

# Academy Notes

February 2012



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## Mission

The mission of Southeastern Natural Sciences Academy is to provide leadership to balance environmental sustainability and economic vitality through research-based solutions in the Savannah River Basin .

## Vision

The vision of Southeastern Natural Sciences Academy is to create solutions for abundant, clean, affordable, and sustainable water resources for life.

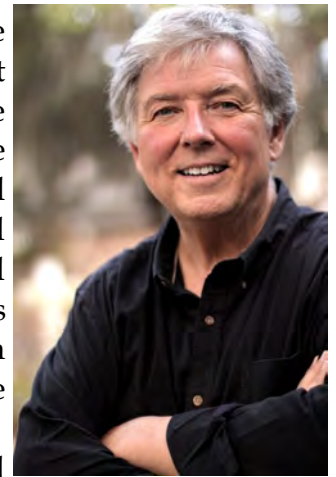
706-828-2109  
Phinizy Swamp Nature Park  
1858 Lock & Dam Road  
Augusta, GA 30906



## From President/CEO Bob Young

Since joining the Academy leadership last fall, I have come to know a talented staff, dedicated board, vibrant membership and enthusiastic volunteers. All of these elements have made and continue to make the Southeastern Natural Science Academy a good investment for our region. Simply put, no individual or organization is doing the work we do day in and day out to develop the science that decision-makers need to chart a sustainable future for the Savannah River. The underlying science is critical, because these decisions impact the local economy and jobs.

Sharing our story and work with leaders in our local community, regulators in Atlanta and policy-makers in Washington, DC has been particularly rewarding. Putting our research into the hands of local business and utilities leads to decisions that directly relate to their profitability. Meeting with potential business partners gives the Academy the opportunity to spread our influence far beyond metropolitan Augusta. It's clear that as we grow our reach, we will grow our resources. I'm finding this is an exciting time to be associated with the Academy. I hope you are, too!



## From Chairman of the Board, Dr. Michael Ash

The past few months have seen great change and great progress at Southeastern Natural Sciences Academy. We are truly grateful for the contributions that past President and CEO Susan Nicholson, who left the Academy last autumn, and we are excited at the arrival of new President and CEO Bob Young. Mr. Young joined the Academy on November 1 after a career of journalism and public service, including serving as mayor of Augusta and in the George W. Bush administration. We also would like to recognize the service of longtime Phinizy Swamp Nature Park John and Linda Swindell. John passed away last year, and Linda is retiring from park duties in February. The future is bright for SNSA. With the work and commitment of the staff and Board, things are only looking better.



## Research Update

### *Academy researchers collaborate with Augusta Richmond County and ASU on fecal coliform research, education, and outreach program*

Contamination of fecal material in streams and rivers can cause significant public health issues. One way that such contamination is monitored is by measuring the amount of fecal coliform bacteria in the water. Fecal coliform bacteria are a group of bacteria that are found in the gut of warm blooded animals. While coliform bacteria are typically not a health threat, they are used as indicators for those organisms associated with feces that are harmful to human and aquatic ecosystem health. Some agricultural practices can contribute to fecal contamination but in an urban setting, the prevailing thoughts on sources of elevated concentrations of fecal coliform bacteria in streams are: failing septic systems, pet waste, storm drainage system malfunction, and wildlife.

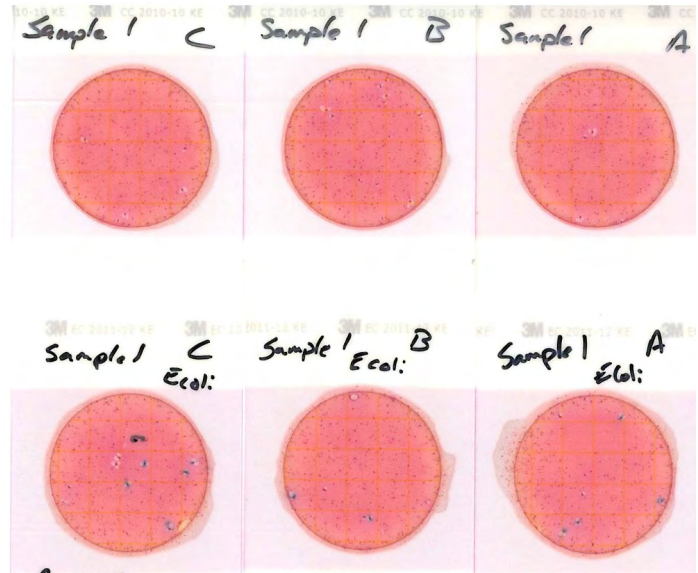
The Georgia Environmental Protection Division has determined that a two mile segment of Rocky Creek (from Hwy 56 to New Savannah Rd) and a three mile segment of Butler Creek (from the confluence of Phinizy Ditch to the Savannah River) are impaired by levels of fecal coliform bacteria that are above the state standard for their designated use (fishable). While both segments of Rocky and Butler Creeks are impaired, it does not always mean that pet waste, leaky septic systems, and poor storm drainage are the cause. As new land is developed throughout a watershed, wildlife can often be concentrated along stream corridors because those corridors remain untouched as a result of regulations protecting stream buffers. There is also increasing evidence that fecal coliform bacteria can survive within the sediment, plants, and periphyton of aquatic habitats. If that is the case, then movement of sediment, plant material, and periphyton after a rain event could confound the understanding of where the fecal coliform bacteria are coming from.



