

Mississippi's Lower Delta Partnership

March 2011

NEW LOWER DELTA TALKS SERIES TO BEGIN MARCH 15 IN ROLLING FORK

A new series of Lower Delta Talks will begin on Tuesday, March 15 and continue on the third Tuesday of each month through November. Sponsored through Mississippi's Lower Delta Partnership (LDP), talks are held at 6:30 p.m. in the Fine Arts Room of the Sharkey Issaquena County Library in Rolling Fork.

"Last year's series was very successful and this year's promises to be even more so. We have a great line-up of speakers, most of whom are new this year, but we do have a few favorites returning—Sam Brookes in June and Willy Bearden in November," said LDP Coordinator Meg Cooper. "I am very excited about this year's lineup of speakers." Talks are free and open to the public.

The series will begin with an historical speaker, Alan Huffman. Huffman is a freelance writer, political researcher and contributor to newspapers and magazines including the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, New York Times, Los Angeles Times, Lost magazine, Outside magazine, Preservation magazine; and Washington Post Magazine. He is the author of *Ten Point*, a photo-essay book about a remote hunting camp in Issaquena County, and the nonfiction books *Mississippi in Africa* (2004) and *Sultana: Surviving the Civil War, Prison and the Worst Maritime Disaster in American History* (2009). He is currently working on a new nonfiction book to be released by HarperCollins in January 2012. Huffman has also been an environmental aide and researcher in the Mississippi Governor's Office and the Mississippi Attorney General's Office, and in the 1980s covered the south Delta and Mississippi River region for The Clarion-Ledger.

Following Huffman in April will be Felder Rushing with his talk entitled "Gardening Southern Style" on the 19th. Ben Payton will give a history of the Blues on May 17, followed on June 21 with Sam Brookes' talk on early people in the Delta. Chris Koeppel will discuss the archaeological findings at the South Delta Interpretive Center and its progress on July 19. August and September talks will focus on food, with Malcolm White's discussion of how tamales came to Mississippi, on August 16, and Martha Foose's September 20, talk on traveling southern foodways. October's talk will focus on hunting in the Delta with area resident Hank Burdine. Rolling Fork native Willy Bearden will wrap up the talks on November 15 with "Saints and Sinners: People Who Made the Delta the Delta."

For more information regarding the talks, please contact Meg Cooper at 662-873-6261. In addition to LDP, the Lower Delta Talks series is sponsored by the Bank of Anguilla, Straddefork Foundation, Walton Family Foundation, Friends of the Sharkey-Issaquena County Library and the Sharkey County Historic Preservation Commission.



Black bears on increase in Mississippi Delta

Spring den checks have revealed a record number of bear cub births across the MS Delta. According to State Bear Project Leader, Brad Young, there are 8 documented litters that have been born in 2011 with the possibility of a couple more in dens that he has been unable to access.

On a recent check on private land in Issaquena County, two female cubs were born to the same sow that birthed the first documented cubs in the Delta in 2007. Female cubs are exciting because the females as they mature tend to stay close to the territory where they were born, whereas males tend to wander.

According to Young, female bears usually begin having cubs when they are three to five years of age. Cubs are born in winter dens in January or February and do not emerge with their mother until April or May. Cubs will stay with their mother throughout the year and will den with her during the following winter. The family reemerges the following spring and will stay together until summer when the young disperse.

Black bears are not true hibernators but go through a period of winter dormancy called carnivorean lethargy. During this time, the bear exhibits a slower metabolism and will not eat, drink or eliminate waste from its body. All waste products are recycled through unique metabolic and physiological processes. Most bears are easily aroused if disturbed while denning.

Although the black bear is classified as a carnivore, they are not active predators. The majority of a bear's diet is comprised of seasonal plant materials such as grasses, acorns and berries. The animal component of a bear's diet is primarily insects, grubs and carrion. Agricultural crops such as corn and wheat can also become components of a bear's diet especially in fragmented habitats.

Young estimates the current population of bears in Mississippi to be around 120, more than double what it was when the bear program began 9 years ago. Young credits this with a variety of factors including increased habitat in the Delta due to CRP and WRP programs.

Information obtained from MDWF&P



LDP employees, Melissa Darden and Meg Cooper with the female cubs born in Issaquena County



Three cubs born in a Bolivar County litter

Migrating Birds and Butterflies to Return Soon

Several species of birds migrate further south in the winter and as the weather warms in the spring, they begin the migration northward. One bird that many Southerners watch for after their winter absence is the Ruby Throated Hummingbird. We take down our hummingbird feeders for the winter while the birds are wintering in Mexico and Central America, and wonder when it will be time to put them up again. Now there are several websites that track the migration of humming birds and by checking in on one of these weekly, you can get an idea of when to return your feeder to its spot at your home. A couple of these sites are: www.learner.org/north, and <http://www.hummingbirds.net/map.html>.

