



**Heritage Month 2009
Only in Arkansas: Exploring Our Natural Heritage**

**April
2009**

This year, the [Department of Arkansas Heritage](#) focuses on the Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission (ANHC) and its conservation mission with the Heritage Month theme of "Only in Arkansas: Exploring Our Natural Heritage." The theme specifically highlights those animal and plant species that occur only in Arkansas and nowhere else in the world, like the Fourche Mountain salamander at right.

The official kick-off of Heritage Month 2009 will be on Sunday, April 19. A reception will be held at the Little Rock River Market (west pavilion) from 4:30-6:30 p.m. in conjunction with the launch of KATV's month-long heritage pilgrimage through Arkansas. Attendees will receive a free copy of the Heritage Month poster.
- [Michael D. Warriner](#)



ANHC sponsors Natural Heritage Awards at Arkansas State Science Fair

The ANHC has supported local and regional science fairs for several years, providing staff for judging and mentoring students. Last year we expanded our support to the state level by sponsoring awards at the state science fair.

For 2009, the ANHC presented four awards for those projects that best reflect the investigation of elements of Arkansas's natural heritage. The Arkansas State Science Fair is sponsored by the [Arkansas Science Fair Association](#). More than 250 students who had already won first, second, or third places at regional fairs in Arkadelphia, Batesville, Fayetteville, Hot Springs, Jonesboro, Hot Springs, and Monticello exhibited their projects for judging April 3-4 at the University of Central Arkansas in Conway.



The 2009 Arkansas Natural Heritage winners, their schools, and their projects are:

- Rachel Roenfeldt, Fayetteville High School, for her project looking at salamander populations in caves
 - Steven McFarlin, Arkansas School for Mathematics, Science, and Art, for his project detailing fin and eye development in cave fish.
 - Caitlyn Sears, Alma High School, for her project titled "Insect Secession"
 - Casey O'Hare, Central High School, Little Rock for her exploration of birds' nests.
- [Jane Jones-Schulz](#)

The national [Project BudBurst](#) list of plants has been updated to include several more plants that are found in Arkansas's wonderful botanical diversity, such as prairie grasses and bald cypress. Additional cultivated plants and non-natives have also been added. Many of these plants are starting to bloom now, so get your data in! Additions include:

[Bald cypress](#)
[Big bluestem](#)
[Common lilac](#)
[Dogtooth violet](#)
[Eastern red cedar](#)
[Southern magnolia](#) (at right)
[Switchgrass](#)
[White clover](#)
[Wild strawberry](#)

The entire plant list for Arkansas can be found under the Citizen Science tab on our website at [Current Project](#).
- [Jane Jones-Schulz](#)



Arkansas Box Turtle Survey: 2008 preliminary results

Initiated in 2007, the ANHC's [Arkansas Box Turtle Survey](#) completed its two-year reporting period this past December. Over the course of 2007-2008, we received reports of nearly 3,000 box turtles across Arkansas. The majority of box turtles reported to the survey were three-toed box turtles. Overall, our data from 2008 trend closely to what was observed in 2007 ([2007 Arkansas Box Turtle Survey](#)).

Approximately 855 box turtles were reported in 2008. The first observation of a box turtle in 2008 was submitted to the survey on March 19 and the last observation on November 7. Numbers of box turtles observed per month peaked in May and declined thereafter into summer and fall. Anecdotal reports for 2008 included more observations of turtles mating and egg-laying.



As in 2007, most observations submitted in 2008 were of live box turtles (94%). Live box turtles were most frequently reported from urban areas, in particular paved roads and residential yards. Even though many box turtles that were reported from residential yards were turtles that had been "transplanted" there from other locations, these "yard" turtles seem to be thriving (based on observers who marked and documented the same individual both years) and even reproducing (based on the number of juvenile turtles reported in residential yards). Again, anecdotal evidence provides a possible clue. Many of the observers reported regularly putting out food for box turtles, found turtles in vegetable gardens, or described other aspects of their yard that provided suitable box turtle habitat.

Dead or injured box turtles accounted for a much smaller number of the total observations with most of these individuals reported from paved roads. Numbers from the survey indicate that Arkansas's box turtle population would benefit from wildlife fencing or similar designs in road planning. Based on estimated size, nearly three-quarters (74%) of the box turtles reported were adults, possessing shell lengths of five inches or greater.

