

Wilderness Survival Training on a TREASURE Forest

By **DON C. EAST**, TREASURE Forest Landowner

ENVIRONMENTAL education for our youth is one of the most important uses of TREASURE Forests. There is one type of youth education that so far is unique to the TREASURE Forest belonging to Jerry and Genelle Brown. For three years, their beautiful and diverse property has been used as the site for wilderness survival training for Jerry's students from the Career Tech Center of Tallapoosa County, Conservation Careers Course.

Jerry is the class instructor for this course, designed to prepare high school students for careers in the conservation area—game wardens, wildlife biologists, park rangers, foresters, etc. The Brown's TREASURE Forest is ideal for such



During survival training the students learned how to build a fire and cook outdoors.

training because it lies in a remote area along Little Hillabee and Harbuck Creeks in Clay and Tallapoosa counties. The six Benjamin Russell High School students who voluntarily signed up for this year's trip were Rob Carlton, Douglas Daniels, Byran Holman, Bruce Sims, Jason Templeton, and Alex Vardaman. Accompanying the group were four stu-

dents from previous classes who enjoyed the experience enough to try it for a second or third time. They were Lance Gilbert, Troy Smith, Roamon Voss and Wesley Wilbanks.

Jerry Brown is a 31-year veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps who has had survival training and experience. He was assisted by Don East, a TREASURE Forest landowner, 36-year Navy veteran and former survival instructor. Others participating in the event were Bobby Dean, membership services coordinator for the TREASURE Forest Association, and Dr. Neal Waer, a wildlife biologist with Preceda Wildlife and Forestry Management Company.

Prior to the field trip, Jerry gave the students classroom instruction in wilderness survival techniques such as shelter construction, orienteering, survival foods, traps and snares, first aid and other subjects.

The students were taken to a remote area for the first night's camp. The selected site had a nice sandbar along a creek bank on one side and beautiful rock outcroppings along the opposite bank. Jerry used a low light level video system to record each step of the field activity so that it could be used later as a post-event debriefing tool for the class. The students were given instruction on some of the survival foods found in the local area, such as Japanese honeysuckle, fiddlehead ferns, redbud blooms, and smilax leaves.

The students were instructed on how to build cooking and warmth fires on the sandbar. After the fires burned down to a good bed of hot coals and nightfall approached, the students were given some venison and rattlesnake meat, along with an Irish or sweet potato to cook. Since no modern cooking utensils were allowed, the food had to be cooked by

primitive means. According to the hungry boys, this in no way degraded the flavor of the food. After the meal, the students were given a brief lecture and demonstration on night orienteering by using the Big Dipper, Polaris and the huge full moon rising in the east. The next day the students were provided additional lectures on basic survival techniques, foods, sources of water, and daylight orienteering. This was followed by Dr. Neal Waer's presentation on wildlife management. Afterwards, the group hiked through a beaver swamp wetland to sample other survival foods such as cattail shoots, dock leaves, plantain leaves, earthworms and grubs, bear grass tubers, wild violet tubers and the sweet juice from the abundant wild grape vines.

Returning to the Brown homestead area and their well-stocked fish pond, the students were allowed to try their fishing skills. Using any bait they could find in the fields and forest, they were allowed to use the basic fishing equipment they had in their packs to catch a few bass. As the fishing session was winding down, Jerry's father, Mr. "T.J." Brown, showed up with a 19 1/2-pound turkey gobbler he had just harvested from the Brown TREASURE Forest. The students were given instruction on field dressing the turkey to use for a part of their meal that night.

The group was then transported to another remote area near Harbuck Creek to cook their fresh fish and prepare for the second night. The students were told that they would be separated and would have to spend the second night alone in the woods! This would allow them to individually perfect the shelter, fire building and campfire cooking techniques they had practiced the night before. Using the

Continued on page 21

Good Things Will Follow

Classroom in the Forest: Forest in the Classroom was a huge success in Mobile County thanks to the many wonderful volunteers. This program is coming to Montgomery, Huntsville, and Birmingham. Watch for times and dates. Good things will follow as Classroom in the Forest: Forest in the Classroom continues to grow. Look for it to premiere in your county soon.

Learn More

For more information please feel free to contact the following:
James Malone, Executive Director
Alabama TREASURE Forest Association
(334) 442-2424

Jane Hartselle, State Project Coordinator
Classroom in the Forest:
Forest in the Classroom
(334) 690-8445 📞

Training, Continued from page 19

abundant forest roads and firelanes on the Brown property, the students were dropped off at pre-selected sites for their night's ordeal.

At daybreak, the instructors began their hike to pick up the students. All were awake and huddled around their fires when Jerry and Don arrived. The group then hiked back to the vehicles for the trip back to the Brown homestead.

Since each generation of Americans is growing farther and farther from the land, even this brief wilderness survival training will be of benefit. The students gained an understanding of what our Native American and pioneer forefathers' everyday lives were like. It also gave them a profound appreciation for the modern conveniences that we take for granted in today's world. Finally, this experience points out the value of Alabama's well-managed TREASURE Forests in providing field laboratories for environmental education. Our thanks go out to Jerry and Genelle Brown for sharing their beautiful and diversified TREASURE Forest, and their tireless effort in making a difference in the lives of some Alabama youths. 📞



Learning about the forest can be fun, as these Mobile County students will attest.

Promote and Support the TREASURE Forest Program Join the Alabama TREASURE Forest Association

The Alabama TREASURE Forest Association is composed of people who practice TREASURE Forest management, people who encourage others to practice it, and people who believe that management of Alabama's forestlands according to the TREASURE Forest concept is good for both present and future generations.

Membership in the Alabama TREASURE Forest Association is open to certified TREASURE Forest owners (Full Members), any forest landowner who is not certified (Growing Member), and persons, companies, corporations, or organizations that do not own forestland (Associate Member), but want to support and promote the sustainable and wise use of our forest resource for present and future generations.

Yes, I would like to join the Alabama TREASURE Forest Association

Date: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ County: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____ Telephone: (____) _____

Check each category and fill in the blanks as appropriate:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Associate Member | <input type="checkbox"/> Enclosed is \$20 annual membership fee |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Growing Member | <input type="checkbox"/> Enclosed is \$25 annual membership fee |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Full Member | <input type="checkbox"/> Enclosed is \$30 annual membership fee |

Primary objective: _____

Secondary objective: _____

Mail to: Alabama TREASURE Forest Association, P.O. Box 145, Chunchula, AL 36521

For more information about the Alabama TREASURE Forest Association contact James Malone, Executive Director, at (334) 442-2424.