For the next three years, the Academy and Augusta-Richmond County's Engineering Department (AED) will collaborate on a program that will provide research, education, and outreach on the topic of fecal coliform in streams with emphasis on Rocky and Butler Creeks. This program will be funded through Georgia Environmental Protection Division's 319(h) grant program with matching funds from AED.

The education portion of the grant activities will include the development of an education and outreach program targeting those within the Butler and Rocky Creek watersheds and the general public on the topic of fecal pollution prevention. Educational

information for that program will be disseminated within our K-College educational programs at the Academy, at the Academy's Earth Day events, outreach events, and other targeted activities. As part of this grant, we are particularly interested in developing an annual water survey for the Augusta area. We will collaborate with Dr. Sandy Reinke at Augusta State in an effort to create the survey. The goal is to develop an understanding of the attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors of water quality and water quantity issues that impact not only the CSRA but the state of Georgia as well.



The research portion of the grant will include more sampling and analysis within each creek as well as other activities that will help define the sources of contamination. Some of the research questions that we would like to explore have to do with the numbers of fecal coliform bacteria associated with the sediment, plants, and periphyton within the creeks and are excited about our collaboration with Dr. Chris Bates at ASU on this topic. We are also particularly interested in developing a sampling scheme that will allow us to sample the same packet of water as the packet flows downstream. This method is of utmost importance in determining sources of bacteria to the creeks and will be employed during rain and non-rain sampling events.

## 2012 Swamp Soiree

Preparations are underway for the 14th annual Swamp Soiree, which will be Thursday, June 14, 2012.

Dye's Southern Catering will cater the event, and the Carl Purdy Bluegrass Band will provide entertainment.

Sponsorship information is available on the Academy website at [naturalsciencesacademy.org](http://naturalsciencesacademy.org) or by calling 706-828-2109,



## Education Update

**Georgia Master Naturalist:** The Academy's Education Department in partnership with ESG Operations and Augusta Utilities announces the CSRA's first Georgia Master Naturalist Program. The Georgia Master Naturalist Program, developed by the Warnell School of Forestry & Natural Resources and The University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service, is an adult environmental education program that explores habitats and ecosystems in Georgia and human impacts on these environments. The program includes a combination of lectures and outside hands-on learning through field trips to local habitats such as swamps, ponds, rivers, wetlands, forest, and urban landscapes. This program is especially geared to people wishing to be more informed about habitats, natural resources and the natural environments of our state. To be a naturalist is a life long goal where learning never stops.

The Academy's program begins on March 15 and will run for 10 consecutive weeks on Thursday (skipping April 5). The first meeting March 15 and last May 24 will include a 3 hour late afternoon introduction and wrap up. The eight Thursdays in-between will consist of 6 hour field trips including a wetland ecology field trip at Phinizy Swamp Nature Park, a forest ecology field trip at Silver Bluff Audubon Sanctuary, a field trip on succession at The Nature Conservancy's Heggie's Rock, a river ecology field trip at both Thurmond Lake and The Augusta Canal, a field ornithology field trip at Phinizy Swamp Nature Park, a stream ecology field trip, and a look at the Urban Watershed with tours of Augusta's Messerly Wastewater Treatment Facility & Hick's Drinking Water Facility.

The cost of the program is \$260 for Academy members and \$300 for nonmembers. This cost includes certification fees and all program materials.

"Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts" – Rachel Carson

Come be apart of this exciting program!



**Senior Projects:** Academy Education Department has been working with two students interested in completing their senior project at Phinizy Swamp Nature Park. These students have expressed an interest in both the field of science and our natural resources.

**Meet the Students:**

**Sara Joiner**, a senior at Greenbrier High School, is a new comer to the Augusta area. In her home state of Arizona she led local nature hikes to introduce people to the native flora and fauna. Moving to Georgia, she discovered all new habitats and in an effort to learn more about the new ecosystems and combine her senior project, she came to us to see where she could volunteer. She has become one of our newest Swamp Saturday Leaders, joined our Adopt-A-Stream team - the Creek Freaks, participated in our October River's Alive Cleanup, and is creating several species profiles for our visitor center. She heads to UGA next year to continue her advanced studies in Biology!

