



**Eastern Box Turtle**

Courtesy of the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, Eric Maynard

A couple of weeks ago my friend from Benton sent me a picture via text to show me her new pet. It was a really small box turtle she had found in her yard. She asked me what to feed the little guy and I told her to not worry about what to feed him and to put him back in the yard. She really wanted to keep him but after two days of him not eating what she was offering, she released him back to the wild. It seems like a good idea to take a turtle from the yard and put him in a box or aquarium and make it a pet but the fact is, they belong outside and they cannot reproduce and maintain the population while they are locked up in your house.

When I was growing up, I had a horse and I spent a lot of time riding my horse in the woods around my house. One day while riding, I noticed a turtle that was very busy at something so I stopped to investigate. The turtle was covering up eggs in a small hole. Every few days, I would ride by that spot and would check to see if the baby turtles had emerged yet. Several weeks later, I rode by and noticed that the hole was empty and I assumed the female turtle had come back and dug her brood out of the hole.

This turtle was a three-toed box turtle and was only the first of many that I would see preparing a nest for her eggs. I did learn later that only a few of the many eggs that are laid by turtles actually exist long enough to hatch because skunks, foxes, raccoons and other animals dig up the nests and eat the eggs. The danger doesn't end when the eggs hatch, it has only begun. The young turtles that do hatch have many predators and seldom live past their first year. However, the ones that survive the first year have one thing going for them and that is longevity. Turtles in the wild can live 15-20 years and ones in captivity have been known to live up to 100 years.

There are more than 15 species of turtles that call Arkansas home. The groups are bottom walkers, baskers, softshells and box turtles. The bottom walking turtle that is most familiar to us is the alligator snapping turtle and is commonly known as the "loggerhead". This turtle will average between 24 and 36 inches across and is known for its tremendous size, long neck that gives it the ability to snap very quickly and has three large ridges running down the shell. My Dad caught two of these turtles in the late 70s and they each weighed over 50 pounds. I thought they were big until found out later that they have been known to weigh up to 250 pounds.

The turtle that fishermen are well acquainted with is the common snapping turtle. I guarantee that if you have ever fished in a farm pond, you have encountered this turtle. You may never have caught one, but you have definitely lost bait to this little devil. The look like a very small version of a loggerhead and have the same wicked temper. Although they aggravate fishermen by stealing bait, they are actually good for a pond because they feed on animal matter and plants on the bottom, which helps keep the pond clean.

Another turtle that is well known to fishermen and boaters is the slider. The slider is a basking turtle and is appropriately named because they will slide into the water when a boat or other danger comes near. Sliders are commonly seen on logs, stumps and rocks sunning themselves. When you drive past Lake Conway, you can see these turtles piled up on stumps all over the lake. When they run out of places to bask, they will pile up on each other to catch a few rays of sunshine.

Softshells are another species that is found in Arkansas, but are seldom seen due to its shy nature. The flattened shell is soft and leathery which makes them look a lot like a pancake with feet. The feet are built like paddles and because of their design, this turtle can swim quite speedily. These turtles are meat-eaters and will feed on crawfish, minnows and other aquatic animals and because of this they are often caught on trotlines.

I have just touched on a few of the many turtles found in Arkansas. I didn't even mention the little Stinkpot turtle, the Mississippi Mud, Map, Southern Painted, Red-Eared Slider, Western Chicken Turtle, Ornate or the Ouachita Map turtle. If you would like to learn more about the many turtles that are found here, there are many places on the Internet that will allow you to learn about turtles and of course the library will have information about turtles.

The turtle population is declining due to loss of habitat, predation by humans and many other factors. Try to avoid hitting turtles when they are crossing the road, don't shoot them off logs at ponds and creeks and be aware of their plight to survive. If we want future generations to enjoy the great outdoors that we know now, we must conserve and protect them today.

## Wildlife banquet is Sept. 18

A Wildlife banquet will be held on Saturday, Sept. 18 in the Epperson Center, located at 206 E. Holly St. in Sheridan. The doors open at 4 p.m. The guest speaker will be Toby Talley. Local wildlife craftsmen and artisans will be displaying their wares. There is no charge for the dinner, however, donations are welcome.