A more thorough and complete analysis of our box turtle data is planned. Our final product will ultimately be submitted to a peer-reviewed journal for publication.
- [Jane Jones-Schulz](#) and [Michael D. Warriner](#)

Conservation partner: Arkansas receives Forest Legacy Grant [Christina Fowler](#), Arkansas Forestry Commission

On March 11, 2009, the USDA Forest Service announced that Congress had approved a \$2.06 million Forest Legacy grant to the State of Arkansas to purchase



approximately 2,400 acres of south Arkansas forestland in Bradley and Drew counties. The project, called the Pine Flatwoods Recovery Initiative (PFRI), will protect an ecologically important forest landscape; provide public access for hunting and other forms of recreation; protect [Geocarpon minimum](#), a federally listed threatened plant species, provide essential habitat for the [Red-cockaded Woodpecker](#), a federally listed endangered species; and help protect the water quality of the Saline River, which is designated as an Arkansas Extraordinary Resource Waterway.



The PFRI tract will be added to the ANHC's [Warren Prairie Natural Area](#) (pictured above) in Bradley and Drew Counties, more than doubling the natural area's size. The PFRI grant was supported through the efforts of Representative Mike Ross, Senator Blanche Lincoln, and Senator Mark Pryor. The ANHC will be the primary non-federal, cost-share provider along with The Nature Conservancy (TNC). The ANHC will hold title to the property.

The Forest Legacy Program (FLP) is a nationally competitive grant process overseen by the USDA Forest Service and administered in Arkansas by the [Arkansas Forestry Commission](#). Arkansas has been the recipient of two previous FLP grants totaling nearly \$2.7 million. FLP protects forests from conversion to non-forest uses. Property is purchased through fee-simple land acquisitions or conservation easement acquisitions from a willing seller with the purchaser being the state or unit of state government.

Private landowners owning forested land within Arkansas's designated Forest Legacy Areas are eligible. For more information about FLP, contact Jim Jolley, program administrator, at 501.296.1865 or e-mail jim.jolley@Arkansas.gov.



National Environmental Education Week

A National Environmental Education Foundation Program

[National Environmental Education Week](#) (April 12-18) is coordinated by the National Environmental Education Foundation (NEEF) in cooperation with thousands of outstanding schools, environmental education organizations, education associations, and state and federal agencies. This year, the National Environmental Education Foundation has chosen the theme "Be Water Wise!" for Earth Day 2009.

Endemic species of the month: April 2009 Moore's larkspur (*Delphinium newtonianum*)

[Moore's larkspur](#) was discovered and formally described by Dr. Dwight M. Moore, an eminent figure in Arkansas botany. Moore first collected specimens of this endemic species from Newton and Pope Counties in 1934.

Flowers are very showy and are pale blue to bright blue to sometimes purplish in color. Flowering typically begins in late May and continues on into July, often persisting until nearly the end of the month.



Moore's larkspur is known from two areas in Arkansas, the Boston Mountains of northwest Arkansas and the Ouachita Mountain region of west central Arkansas. A large number of sites have been documented in the Boston Mountain area, where it is known from Newton, Searcy, Johnson, Van Buren, and Pope Counties. In the Ouachita Mountains, the species is known from Polk, Montgomery, and Pike Counties. Research indicates that Ozark and Ouachita Mountains populations are genetically distinct from one another.

- [Michael D. Warriner](#)

Upcoming Events

April 17-18, 2009. [Little Rock Zoo Earth Day Celebration](#): Conservation

education and activities for families, Little Rock (9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.- ANHC staff participating).

April 19, 2009. Department of Arkansas Heritage: Heritage Month 2009

Kick-off: 4:30 p.m., River Market Pavilion (west), Little Rock.

April 24-26, 2009. [Arkansas Audubon Society Spring Convention](#): Petit Jean State Park.

May 1-3, 2009. [Arkansas Native Plant Society Spring Meeting](#): Stuttgart, Arkansas.

May 13, 2009. Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission Meeting: The ANHC will meet at 11:00 a.m. on Wednesday, May 13, 2009 at the Honeycomb Restaurant and Bakery, 705 Main Street, Arkadelphia.

May 17, 2009. [Hot Springs e-Day 2009](#): Transportation Plaza, Hot Springs, Arkansas.

June 26-July 1, 2009. [2009 Meeting of the American Arachnology Society](#): Arkansas Tech University, Russellville.

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