
Mississippi Chapter Sierra Club

Golden Triangle Group

CROSSROADS

February 2003 – August 2003



SIERRA
CLUB
FOUNDED 1892

EVENTS

FEBRUARY

Sat., Feb. 8th, 9:00 a.m. **Sierra Club Wilderness Trail.** Volunteers are needed to clear brush and several fallen trees from the Sierra Club Wilderness Trail in the Noxubee Wildlife Refuge. Bring gloves, lunch, drinking water, and boots, if wet. Any of the following tools can also be brought: loppers, clippers, saws, and light chain saws. From Starkville, take Highway 25 S for about 10 miles. Turn left onto Keeton Tower Rd. We'll meet at the trail head, which is at the end of Keeton Tower Rd. The trail is a 4 mi. loop so there's lots to do. For more information, call Juliet Tang at 662-465-8767.

Wed., Feb. 12th, 6:00 p.m. **Potluck and Planning Meeting** at Frances and Harold Thompson's home. Election results for executive committee will be announced and officers for 2003 will be elected. We'll discuss ideas for raising local awareness of environmental issues and start organizing for the Summer Blast. Follow Montgomery St. north of Highway 82, turn right on Critz St., take 1st left on Overstreet Dr., and left again on Lakeview Dr. For more information, call the Thompsons at 662-323-7379.

MARCH

Wed., March 19th, 7:00 p.m. **Program: Ecology of the Galapagos Islands.** Dr. Armando de la Cruz, retired Professor from the Department of Biology at Mississippi State University will present a video on his recent trip to the Galapagos Islands followed by open forum discussion. Clay Lyle Building, rm 117, MSU Campus, Starkville. For more information, call Juliet Tang at 662-465-8767.

APRIL

Wed., April 16th, 7:00 p.m. **Program: Archaeology: A Non-renewable Resource.** The speaker will be Dr. Evan Peacock from the

Department of Anthropology at Mississippi State University. His research interest is the archaeology of human impact on the environment. The talk will be held in Rm 117, Clay Lyle Bldg, MSU Campus, Starkville. For more information, call Evan Peacock at 662-324-6407.

MAY

Sat., May 17th, 4:00 p.m. **Summer BLAST Party.** Sierra Club invites its members and other kindred spirits to join us in a loud celebration of the earth and its beauty. We will provide main dish and beverages and ask others to bring side dishes. Come mingle and appreciate nature's glory in the fine gardens created by the Thompsons. Follow Montgomery St. north of Highway 82, turn right on Critz St., take 1st left on Overstreet Dr., and left again on Lakeview Dr. Please call Juliet Tang at 662-465-8767 so we can get an approximate count of the number of people coming.

Sat., May 24th, 7:30 a.m. **Cahaba Lilies.** Canoe and/or walk along the Cahaba River in Alabama (near Tuscaloosa) to see these spectacular aquatic spider lilies in the Amaryllis family. This is NOT an official Sierra Club Outing. Bring your lunch and drinking water. We will meet at Clay Lyle Bldg, MSU Campus, Starkville. Call Juliet Tang ahead of time to make arrangements for canoes, etc. 662-465-8767. (also see featured article)

AUGUST

Wed., Aug. 20th, 6:00 p.m. **Potluck and Planning** at Lois Connington's home, 117 Cedar Ln., Starkville. Bring suggestions for fall programs, outings, and newsletter articles. From Highway 82, go north on Old West Point Rd. Take 2nd right on Cedar Ln.

THE CAPTIVATING CAHABA LILIES

Few natural wonders offer such a fleeting glimpse of their beauty as does the Cahaba lily. However, if you have been lucky enough to have seen a half-mile long blanket of the spectacular white blossoms spreading across Hargrove Shoals on the Cahaba River in Alabama, you come away feeling blessed. Every year, these stately plants begin appearing from mid-May to mid-June along the shoals of the Cahaba River in southwest Shelby and north Bibb counties.

The lily populations on Hargrove Shoals and those on the Little Cahaba are among the largest known stands remaining today. The Cahaba lily's unique appearance, development, and habitat requirements make this aquatic species unequaled among the Amaryllis family. The Amaryllis family includes two species called "spider lilies," one of which is the Cahaba lily, *Hymenocallis coronaria*.

The lily's highly selective habitat requirements include clean, fast flowing, well-oxygenated water over layered rocks where the bulbs become wedged. Rocky shoals are the most highly oxygenated habitats in a river, moving sediment that would otherwise smother the lily's bulbs. These rocky shoals are common along what is called the "Fall Line," a transition zone between the hilly areas of the Appalachian Mountain chain and the Gulf Coastal Plains. This Fall Line runs through Centreville, Alabama, just south of the largest lily stands.

Each clump of the lilies grows to a height of about three feet above water level. Each stand produces about six flowering stalks. Those stalks yield between six and eight buds that will flower into a captivating white blossom spanning roughly six inches in width. Each blossom has a corolla, six petals (three petals and three sepals, for you botanical purists), six stamens, and six anthers. An individual flower from a stalk will bloom for just one night and the following day. The lily's fragrant aroma is produced only during the evening hours. To see each separate flower is to capture the living cycle of an ephemeral beauty that will soon wilt, but which may develop into a seed for next year's bounty.

Dr. Larry Davenport, a Samford University botanist and leading expert on the Cahaba lily, has discovered many interesting facts regarding the lily which help explain its scarcity. The seeds of the Cahaba lily do not float — creating an advantage in

that the dropping seeds will remain in the vicinity of the specialized habitat instead of floating away down the river. However, because of the effects of impoundments and channelization, which change the river's landscape, these specialized habitats are becoming more and more rare.

