



# SIERRA CLUB

FOUNDED 1892

## CAHABA GROUP GREATER BIRMINGHAM AREA



Hybrid Technology, 50 MPG!!! Now that's more like it!!!  
Photo by Laurie Malone — (Paul Perret's Car)

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### Ebenezer Swamp...by T. M. (Mike) Hardig, Ph.D.

The University of Montevallo's Ebenezer Swamp Ecological Preserve is located on Spring Creek, approximately 6 miles northeast of the University. Ebenezer swamp consists of sixty acres of wooded wetlands and is home to numerous species of fungi, plants, and animals. The forest is dominated for the most part by Tupelo Gum, with occasional Red Maple, Loblolly Pine, Sweet Bay, Tulip Tree, and Sycamore.

The dominant animal life form is the Beaver; water impounded behind several beaver dams along Spring Creek has a pronounced effect on the ecology of the preserve. Other animal inhabitants include the American Woodcock, Turkey, Great Blue Heron, Timber Rattlesnake, Water Moccasin, Copperhead, Raccoon, Opossum, and various species of freshwater clams.

The preserve is also home to numerous herbaceous plant species, including three species of orchids and a rare species of cone-flower. Ebenezer Swamp is used for teaching and research purposes. Ongoing research projects include water quality testing and surveys of vegetation and macroinvertebrate diversity.

Ebenezer Swamp was generously donated to the University of Montevallo by Mrs. Mildred Orr of Montevallo.

### The Threat to Ebenezer Swamp...

I am certain that you will be concerned about recent developments that pose a great risk to the health and longevity of the wetland. The Middle Tennessee Land Development LLC has proposed opening a limestone quarry in the southern Cahaba Valley, adjacent to Ebenezer Swamp and the headwater of Spring Creek. This is dire news! A limestone quarry in this location will have widespread and profound effects on the ecology of the region. It will adversely impact the local flora and fauna as well as the people that live in the area. These effects will likely include: extirpation of local plant and animal species due to loss of wetland habitat, higher average stream flows with more-frequent and more-severe downstream flooding, increased downstream sedimentation, contamination of

aquifer-supplied drinking water, loss of aquifer-supplied drinking water, and accelerated sinkhole development in the surrounding highlands. These effects will be a direct and unavoidable consequence of the geology and hydrology of the region.

A limestone quarry operation will have a major effect on the local hydrologic balance. Quarries quickly become ponds if they are not continuously pumped dry because of the continuous influx of groundwater. Dewatering operations continuously withdraw groundwater from the aquifer and divert it as surface flow. The larger the hole, the greater the volume that must be pumped out. The net effect of pulling groundwater out of the bottom of a quarry is to create a large "cone of depression" in the surrounding water table that reaches well beyond the quarry's perimeter. Dry Valley, which is situated to the east of the southern Cahaba Valley and is home to extensive quarry operations, provides clear and compelling examples of the effects of dewatering. In the early 1970s the dewatering rate from the Dry Valley quarries was approximately 14,000 gallons per minute. More recent data are not available publicly, but given the increasing sizes of the quarries, today's pumping volume must be considerably greater. All wells less than 100 feet deep in the vicinity of the Dry Valley quarries are dry. Aerial photography shows scores of sinkholes, and the natural springs that used to feed lower Spring Creek, in the adjacent watershed, have gone dry. The diverted groundwater flows out of Dry Valley as surface water in Dry Creek, where it subsequently joins with Spring Creek, which then joins with Shoal Creek, which then flows through Montevallo before joining with Mahan Creek to form the Little Cahaba River.

Dewatering in the vicinity of Ebenezer Swamp would lower the groundwater surface to a point below the natural outflows of the existing springs, causing the springs to go dry. Concomitantly, a lowered groundwater surface would reduce the overlying saturation zone, thus causing the soils along the stream flanks to dry out leading to a loss of habitat. Normal groundwater inputs into Spring Creek and Ebenezer Swamp occur slowly and steadily. Increase in surface water input due to dewatering will far exceed the loss of groundwater input because the volumes pumped from

## Local Information

the quarry will be greater than the volumes usually flowing from the springs. Because surface water moves relatively quickly out of the watershed, aquifer recharge through the stream bottom will be very limited. The net effect will most likely be the loss of swamp habitat, to be replaced by a drainage creek. Many of the hundreds of plant and animal species that inhabit Ebenezer Swamp will be extirpated. The beneficial aspects of the wetlands (i.e., water purification, bank stabilization, and storm runoff holding capacity) will be lost.