## Youth football registration

Sheridan Yellowjacket Youth Football (SYFF) will be holding registration on Saturday, Aug. 14 at the SYFF Fields from 8 a.m. - 11 a.m. Registration is open to all youth entering 3rd - 6th grade (depending on age limitation). Fees this year are \$100 per player; reduced fee for siblings. A registration form is available at www.sheridanyouthfootball.com, or call Johnny Wilson, SYFF Commissioner, at (870) 540-6761.

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# Local Aspirnauts tour Vanderbilt Univ.

Aspirnaut students from Arkansas and North Carolina traveled to Nashville, Tenn., on June 6 where they spent two days touring Vanderbilt University's campus, research and hospital facilities, as well as meeting with distinguished faculty and staff members of the University.

### VSVS Labs

Students participated in labs lead by the Vanderbilt Student Volunteers for Science (VSVS) Director Pat Tellinghuisen and undergraduate student participants of the Aspirnaut Program. Completed labs included: Properties of CO<sub>2</sub>, The effect of CO<sub>2</sub> in the Environment, CO<sub>2</sub> and Cave Formation and Comets, and Cryogenics.

### Life Flight and Helipad Tour

Participants were able to go on the roof of the Vanderbilt University Hospital to tour the Vanderbilt LifeFlight Helipad and to view a helicopter. This roof top also provided the students with amazing views of downtown Nashville.

### Lab Tours

Students were allowed to tour the labs of Dr. Billy Hudson, Mass Spectrometry, and Dr. Mary Zutter. During their lab visits they saw a glimpse into ongoing scientific research surrounding kidney disease, breast cancer, and skin cancer. Students also took a BioMedical Engineering lab tour and learned about micro uidics.

### Heart Outreach Presentation and Portable Planetarium

Dr. Lisa Mace, from the Depart-

ment of Clinical Pharmacology lead a heart outreach presentation. During the presentation participants were able to look at hearts and heard from Dr. Mace about ways to maintain a healthy heart and cardiovascular system.

During an afternoon session, a portable planetarium was set up and an image of the night sky was projected onto the planetarium's interior and used to teach the students about the solar system, the constellations, Greek mythology and the nature of stars.

Local students raised funds for the trip through raf e tickets and a \$100 gift card donated by Wal-Mart. The winner of the gift card was Sandra Anderson of Grapevine.

### Student's Thoughts About the Visit

"I had so much fun at Vandy. My favorite part was .....all of it!"

- Lonny Quarles

"My favorite parts were when we saw the hearts, did the labs, saw the lab rats and went into the planetarium."

- Sydeny Pickard

"I enjoyed when we did all the labs especially when we did the one lab that the dry ice made the water change color and fizz while it was changing color."

- Cember Bellmony

"I liked the marine biology lab, where Dr.Hudson showed us the sea squirt."

- Eli Wood



**SHERIDAN SCHOOL DISTRICT** participants in a tour of Vanderbilt University were 7th graders Sydney Pickard, Cember Bellomy, Madalynn Allbright, Eli Wood and 8th grader Lonny Quarles. They are pictured with Dr. Billy Hudson and Dr. Julie Hudson. Photo by Anne Rayner



**POYEN SCHOOL DISTRICT** participants in a tour of Vanderbilt University were Cody Dykes, 10th grader, Amanda Jones, Jordan Lemons and Tricia Dykes. Photo by Anne Rayner



**SYDNEY PICKARD**, 7th grader, Lynn Quarles, Sheridan Arkansas Parent, and Madalynn Allbright, 7th grader, work with dry ice during the VSVS lab.



**DR. LISA MACE** during the heart outreach presentation.



**JORDAN LEMONS**, 7th grader, and Amanda Jones, Poyen High School Science Teacher, enjoy the VSVS lab.

**CARLIE LAPE**, 8th grader, holding a sea squirt in Dr. Billy Hudson's lab.



**INFORMATION AND PHOTOS** courtesy of Julie K. Hudson, MD, MA Program Director and Assistant Vice Chancellor for Health Affairs Vanderbilt University

**New 11U Travel Team looking for players!**

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**PLAYER OF THE WEEK**

**Josh Miller**

Josh Miller belted a pair of two-run homers to account for all four of Sheridan's runs in the game against Harrison in the AA American Legion State Tournament.

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