



the river's voice

The Official Publication of the Friends of the Locust Fork River Summer 2009

Our Mission

As Friends of the Locust Fork River, we join together to actively preserve the natural integrity of the river in its free-flowing state, and to that end, the lifestyle of the community that surrounds it.

OUTINGS & EVENTS

Sat. July 11

LAZY TUBE FLOAT #1

In the dog days we pile onto something floatable and drift slowly and more slowly around a bend.

With low water, (the usual) we drift for a couple of hours. If we should get some unseasonal rains, the time is as swift as one hour. We pull out and eat our lunch and everybody carpools back to meeting site. It's a grand way to while away a hot Saturday.

Meet at BP Station just north of merge (or "confluence") of US 231 and AL 79 in Cleveland at 9 am. (Also formerly *(continued on page two)*)

AMAZING! From Proposed Inundation to Potential Preservation

By Nancy Jackson

As Friends of the river probably know, the Birmingham Water Works Board (BWVB) decided in February against building a dam and reservoir on the Locust Fork River in Blount County. What a relief!

MORE VS SMART

(Please note that FLFR regrets that the water board continues to insist on more water instead of smart water. The proposed construction of a pump station on the Black Warrior River will create significant erosion and sedimentation. Conservation and efficiency measures would provide the additional water at lower financial cost, with only positive environmental impact. FLFR will continue to urge conservation and efficiency.)

LAND FOR SALE

Then in an early April meeting BWVB suddenly announced the 3,200 acres of property it bought around the reservoir site was available for sale. Our thanks to Ann Smith, a member of the League of Women Voters, who watchfully attends BWVB meetings, and alerted us immediately.

NOMINATION

By April 14, with time-warp speed, Nelson Brooke, Black Warrior Riverkeeper/ executive director, presented a stellar nomination packet to Forever Wild (FW).

Forever Wild is Alabama's public land trust, acquiring lands for preservation to benefit the public.

Nelson's packet included attachments of:

- 33 organizations in support of the nomination & acquisition
- Maps and plats
- Rare species list
- Background information
- Gorgeous Beth Maynor Young photos

He paddled the stretch of river within the properties and richly described its features in his introductory letter: "wooded hills", "a calm and scenic stretch", "a nice sandy beach", and shoals sustaining the Shoals spider lily (a.k.a. Cahaba lily).

Nelson also noted geologist Jim Lacefield's assessment of the river as "within the same channel as an ancient river... formed some 300 million years ago."

The letter referenced priority valuation of the river by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, the U.S. National Park Service, and World Wildlife Fund.

In all, he made a very strong case for protection of "one of Alabama's longest remaining free-flowing rivers" – great for swimming, paddling, fishing, photographing, bird and wildlife watching. He cited water quality issues, of course.

(continued on page two)

OUTINGS & EVENTS

CONTINUED

Pardue's, then Howard's, and now Covered Bridge Grill.) We'll carpool to put-in. Bring water shoes, a flotation device, sun hat or screen, protection against poison ivy for walk to river, old clothes and/or swim suit, lunch. We'll provide canned drinks and water. To register call Richard, 205-681-0808.

Sat Aug 8 **LAZY TUBE FLOAT #2**

Same slow story — different day. (See Float #1 above). To register call Nancy, 205-429-3090

TBA **PUBLIC MEETING** **ABOUT LOCUST FORK** **LANDS NOMINATED** **FOR FOREVER** **WILD PURCHASE**

Stay tuned! Information about the Forever Wild process and options for land use after purchase.

TBA **OCTOBER BIRD STROLL**

Still stay tuned. We hope to make this delightful birding stroll at King's Bend a quarterly event — roughly January, April and October.

(PROPOSED PRESERVATION continued from page one)

NEXT STEP

It worked! On June 11 the Forever Wild board, in its quarterly meeting, voted unanimously to move forward on the Locust Fork nomination. The State Lands Division staff will secure an appraisal value on the properties, and seek grant monies to support a potential purchase.

The meeting was well-attended by supporters of preservation of the Locust Fork properties. Nelson and Sam Howell spoke, as well as Ralph Mitchell, Blount County administrator, who stated the county was in full support. Dr. Doug Phillips was in attendance and voiced support, too.