Another interesting migrant is the Monarch butterfly that can also be tracked on the www.learner.org website and on www.monarchwatch.org. These butterflies make the up to 3000-mile journey each fall and spend the winter on Monarch nature preserves in the mountains of Mexico. Any day now, they will begin their journey north for the summer.

Look for these two migrants making their journey north soon!



“TRASH TO TREASURE” LITTER PICK UP

Ever wonder what treasures could be found in roadside litter? Well, Saturday, March 26 is your chance to find out. A local community cleanup in Rolling Fork dubbed “Trash to Treasure” begins at the Rolling Fork Visitors Center at 9 a.m. where volunteers will receive rules of the treasure hunt, garbage bags and gloves. Treasure tickets that qualify the finder to participate in drawings for locally-donated prizes will be mixed amongst roadside litter. After a morning of picking up litter and hunting for treasure tickets, participants will return to the Visitors Center at 12:30 for lunch, litter education and a chance to claim treasure.

A clean community is a sign of a good community. Every little bit of litter damages the appearance of an area while a lack of litter announces a community’s sense of pride. So join the effort to “Spring Clean” Rolling Fork by involving friends, family and co-workers for a productive morning hunting treasure and removing litter.

Individuals and groups are invited and encouraged to take part in this fun and much needed event. A continuation of the ongoing “We can’t BEAR litter” campaign, the litter pickup is jointly sponsored by the City of Rolling Fork, Lower Delta Partnership and MSU Extension 4-H club.



We can't **BEAR** *litter.*

FESTIVALS ACROSS THE DELTA

Spring is upon us and it seems to be festival season for the Mississippi Delta. There are festivals both large and small taking place March through May in many Delta communities. With the cost of gas these days, Delta residents should consider the value of entertainment close to home and our local festivals offer this opportunity.

Music, arts & crafts, great food and children's activities are featured at most festivals, but many also offer something unique to their festival, like the catfish eating contest in Belzoni at the World Catfish Festival or the catfish races at the Mainstream festival in Greenville.

Festivals have become important economic development tools for many communities according to Mississippi Arts Commission director, Malcolm White. "Festivals have enormous impacts on communities and their tax base. It's not just gate receipts and people attending, but also hotels, restaurants, gas stations and shopping whether people come to spend the day or the weekend."

Support the Delta, attend a festival, or two this Spring.



2011 Spring Festival Dates

March 18-19 – **Italian Festival**,
Cleveland

April 2 – **World Catfish Festival**,
Belzoni

April 9 – **Deep Delta Festival**,
Rolling Fork

April 14-16 – **Juke Joint Festival**,
Clarksdale

April 15 – 16 – **Riverfest**,
Vicksburg

April 16 – **Crosstie Arts & Jazz
Festival**, Cleveland

May 7 – **Mainstream Arts & Crafts
Festival and Catfish Races**,
Greenville

May 7 – **Leland Crawfish Festival**,
Leland

May 7 - **Jerry Clower Festival**,
Yazoo City



Lower Delta Talks

March 15, 2011

Sultanta: Surviving the Civil War, Prison
and the Worst Maritime Disaster on the
Mississippi River

by Alan Huffman

April 19, 2011

Gardening Southern Style

by Felder Rushing

May 17, 2011

History of the Blues

by Ben Payton

June 21, 2011

Early People in the Delta:
10,000 BC - AD 1600

by Sam Brookes

July 19, 2011

South Delta Interpretive Center

by Chris Koepfel

August 16, 2011

How Tamales Came to Mississippi

by Malcolm White

September 20, 2011

A Southerly Course: Traveling
Foodways Close to Home

by Martha Foose

October 18, 2011

Hunting Delta Style

by Hank Burdine

November 15, 2011

Saints and Sinners: People Who
Made the Delta the Delta

by Willy Bearden

Talks will be held in the Sharkey-Issaquena
County Library Fine Arts Room at 6:30 p.m.
Sharkey-Issaquena County Library
is located at 116 East China Street,
Rolling Fork, Mississippi.

Lower Delta Talks are sponsored by:

Lower Delta
Partnership

Bank of America

Stoddlefork Foundation • Wilton Family Foundation
Friends of the Sharkey-Issaquena County Library
Sharkey County Historic Preservation Commission

Adopt-A-Stream workshop to be held at Hugh White State Park

The Mississippi Wildlife Federation along with the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality will hold a 2-day Adopt-A-Stream workshop at Hugh White State Park, near Grenada, MS on June 14-15, 2011.

Registration available on the MWF website; www.mswildlife.org or contact Deb Veeder at 601-605-1790.



Photos on page 1 are from the 2010 Lower Delta Outdoor photography contest. 2011 entries are due September 1. Information available on www.lowerdelta.org.

The LDP e-newsletter is published on a quarterly basis.