**Mickey Exum**, a senior at Grovetown High School, approached the Academy in December looking for a mentor for a senior project on herpetology. Aaliyah Green made the perfect fit and she started him right away with a turtle habitat comparison study. They set up study plots in both the natural wetlands and constructed wetlands of Phinizy Swamp Nature Park. A habitat assessment was performed collecting data on plants, shade cover, basking locations, presence of prey species, soil & nesting habitat, and water quality parameters including dissolved oxygen, pH, turbidity, and conductivity. Hoop nets were set in each habitat and species, sex, age class, and straight carapace length was recorded for each turtle captured. Mickey plans to study marine biology as he heads to college next year.



**Phinizy Swamp Navy Workday:** On December 10, 18 Navy volunteers with the CID Detachment at Fort Gordon descended upon the Swamp to help with a much needed clean up of the Rain Garden Boardwalk. Over the spring and summer the boardwalk had become overgrown with briars, vines, and other vegetation to the point where it was close to impassable. This group with the help of Jason Moak from Research and Ruth Mead from Education made great improvements to invite visitors back to the boardwalk. Over 10 pickup loads of baccharis were removed! Thank you to the Navy and this team who plans to donate two workdays a year to the Swamp!

# Membership

The Academy is careful to list donations so they reflect which area of support gifts were intended. This list includes donations specified as membership. (New and renewed 1/1/2011 through 1/1/2012.)

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The impressive list below includes corporations, foundations, and civic groups who have partnered with the Academy since 2006. Partners are listed in their total giving level. Please call 706-828-2109 if your company or civic group would information on becoming a corporate member of SNSA.

### SUSTAINING PARTNER

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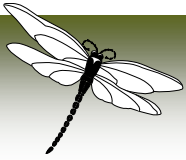
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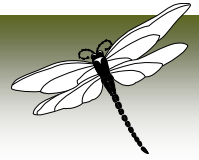
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# Academy Events

Spring 2012



To register for events or for more information, call 706-828-2109.

All events are at Phinizy Swamp Nature Park: 1858 Lock & Dam Road, Augusta, GA 30906 unless otherwise noted.

## Waterfowl Walk

**February 4 • 9:00-Noon**

Join us for the fun guided walk through Phinizy Swamp Nature Park. This will be a driving/walking tour of the park. If you have always wanted to see the back of the park but don't want to walk that far, this is the tour for you. Open to novice through advanced birders. A great family outing. Your \$5 donation goes to support Phinizy Swamp Nature Park, a global designated Important Bird Area.

## Nature Book Swap & Shop

**February 4 • 10:00-4:00**

While you're at the park for Swamp Saturday or the Waterfowl Walk, make sure to

stop by the Visitor's Center to peruse our selection of nature and science books. All books are \$1 or bring a nature or science book in good condition from your home to swap.

## Sweetheart Bike Ride •

**February 12 • 2:00-4:00 pm**

Join us and staff from Andy Jordan's Bicycle Warehouse for this bike tour through the park at a leisurely pace—a great activity to enjoy with your sweetheart, friends or family. Adults should accompany children under the age of 12. Helmets required.

Academy members: \$6; non-members: \$10

## Georgia Master Naturalist 10 Weeks Starting March 15

This program is especially geared to people wishing to be more informed about habitats, natural resources and the natural environments of our state. To be a naturalist is a life long goal where learning never stops. **See page 4 for details!**

## Swamp Stomp 5k April 21 • 8:00 am

Don't miss the 11th annual 5K at Phinizy Swamp Nature Park! It is one of Georgia-Carolina's most scenic races! Course is distinctively different from the 10K! Call 706-828-2109 to sign up, or register online at [www.active.com](http://www.active.com).

## Swamp Saturdays at 9:30am

**February 4, March 3,  
April 7, May 5**

The Academy's trained volunteers lead free 2½-mile, 1½-hour hikes through the Nature Park every month. Don't miss a walk past wetlands and swamps, over picturesque trails, and scenic outlooks. Please call 706-828-2109 in advance for groups.

## Earth Day 2012

**April 21 • Time TBD**

Stay tuned for more information about the Academy's 2012 Earth Day celebration. The event will focus on water quality issues. Watch the next issue of Academy Notes for details.

Please visit [www.naturalsciencesacademy.org](http://www.naturalsciencesacademy.org) for the most up-to-date news and events.

As part of our ongoing effort to lessen our environmental footprint, this newsletter will be distributed primarily by email. Please call 706-828-2109 if you or someone you know would like to receive a hard copy.

## *Interested in Naming Opportunities?*

*Call the Academy Office  
at 706-828-2109 for information on Park  
Benches,  
Adopt-a-Trees, and Kiosks*

*Become a Member  
or Corporate Partner Today!*

## Wish List:

- Dish washer
- Clothes washer and dryer
- Christmas decorations
- Radio communication system for the nature park and field research.
- Updated computers for administration, education and research.
- Flag pole for the campus.
- Replacement vehicle for research.
- Updated phone system for the campus.
- Technical assistance for website design updating.
- 4' and 6' ladders