Other nominated tracts were also moved forward. The FW board keeps several proposals in motion, since some will not meet with success.

Included were tracts adjoining the Walls of Jericho preserve already owned by FW; land near Tannehill State Park; and property in the Red Hills area of southwest Alabama, home to the salamander of that name, found only in that region.

SEPTEMBER MEETING

The FW board meets again in mid-September. At that time the board may consider an appraisal of the Locust Fork properties and vote whether to begin purchase negotiations with BWWB. Of course there is no guarantee that the board will act at that time, or be able to purchase the properties. It is our hope that BWWB will work with FW toward a successful preservation of this section of the river's immediate watershed.

OPTIONS

FW lands are managed to target four types of use: nature preserves, recreation areas, state parks, and wildlife management areas. BWWB lands could be a mix, but unlikely a state park, with state parks already financially strapped.

MORE SUPPORT

Local resident support, particularly from adjacent land owners, is very helpful at this stage. FLFR, Black Warrior Riverkeeper, and the other supporting organizations have worked very hard on this project. If you'd like to help or make comments, please contact Sam Howell at sam@flfr.org or Nelson Brooke at nbroke@blackwarriorriver.org.

FLFR's Day On The River needs YOU

'*Day on the River*' is an environmental education 'happening' at King's Bend on the banks of the Locust Fork River. The goal of 'Day on the River' is to teach the children who live in the Locust Fork watershed to be good stewards of the river and all the river's inhabitants. This event is geared to children age 8-12 but usually the whole family comes — so we reach

a lot of people. Many organizations help Friends of the Locust Fork River put on this event: Birmingham Canoe Club, Cahaba River Society, Alabama Rivers Alliance, McDowell Environmental Center, the McWane Science Center, the Venture Scout troop of Oneonta, Ashley Allen — a paleontologist and winner of the national 'best teacher' award *(continued on page three)*

RIVER EDUCATION "RAPIDS"

By Debra Gordon-Hellman, FLFR's prime education outreach

Lately, FLFR watershed education activities have been rushing along like, well, Class IV rapids. In mid-May came River Rave, the brainchild of Hayden Elementary's Dr. Shelley Vail-Smith. Inspired last September by FLFR's Day on the River, Dr. Vail-Smith created an exciting day of educational activities on the Locust Fork at King's Bend. Two hundred fourth graders and over 100 parents and teachers descended on the area for a fun, stimulating program.

TREES, CREEPIES AND ALL

Workshops on tree identification, siltation, creepy crawlies, woodland animals, river seining, riverside chemistry, water conservation, and the food chain were led by FLFR, Ruffner Mountain Nature Center, Alabama Water Watch, and wonderful Hayden teachers, including retired science teacher Dr. Robert Hamm, a noted herpetologist. Dr. Vail-Smith's vision goes beyond her school. With her, FLFR hopes the entire county will embrace this type of river education project.

from Oneonta High School and our very own FLFR members/ environmentalists: Nancy Jackson, Debra Gordon-Hellman, Richard and Melanie Johns and many more. Last year we had 144 children and 61 parents participate and 75 volunteers. It's all totally free including the lunch.

If you are a FLFR member or just interested in passing on enthusiasm for maintaining a healthy river while having a

WATER WATCH

The next day FLFR hosted an Alabama Water Watch certification workshop on the Locust Fork in the Royal community. Local educators and others from Blount County, Birmingham, & Huntsville learned chemistry & bacteria testing for water quality. The Water Watch program is adaptable to high school science courses. Alabama Water Watch, headquartered at Auburn University, oversees volunteers collecting data to create a long-term profile of water quality. FLFR members Nancy Jackson, also a board member, and Susan Finley have been monitoring for over 15 years, two of Alabama's "oldest" monitors.

EDUCATION AND NATURE

Not only kids get to have fun while learning! Another visionary, Locust Fork High School teacher Marcia Butler, organized with some FLFR assistance a statewide teacher conference in June she called "A Day at the Fork: Creating Outdoor Education" (*continued on page seven*)

great time — consider volunteering for **Day on the River**. *We need volunteers* for guiding groups of children to the different stations, helping with lunch preparation and clean-up, parking, and being a safety monitor on the river banks.

