that included 15 minutes of live Q&A with the presenter were hosted live via Zoom and made available on demand to registrants. Professional continuing education credit was offered to registered foresters and professional loggers.

Number of Participants: 5,676 registered, 2,518 on-demand views

Audience: 60% Male, 40% Female, 89% White, 3% Black, 3% Hispanic, 1% Indigenous American, 1% Asian, 1% Other, 2% More Than 1 Race

Collaborators: Alabama Extension FWNR and Aquatic Resources Teams, ADCNR, ADEM, Alabama Historical Commission, American Bird Conservancy, Auburn University, Jacksonville State University, The Jones Center at Ichauway, Tall Timbers, University of Georgia, UFS, USDA-APHIS, USFWS, Wild Taught Environmental Education and Management

Evaluation Technique: Registration demographic and acreage reporting, live webinar Zoom polling, post-webinar series Qualtrics evaluation

Acreage Owned or Managed by Attendees: 38,196,859 (equivalent to 166% of Alabama forestland)

Direct Impacts:

- 54% of attendees implemented some practice discussed in one of the webinars viewed
- 44% of attendees viewed more than 6 of the 25 webinars offered
- 629 PLM & CFE CEUs were offered to forestry industry professionals at no charge
- Underserved audience outreach attributed to 40% of the viewership based on sex and 11% based on race
- 38,196,859 acres owned or managed by attendees indicates participation by agency and professional personnel providing broad impacts at landscape level and value of the series toward professional development
- Participants indicated satisfaction with the webinar series:
 - “No suggestions. It is OUTSTANDING!”
 - “They are excellent and I love having the recordings to go back and reference.”
 - “Excellent programming”

Professional Logging Manager

Project Leader: Richard Cristan

Alabama has 23 million acres of timberland and ranks third in largest commercial forestland in the United States. Logging is economically important in the state. Loggers need to be trained in sustainable forestry practices and logging safety. The Alabama Professional Logging Manager (PLM) initial training and subsequent required yearly continuing forestry education (CFE) provide loggers the needed training. PLM and CFE topics include sustainability, forest management, biodiversity, conservation, wildlife, threatened and endangered species, forestry best management practices (BMPs) for water quality protection, logging safety, and trucking.

Loggers must complete 5 CFE hours to maintain their PLM status annually, and registered foresters (RF) need 10 CFE hours annually to maintain their registration with the Alabama State Board of Registration for RF. Extension specialists and Extension agents conducted in-person CFE workshops for loggers and foresters and a biweekly webinar series that offered PLM and CFE hours. Specialists and Extension agents were also invited to speak at CFE workshops hosted by the forest industry, organizations, associations, and natural resource council planning committees.

Collaborators: Alabama Extension FWR Specialists, Extension Agents, and County Extension Directors, Alabama Forestry Association, Alabama Forestry Commission, Alabama Loggers Council, Forest Workforce Training Institute



Overall Program Contacts: 1,793
(42 events)

**PLM Initial Training Contacts
(New PLM):** 137

PLM Initial Training Demographics:
41 Alabama counties represented, 41 average age (16–83), 84% White, 12% Black, 2% Hispanic, 2% Indigenous American, 95% Male and 5% Female, 68% Loggers, 16% Foresters, 4% Timber Buyers, 5% Truck Drivers, 7% Other

PLM Initial Training Participants Logging Experience: 17% less than 1 year, 20% 2–5 years, 12% 6–10 years, 16% 10–20 years, 17% 20–30 years, 13% 30–40 years, 5% greater than 40 years

PLM CFE Participant Contacts and Hours:
474 contacts, 1,682 hours

RF CFE Participant Contacts and Hours:
610 contacts, 1,198 hours

Out-of-State CFE Contacts and Hours:
10 contacts, 38 hours

Overall CFE Contacts and Hours:
1,094 contacts, 2,918 hours

Products: Peer-reviewed Extension publications available at www.aces.edu

Evaluation Techniques: Surveys following PLM initial trainings and CFE workshops

Direct Impacts:

- Increased knowledge of sustainable forestry practices by an average of 67% (57% in 2023, 65% in 2022, and 58% in 2021)
- PLM initial training materials were clear and easy to understand (4.8/5), well organized (4.8/5), and valuable by increasing knowledge (4.7/5)

Snake Identification and Safety

Project Leader: Wesley Anderson, Dylan Taylor, Bence Carter

Human-snake conflicts have existed for millennia. Snakes seem to capture the public's imagination through a combination of fear and fascination. At the same time, many people are beginning to recognize their ecological importance, and requests for snake relocation rather than extermination have become increasingly common.