I assure you that a quarry operation in southern Cahaba Valley poses many associated risks to the ecology of the region. These risks have the potential to bring great harm to all life forms in the area as well as financial hardship to the people of the region. I am asking you to help prevent the loss of yet another piece of Alabama's natural wealth. For more information go to:

[www.montevallo.edu/swamp](http://www.montevallo.edu/swamp)

**Thank you for your help!!!**

### Conversion to Statewide Newsletter for Alabama Chapter Sierra Club

Well, this is the 2<sup>nd</sup> to the last issue of the Cahaba Group Newsletter. Starting in October, there will be a statewide newsletter for all chapters. A consolidated newsletter will allow you to read about environmental issues affecting the entire state and easily search for club outings from Huntsville to Mobile. More like a newspaper, the state newsletter will enable communication among all members. Although cost of local newsletters was not the reason for this change, a single statewide newsletter will be cheaper to produce and mail, allowing us to use your dues and other contributions even more efficiently to address the numerous environmental issues that effect us all.

Don't worry about your current newsletter editor being left out in the cold. After managing twenty-four issues, I was feeling that it was time for a change anyway. There are lots of opportunities to volunteer and I'll still be "around". Thanks for your contribution of articles, photo's and ideas over the last two years. I have appreciated the compliments and the criticism. My volunteer efforts have been richly rewarded by the opportunity to meet and become friends with the group of folks that "are" the Cahaba Group. The pleasure of your company, has been mine. Happy Trails,

Del Kelso

### Sewer Indictments...Val Walton and Brett J. Blackledge (Original Article in Birmingham News)

Former commissioner McNair, others indicted in sewer probe  
Federal prosecutors today charged former Jefferson County Commissioner Chris McNair, current and former county employees and several contractors with conspiracy to commit bribery and bribery in an investigation of Jefferson County's \$3 billion sewer program.

Doug Jones, a former U.S. attorney representing McNair, said McNair is scheduled to make an initial court appearance on the criminal charges at 1 p.m. Jones said he had not seen the indictment. "We are going to be over there," Jones said today. The 76-page indictment also accuses:

- Bobby J. Rast, president of Rast Construction Inc.  
Daniel B. Rast, executive vice president of Rast Construction Inc.

- Sohan P. Singh, president of US Infrastructure Inc.  
Edward T. Key, vice president of US Infrastructure Inc.
- US Infrastructure Inc., a company that received \$50 million worth of "no bid" engineering contracts for Jefferson County.
- Rast Construction Inc., a company that along with a joint venture partner performed at least \$200 million worth of sewer construction contracts for Jefferson County between 1997 and 2003.
- Floyd W. Dougherty, president of Dougherty Engineering and Associates.
- F.W. Dougherty Engineering & Associates Inc., a corporation that received at least \$30 million worth of "no bid" engineering contracts.

McNair, who was first elected to the commission in 1986, resigned his post in March 2001 at age 75, citing personal reasons. He oversaw the county's sewer program until he retired.

A grand jury in February indicted five current or former employees of the county's sewer department on charges ranging from bribery and conspiracy to mail fraud. Among those were Jack Swann, the county's environmental services director who has managed the sewer program and Harry T. Chandler, his top deputy. Prosecutors also accused Roland Pugh Construction and two of its executives of paying the bribes. Two other former employees, Donald R. Ellis and Larry P. Creel, pleaded guilty in May to accepting bribes for their influence in sewer business. They agreed to cooperate with investigators.

FBI agents visited McNair's second home that he built near Fordyce in south Arkansas in April 2003. Construction on the 2,046-square-foot home began in early 2001, a carpenter who helped build it said in a 2003 interview. That was soon after McNair finished a \$500,000 expansion of his Birmingham photography studio.

The Birmingham News reported in December 2002 that companies hired by the county to help with the court-ordered sewer repair program also helped McNair with the expansion of his photography business. Other large contractors paid McNair to produce company publications for them while he was overseeing the sewer program.

McNair has said there was nothing wrong with him hiring and paying sewer contractors to work on his studio expansion. He also said there was nothing improper about his photo business receiving work from sewer contractors. He has declined to discuss work performed on his Arkansas home.

## August Outings and Events!!!

### Three Short Hikes To Three Of The Most Spectacular Places In Alabama

**SAT 8/ 6 \* Call 256-287-1652**

We will travel to the Scottsboro area in Jackson County to two spectacular sink holes; Neversink and Stephens Gap, then proceed to Blowing Wind Cave to witness hundreds of thousands of Gray Bats emerge from the cave to feed at dusk. Neversink is a 172ft. deep, large diameter sinkhole that is owned by the Southeastern Cave Conservancy. Stephens Gap is a beautiful sinkhole with access to the bottom through a hole in one side. Stephens Gap is on private property, and access is by owner permission only. To enter the sinkhole and look up at the waterfalls pouring down from the top is a sight to behold. From

## Sierra Club Events Calendar, August 2005

### Executive Committee Meeting

**MON 8/8 \* CALL 205-795-2043**

Executive Committee meeting at the Sierra Club SE Office at 6:30 pm. All members welcome and encouraged to attend and participate. Call 205-795-2043.