Email Sharon Cook otebear@urisp.net to let us know you'll be there. And, do this ASAP! **Don't forget to mark your calendar for Sat., September 12th, 2009.**

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NOTICE OF BRIDGE CLOSINGS

The Swann Covered Bridge will be closed for repairs as of the week of June 15, 2009 to do some needed repair work to ensure structural integrity to 3 tons (6000 lb.) weight capacity.

Parking access for the put-in and take-out will be best made from the "river right" side. The Horton Mill Covered Bridge has already closed. The Easley Covered Bridge will soon follow. The work on all three covered bridges is expected to take at least 12 months to complete.

The Great Raft Trip — finally! By Stephen Guesman

The great fun raft trip, that is. After 4 years of talking and trying, FLFR finally had our first annual fun(d) raising Whitewater Raft Trip on April 18th. About 15 folks put in at King's Bend and headed downstream in rafts, canoes and rubber duckies – the two-person kind. A little over 4 hours later we pulled out at Swann Covered Bridge having set a speed record (slow) for the renowned Section 3 of the Locust Fork River.

Much of our record-setting time was due to our leisurely lunch on the sunny rocks of Double Trouble as we watched various folks negotiate the rapids. Then some of our own crew took turns

shooting the rapids before we loaded back up and continued downstream.

Many thanks to our friends and benefactors from Locust Fork Expeditions (LFE) for providing the equipment and experience for this soon-to-be annual event. The LFE folks run several trips in the course of a season (January to April), but mostly for friends and scouts from their home in Tupelo, Mississippi. This was a rare treat to have them dedicate a day benefiting the Friends of the Locust Fork River.

And they want to do it again next year . . . so go ahead and mark your calendar for :

***The Annual Locust Fork
Whitewater Raft Trip
April 10th, 2010.***

APRIL BIRD "HIKE"

By Joe Still



Eight enthusiastic birders went for a hike (think "stroll") at King's Bend with David Pylant on April 25. David is the very knowledgeable president of the Audubon Society of Cullman.

The day was gorgeous and we saw a lot of local species. One showoff in particular, an Indigo Bunting, put on a lengthy display in a treetop for us. King's Bend is a beautiful riverside spot, with a variety of bird habitats.

FLFR is planning to do three yearly hikes with David in the future: Oct., Jan, and April. Listen up for details and come join us.

FLFR Canoe Outing June 2009

by Sam Howell, FLFR president

Thursday before Saturday's launch enough rain fell to allow us passage through the greatest obstacle before the take-out at Blalock Bridge...the Rock Garden.

It's not called the Rock Garden for nothin'. Thousands of rocks peeking above water level make for a difficult time if the USGS gauge at the hwy. 231/79 bridge reads 2.0 or less. This time we paddlers made it through with ease.



TEN MILES

On Saturday June 6th, the FLFR trip leader, Sam Howell, and 17 eager paddlers disembarked from the Crooked Shoal Bridge at County Highway 13. We set out on the 10 mile excursion along Section Six through Latham's Bottom, Standridge Bend, a Cahaba Lily patch, and the rock garden to a take-out at the hospitable Johns' Family property near Blalock Bridge. This is the area of lands nominated to Forever Wild (see page one).

Along the way we were welcomed by Mr. Turtle, Slim the Snake, Great Blue Herons, numerous ducks, and even an Osprey searching the river for dinner. Some of our group even caught a few bass to put the "sport" into the trip. The Locust Fork River is well known for its sport fish population.

The most fun for the young and young at heart of the canoeing party was an enticing rope swing on this warm spring day.

ALL FUN

The trip was well attended by locals as well as folks from Birmingham and Tuscaloosa. I am happy to say there were no mishaps along the way. Lunch and a nice swim at the halfway point on the beach at Standridge Bend were just right. No one seemed to mind that the trip took a little longer than planned. We were all having way too much fun to wish it to end!