Dr. Davenport, along with Dr. Randall Haddock of the Cahaba River Society, has worked to unravel the mysteries surrounding the lily's pollination system. Dr. Davenport had suggested the large white flower with a deep corolla tube and large nectar production was consistent with a moth-pollination strategy. Having studied plant pollination strategies on the tallgrass prairies of Missouri, Dr. Haddock was eager to test the hypothesis here on the Cahaba River. The only way to accomplish that task was to sit in the middle of the river in the middle of the night and wait. Sure enough, Dr. Davenport's theory proved to be correct. A large sphinx moth, the plebian sphinx, *Paratrea plebeja*, was spotted in the moonlight, hovering over a clump of lilies, moving from one flower to the next. Once a specimen was captured, it was found that the tongue or proboscis of the moth was over 2 inches long, just long enough to reach the bottom of the corolla tube, which holds the sugary nectar. Nectar is the lily's reward to the moth for carrying pollen from one flower to the next, allowing pollination between different stands of flowers.

We encourage those of you who wish to enjoy the Cahaba lily's beauty at home to take photographs and to collect only memories. Poaching the bulbs poses a significant threat to the existing lily populations. Second only to loss of habitat, unknowing lily lovers can decimate a population by harvesting bulbs. The Cahaba lily is not a houseplant and because of its very particular habitat needs, does not survive well when removed from the river. Those plants that you might find being sold may be in bloom, but are not likely to produce again outside of its natural environment. Every spectator would have to agree that there is no place more beautiful for this lily than to be nestled among the rocks of the Cahaba.

This article was taken from the Alabama Wildlife Magazine Archives, Spring 1999, and can be found at <http://www.alawild.org/cahaba.htm>.

EARTH DAY

In anticipation of this year's Earth Day, I ask myself where are we headed? This was the same question

faced by Senator Gaylord Nelson of Wisconsin, who spearheaded the first Earth Day on April 22nd, 1970. Because of Senator Nelson, Earth Day became a powerful catalyst for change. His objective was to get a nationwide demonstration of concern for the environment so large that it would shake the political establishment out of its lethargy and, finally force this issue permanently into the political arena.

It worked. An estimated twenty million people participated in demonstrations all across the country. Ten thousand grade schools and high schools, two thousand colleges and one thousand communities were involved. The event inspired the US Congress to pass the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, the Safe Drinking Water Act, and gave EPA the responsibility of researching and monitoring environmental issues and enforcing environmental laws.

I thought we were moving in the right direction: reducing pollution, addressing global warming, protecting endangered species, and working towards a peaceful, sustainable earth. Every day, though, I see that progress slip away. Industry interests are at the forefront and our political leaders are slowly but surely undermining all the environmental protection acts we hold so dear.

So, don't let Earth Day be just another day of the year. Add a new resolution to your list of what you personally can do to preserve the environment. Join an environmental news service to keep yourself informed. Write or email the President (president@whitehouse.gov) and your members of Congress to tell them what you think of their environmental policies. As the first Earth Day so aptly demonstrated, only by acting together, can we bring about change.

Juliet Tang

Parts of this article were taken from <https://osiris.cso.uiuc.edu/denix/Public/News/Earthday/Previous/note1.html>

ALLIANCE FOR THE FUTURE

Sometimes it's more important to stress people's similarities than their differences. Well, I believe the same rationale should also apply to organizations. Right now, in the Starkville area alone, I can count at least ten different groups or organizations that support and promote a safe, clean, and sustainable environment. They are the Golden Triangle Group of the Sierra Club, the Oktibbeha Audubon Society,

Starkville Recycles, The Green Party, REO (Recycle and Environmental Organization), Shades of Gray, The College Democrats, Mississippi 2020, Friends of the Black Belt Prairie, and Friends of Mississippi Public Lands.

Although each group may have several members in a region, busy life schedules prevent most members from participating. One solution is that organizations should seek out other organizations with shared goals, and together one alliance for the region should be formed. Add the Yahoo Group features of electronic messaging, and voilà, the same effort used to inform or recruit one person now can be used to inform or recruit from all in the alliance.

For example, if the Starkville Board of Aldermen is going to address recycling, a member of Starkville Recycles could send one email to the Yahoo group asking for people to attend the city meeting. Everyone whose name is on the group list will receive the email. It doesn't matter which group you belong to or which group is requesting help. Instead, what matters is that you have been informed of the meeting, have an interest in expanding the future of recycling, and have the time to show your support by attending the meeting. Hopefully, when the meeting opens, you'll find a handful of members from each group in the alliance, making your sum presence a veritable horde.

As a member of the alliance, if you find that some messages don't interest you, just hit the delete button and forget about it. Or, if you find that you're no longer interested in having your email included in the alliance, simply unsubscribe and you're off the list. Rules governing the kinds of messages that can be posted are also possible so that only messages of interest to the entire group are sent.

So, it's time to put aside our differences and focus on common goals shared by all our "green" organizations. Think about it and if you want to include your name in the list for the Starkville area, just send me your email address and I'll make sure it's put into the group list. If you don't have email, send me your name and phone number and we'll try to call you each time there is a posting. Or better yet, we'll try and get you set up with one of the free web-based email services that can be accessed at any library with public computers.

Juliet Tang

email jtang@entomology.msstate.edu

For more information about Yahoo Groups, go to
<http://help.yahoo.com/help/us/groups/index.html>

GOLDEN TRIANGLE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS

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Ex Comm

* Two year term, ends Dec. 2003

**Two year term, ends Dec. 2002

NOTE: Due to late ballots, executive committee
election results and elected officers for 2003 will be
announced at Feb. 12th meeting.

NEWSLETTER ARTICLES

The next newsletter will be published and circulated
in September. Send any suggestions, articles, or
announcements to Juliet Tang (662-465-8767).

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Crossroads