### ICO Team Meeting

**TUE 8/9 \* CALL 205-970-6500**

The ICO team will meet at 6:30 p.m. at Alabama Outdoors. Anyone who is interested in working in natural areas with young people is welcome to attend. We are also (*always*) looking for people interested in helping raise funds for our program, even if they do not wish to go on outings. Please join us at our meeting or contact Margo Rebar at 205-970-6500 or e-mail [mrebar@earthlink.net](mailto:mrebar@earthlink.net)

### Canoe the Coosa River Near Wetumpka

**Sat. 8/13 \* Call 256-287-1652**

The flow of this 6.8-mile section of the Coosa is dam controlled, with releases of additional water on weekends through October to accommodate recreational boaters. The trip is a combination of flat and white water with several class 2 and one class 2+ rapids. Although we will encounter rapids, the trip is rated as safe for beginners. This is not a trip for small children unless they are in a boat with an experienced paddler. Boats can be rented from the Coosa Outdoor Center at the following rates Sit on top solo kayaks (Hula/Aloha, Pegasus, Torrent, or Ripper), \$20.00. I recommend the Torrent for beginners. Tandem Kayaks (Festiva, Lanakai) and Canoes \$30.00

If you rent a boat, there is no shuttle fee and life vest and paddles are provided. If you bring your own boat, there will be a \$5.00 shuttle fee. You can contact the Coosa Outdoor Center to arrange boat rentals at 334-201-5510 or 334-202-3050 or 334-201-1059

Meet at 9:00 a.m. at the Cracker Barrel Parking Lot just off exit 248 on I-65 south of Birmingham. This is the Cahaba Valley Road exit. Exit right then turn right. See Cracker Barrel on right.

Trip Leader Joe Copeland 256-287-1652

### General Interest Meeting

**TUE 8/16 @ 6:30 PM**

**BIRMINGHAM ZOO AUDITORIUM**

Topic To Be Announced

### Newsletter Mailout

**THU 8/25 \* CALL 205-795-2043**

Meet at the Sierra Club SE Office at 6:30 pm. All members welcome and encouraged to attend and participate. Call 205-795-2043.

### "Outings Tattler"

#### Art Show and Wine Tasting by Bill Baty

Forty-seven artists displayed their finest works with a nature theme of landscapes and seascapes. A special thanks to Ms. Pat Dicas and Ms. Dottie West (no not the country singer) of Artists Inc., Western Super Markets, and the wine distributors. The event was well attended by Sierra members and a good time was had by all.

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#### Blueberry Picking by Del Kelso

"Blue tooth technology"? Nope, blueberry tooth! Our group left the Hwy 280 Home Depot for Talapoosa County with a lust for berries blue and we were not disappointed! Special thanks to Hostess Kathy Nickelson for inviting us down to pick the ripest, best blueberries around. (I brought home at least 2 gallons and have been eating a handful every time I walk by the kitchen counter!) Being "blue" never tasted so good!

### Trail Work on Pinhoti Trail Extension

**Sat 8/20 \* Call 256-287-1652**

We will be working with the Alabama Trails Association on a portion of the 1st 3 miles of the Pinhoti Trail Extension from the Alabama State Line, North into Georgia. This is a portion of the project that will eventually connect the Pinhoti Trail to the beginning of Appalachian Trail at Springer Mountain Georgia. The corridor for this project has just been recently acquired, after several years of negotiations. We will be driving to the starting point; therefore, we will not need to hike in to start working. All tools will be provided by the ATA. Everyone works at his or her own pace with lots of chatter while leaning on the handle of your fire rake. For information concerning the time and meeting place, call Joe Copeland at 256-287-1652 or email [joe@power.net](mailto:joe@power.net).

### Ruffner Mountain Day Hike

**Sat 8/27 \* Call 205-792-3847**

Ruffner Mt. Nature Center - Leader: Tammy Dodson (formally Cooper)

Ruffner Mt. is a 1000 acre nature preserve close to Irondale, AL and offers a spectacular view of downtown Birmingham. This will be a five-mile, moderate hike. We'll meet at the Ruffner Mt. Na-

### Outings Notes

In the interest of facilitating the logistics of some outings, it is customary that participants make carpooling arrangements. The Sierra Club does not have insurance for carpooling arrangements and assumes no liability for them. Carpooling, ride sharing, or anything similar, is strictly a private arrangement among the participants. Participants assume the risks associated with this travel. Anyone is welcome on outings, but if you make repeated trips, please join the Club. (See details in this newsletter.) Join us for optional dinner if you'd like. Check difficulty rating and children/age requirements. Questions? Contact trip leader.