If you are interested in learning more about this FLFR outing or to receive an email reminder of FLFR's monthly outings, email sam@flfr.org. For suggestions regarding possible outing venues please email our outings director at joestill@flfr.org

See "Outings" on Page One for information about our very popular July and August "lazy tube floats".

ON THE LAID-BACK ART OF TUBING

By Sam Anderson
Excerpted from "Dixie Zen" in
THE OXFORD AMERICAN
July/ August 2003

People often compare the summer heat of Louisiana to being locked in a sauna for three months. It's important to add that, in the sauna, you're forced to wear a body stocking made of warm honey-soaked cotton balls — and that, sometimes around the beginning of July, you're thrown into a clothes dryer (still within the sauna) in which you tumble about on high heat with a load of wet towels.

The point is that Louisiana's heat is inescapable and aggressive. It dominates life to such an extent that you start thinking consciously about things that are, in friendlier climates, unremarkable: breathing, for instance, and blood circulation. This means that from June to September, Louisiana's outdoors are off-limits...biking, hiking, tracking weird birds with binoculars — become exercises in instant dehydration.

(continued on page six)

COAL MINING PERMIT SOUGHT FOR CLEVELAND AREA

MCoal Corporation has filed for permits with Alabama agencies for high wall auger coal mining operations in the Cleveland area. The permit covers 3,255 acres, and disturbed areas will be 3,240 acres.

Duration of the proposed project is from 3/01/09 — 2/28/2014. Active mining may begin in September. Sites of coal mining are scattered over Township 11S, Range 1E and 2E; and Township 12S Range 1E.

The company notes that some operations will take place within the 100-year flood plain. The operation will include a 10,000-gallon diesel fuel storage facility. The capital costs estimated for pollution control measures are \$3,100,000.

(ON THE LAID-BACK ART OF TUBING *continued from page seven*)

Louisiana is more than twenty percent water, and through several millennia of absurdly hot summers, residents have found ways to squeeze into the state's aquatic fifth by boating, skiing, swimming, fishing and sportively dodging things with sharp teeth. In my experience, the most effective antidote to the heat is what I consider the unofficial summer sport of the south: *tubing*.

Midway through every summer, my friends and I would get tired of walls and air conditioning and drive out to our river of choice, the Bogue Chitto. On a map the Bogue Chitto is a thin line squiggling across the eastern edge of the state. It is modest in every way — in width, (somewhere between a country road and a suburban driveway), in depth, (the bottom rarely dips out of reach), and in length. Its temperature is perfect.

Several companies rent inner tubes, and though this can lead to overcrowding, it also makes the experience very easy. For \$8 you get your tube and a bus ride upriver....

It's hard to overemphasize the passivity of tubing. It is sloth ingeniously disguised as adventure. Nature rolls effortlessly by, and in response you alternately breathe and eat. You float down river for about five hours, gauging the length of the trip only by the emptiness of the ice chest. This indolence is broken up by a minimum of functional paddling.... Occasionally you wave with veiled condescension to a fleet of passing

canoers, trapped in their aluminum hotboxes and actively assaulting the river with oars.

Tubing, on the other hand, is fluvial Buddhism: it asks you to submit humbly to the river, to meet it on its own terms and have a long talk with it in its native language, rather than just flitting around on top of it. There are no tricks or stunts. You don't visit, you *merge*.

It is your motor. Aside from a tube, the only equipment you need is spiritual: respect for the river, an instinct for meditation, and a high regard for inaction.

Tubing, more than any narcotic, fundamentally changes your perception of time. As soon as you leave your last earthly point of reference...you slip into a state of religious, mystic timelessness.

There are no landmarks on the river — it's the same treeline, the same birdsong, the same sandbar, endlessly repeated — so that in addition to losing your sense of time you become detached from any commonsense notion of place. The end result...is Dixie Zen: a highly elusive, mindless and mindful trance in which you feel drunk and loved.... Even on a humble backwoods stream like the Bogue Chitto, you begin to understand why rivers have been the symbolic centerpieces of almost every culture, ancient and modern.