We identified the need to offer venomous snake training classes, focusing on identification, safety, and proper handling techniques. We wanted to ensure people most likely to respond to a snake call were receiving the training—particularly first responders such as police, fire, EMTs, and animal control. These workshops teach attendees how to correctly identify native venomous snakes, general safety, and steps to take if bitten. They culminate in attendees getting to interact directly with native venomous snakes, including timber rattlesnakes, copperheads, and cottonmouths, while using appropriate tools to handle and secure them for relocation.

Between June and November 2024, we conducted seven day-long workshops geared toward first responders. First responders received CEUs appropriate to their profession on request. The geographic scope of the workshops was statewide with workshops occurring in Pike, Sumter, Blount, St. Clair, Elmore, DeKalb, and Houston counties.



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Four shorter workshops on snake identification and safety were offered to the general public in Hale, Greene, and Tuscaloosa counties.

Number of Participants: 284

Audience: 75 Total, 67% Male, 32% Female, 1% Nonbinary, 83% White, 13% Black, 4% Indigenous American, 1% Hispanic

Collaborators: Troy University, Snead Police Department, Friends of Big Canoe Creek, Alabama Wildlife Federation, Northeast Alabama Community College, Moundville Archaeological Park, University of Alabama, University of West Alabama

Evaluation Techniques: Surveys

Direct Impacts:

- 156 participants had the opportunity to work directly with venomous snakes to increase the ability to relocate them safely.
- Average perceived ability to correctly identify venomous snakes increased from 2.5 (Slightly Knowledgeable) to 4.0 (Very Knowledgeable) on a five-point scale.
- 79% of participants indicated their opinion of snakes had changed by the conclusion of the workshop.
- 83% of participants indicated they were “More Comfortable” or “Much More Comfortable” safely relocating a venomous snake should the need arise.
- Participants indicated satisfaction with the workshops:
 - “Grateful for the offering, excellent instruction and hands on training”
 - “Much needed and probably a very overlooked subject. There’s a lot of ignorance that this class stamped out when dealing with snakes.”

Wildlife Management: Enhancement and Damage

Project Leaders: Mark Smith

Alabamians spend more than \$2.2 billion per year on wildlife-related recreation, and most of these expenditures are made by 1.1 million wildlife watchers (\$734 million) and 535,000 hunters (\$913 million per year). These individuals spend more than 14.3 million days per year engaged in these two outdoor activities. The Wildlife Management: Enhancement and Damage project is designed to assist clients with managing Alabama's natural resources. Management may involve programs and one-on-one contacts to improve wildlife habitat or to minimize or eliminate damage caused by wildlife. Enhancement programs cover topics ranging from backyard birds and planting food plots for deer to managing habitats for wild turkeys and pond management.

Wildlife damage and ways to address those problems comprise a significant amount of work for Extension agents and specialists. These activities may be in the form of one-on-one contacts (e.g., phone calls, emails, office visits) or structured educational programs. Backyard wildlife damage programs focus on vertebrate species that may cause damage to structures, yards, and ornamentals and/or pose health threats. Program topics include squirrels, chipmunks, moles, voles, commensal rodents, bats, snakes, and white-tailed deer.

The goal of these activities is to educate clients on how to identify damage and take actions necessary to eliminate it, either by contacting a professional or using the information provided to address the problems themselves.

Extension Collaborators: Wes Anderson, Bence Carter, Lynn Dickinson, Norm Haley, Kerry Steedley, Dylan Taylor

Number of Participants: 520

Audience: 79% Male, 21% Female, 87% White, 13% Black

Conservative Direct Impact Estimate: \$79,365 in prevented wildlife damage to property (assumes an average of \$715 per contact event) and \$503,070 in wildlife enhancement in urban and rural communities (\$1,230 enhancement expenditure per contact based on 2006 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation)





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