### National Sierra Club Liability Waiver

In order to participate on one of the Sierra Club's outings, you will need to sign a liability waiver. If you would like to read a copy of the waiver prior to the outing, please see <http://www.sierraclub.org/outings/chapter/forms/> or call 415-977-5630. **Canoe Trips:** All canoe outings are suitable for beginner/novice canoeists unless otherwise noted in the trip description. Life jackets are required and must be worn. You are responsible for finding your own canoe. Borrow one, paddle with a friend, or rent from Alabama Outdoors, 870-1919, or another outfitter. Bring your picnic lunch and something to drink while on the water. If you have further questions, please call the trip leader.

### Directions to Meeting Places

**Birmingham Zoo Auditorium**—2630 Cahaba Road, near Botanical Gardens.  
**Golden Rule BBQ, Hwy 79**—Right side of Alabama Hwy. 79 (as you're driving away from Birmingham). Past Tarrant City, just past traffic light at intersection of AL Hwy 79 and Sunhill Road. Before Carson Road intersection, near Jefferson State Community College.

**Hayden/Corner Park and Ride**—Hayden/Corner exit 284 off I-65 North.

Turn right off exit ramp, then first right, then enter parking lot on right.

**Jack's, Double Springs**—On U.S. Hwy. 278 in Double Springs just east of stoplight at intersection of Hwys 278 and AL 33 and AL 195.

**Cracker Barrel, Trussville**—I-59 North to exit # 141 (Chalkville Road exit). Turn right at end of exit ramp and look for Cracker Barrel Sign to left.

**Cracker Barrel, Pelham**—I-65 South, exit #248. (Cahaba Valley Rd) Turn right, Cracker Barrel on right.

**Oak Mountain State Park**—I-65 South from Birmingham to Hwy 119/Cahaba Valley Road exit. Right off exit ramp, then left at first traffic light. Follow road 2 miles, then left at stop sign. Go 2 miles past the fee gate, then right onto Terrace Drive. Go to park office parking lot between boat parking and beach parking.

**Kmart Parking Lot**—corner of Crestwood Blvd and Montclair Road. From I-20 East exit 132B, cross Crestwood Blvd, see Kmart on right.

**Ruffner Mountain Nature Center**—I-20 to Oporto-Madrid exit. Head away from mall area. Go 1.5 miles, then turn right on Rugby Avenue. Go 1 mile, then turn right on 81st Street South Follow signs to the Center.

**Shoney's, Oxford**—I-20 East to Oxford exit 185. Left at end of ramp on AL 21. Go under interstate and see Shoney's on right.

**Sierra Club S.E. Office**—1330 21st Way South, near Five Points South, one block south of Highland Police Station. Turn onto 21st Way S. at Temple Beth-El. Go to end of block to last building on right.

## At a Glance – Sierra Club Events – August 2005

| Sunday | Monday                                    | Tuesday                                  | Wednesday | Thursday                          | Friday | Saturday                                       |
|--------|---|--|-----------|-----------------------------------|--------|--|
| 7/31   | 8/1                                       | 8/2                                      | 8/3       | 8/4                               | 8/5    | 8/6<br><b>Day Hike (3 for the price of 1!)</b> |
| 8/7    | 8/8<br><b>Executive Committee Meeting</b> | 8/9<br><b>Inner City Outings Meeting</b> | 8/10      | 8/11                              | 8/12   | 8/13<br><b>Paddle the Mighty Coosa</b>         |
| 8/14   | 8/15                                      | 8/16<br><b>General Interest Meeting</b>  | 8/17      | 8/18                              | 8/19   | 8/20<br><b>Trail Work Pinhoti Extension</b>    |
| 8/21   | 8/22                                      | 8/23                                     | 8/24      | 8/25<br><b>Newsletter Mailout</b> | 8/26   | 8/27<br><b>Day Hike @ Ruffner Mtn.</b>         |
| 8/28   | 8/29                                      | 8/30                                     | 8/31      | 9/1                               | 9/2    | 9/3  |



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contacts and more!!  
<http://alabama.sierraclub.org/cahaba.html>

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To join or renew your membership, send coupon with a check for \$25 made out to the Sierra Club. Mail to John Walker, 2833 21st Street, Ensley, Birmingham, AL 35208-2217 or call John at 786-0622.

(Dues include a subscription to *Sierra* magazine and newsletter and are **not** tax deduct.)

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