And then suddenly, you're at the landing. As you drive (home), the motion of the river does its best to rock you to sleep; when you finally get to your landlocked home... it is still not done with you. Though you know you're not moving, you bob gently, steadily for the rest of the night.

(RIVER EDUCATION continued from page three)

Across the Curriculum". About 100 teachers from around the state heard an inspiring address on the powerful connection between education and nature by Blount native Dr. Doug Phillips, of "Discovering Alabama".

OUTDOOR CURRICULUM

Then teachers attended workshops at Locust Fork High School and King's Bend on topics connecting curriculum with outdoor activities, such as orienteering, composting with worms, soil, bird/butterfly & vegetable gardens, creative writing, aquifers, and tree identification.

By far the most popular workshops took place in the river where teachers canoed (and flipped over), and learned about water testing

with chemistry and/or macro-invertebrates (small critters you can see with the eye). Leading the workshops were local citizens, teachers, Dan Porch of the Extension Service, and Doyle Keasel from Alabama Wildlife Federation.

QUALITY OF LIFE FOR ALL

Supportive principals, parents, teachers, citizen volunteers, and just plain folk who love nature and the river are essential players in maintaining a healthy river and a good quality of life in Blount County. Their generosity and that of landowners like Pat King of King's Bend, who enthusiastically supports river education, is integral to these efforts.

(cut form here to mail back in) -----

membership form

Yes, I want to help the Friends of the Locust Fork River preserve our local treasure:

I am a new member or a renewing member (check expiration date on label) **please check one**

Individual — \$20

Family — \$30

Friend — \$50

Patron — \$100

Donor — \$250 and above

Please include me in the FLFR e-mail network for outings and Locust Fork river alerts

Call me to help with FLFR activities

Name _____

(if mailing label is correct you just need to enter your name)

Address _____

City, State and Zip _____

Phone number _____ e-mail address _____

All contributions are tax deductible and gratefully appreciated! Please return this form to:

The Friends Of The Locust Fork, P.O. Box 245, Hayden, Alabama 35079

FLFR'S WISH LIST

Wishes richly fulfilled:

Jim & Faye Lacefield donated TWO excellent-condition whitewater canoes to FLFR. Thanks a ton!

Dana Waldrop donated a Polk Boat to FLFR. Thanks a heap!

Thanks to all of you who help FLFR in so many ways. It takes a village to take care of its river.

The Locust Fork has been compared to the Yellowstone and the Gallatin in Montana. Unlike those rivers, the Locust Fork doesn't enjoy the protection of flowing through a national park. It flows through Alabama. It is our treasure, and only the people of Alabama can save it. As a member of Friends of the Locust Fork River, your contribution will help in the fight to preserve and protect one of our state's rarest and most beautiful natural treasures.

River Recipes

From the pages of... *Locust Fork Yacht Club's Creek Bankin' Recipes*

Alabama Waterways: A Photographic Celebration by Ten Photographers.

Lite Box Gallery,
Pepper Place Showroom
Through July 18

Gallery Hours:

Thursday & Friday:

12:00 noon - 5:00 pm;

Saturday:

*8:00 am - 12:00 noon in
conjunction with the Pepper
Place Farmers Market.*



The Friends Of The Locust Fork
P.O. Box 245
Hayden, Alabama

*You can find us on the web
at www.FLFR.org*

Next time you are invited to the creek bank for some swimming and picnicking, ask if you can bring a summertime appetizer. Try this. You'll knock their trunks off!

Greek Marinated Shrimp (cold)

1.5 lb med. shrimp, shell on
6-9 cloves of garlic, minced
1/2 cup lemon juice
1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil
3 Tbsp fresh oregano, chopped
1-1/2 tsp lemon zest
2 Tbsp capers with liquid (optional)
salt & pepper to taste

Cook the shrimp in water with a little salt until just opaque in color (few minutes), drain, peel when able to handle and split lengthwise. Whisk the remaining ingredients together in stainless or glass bowl. Taste and adjust seasoning with S&P. I like mine with extra pepper and the capers. Mix with shrimp. Cover and let marinate for several hours... stirring occasionally. Serve cold.