

Alabama 4-H Team Earns National Championship in Utah

Once again, the Coosa County 4-H Wildlife Team represented Alabama at the National 4-H Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Invitational in Cedar City, Utah, on July 25-29, 2007. Once again, they returned home as National Champions. The scores were close, but Alabama won by a 10-point margin over the second place Utah team, followed by the Texas team in third place. A total of nineteen states were represented, and all the teams were already state champions.

This victory marks the tenth time Coosa County 4-H has had a team participate in the national wildlife event. Nine of these teams have all placed in the top three, including three national championships and four reserve national championships.

Team members for this year included Treavor Abrams, Samuel Cordner, Elijah Phillips, and Anna Vines. They were coached by Kristy Abrams and Roger Vines, Coosa County Extension Coordinator. Shelly Wood and Jennifer Ayers also assisted with the team.

The teams competed in several different events including aerial photo interpretation, wildlife foods, wildlife habitat management practices, a written rural wildlife plan, and a written urban wildlife plan. Anna Vines was the overall high scoring individual, Elijah Phillips placed fourth, and Samuel Cordner came in ninth overall. Treavor Abrams also did well, but placed out of the top ten.

The 4-H Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Program, commonly known as WHEP, is an educational program of the Cooperative Extension System to teach youth about the value and principles involved in managing wildlife resources. It began in Tennessee as a state 4-H program and has grown to a nation-wide event. Participants must first win their

different from Alabama. The competition site was on land dominated by high desert sagebrush and rugged mountains. The Utah and Texas teams had the advantage of being on familiar ground, so that made me especially proud of our Alabama team members who still came out on top. I have been coaching this team since they were in the fourth grade,

so it's great to see them reach this long sought-after goal."

During the trip out west, the team took advantage of many educational opportunities, visiting Grand Canyon National Park, Meteor Crater National Monument, the Painted Desert, the Petrified Forest, and Mammoth Cave. They also toured Hoover Dam and the Indian Cliff Dwellings in Walnut Canyon National Park along the way. Vines stated, "On top of this they

made new friends from all across the country and learned about the plants and animals of the American West. But just as important, they learned about commitment to a goal, the value of hard work, and how to support their team mates. The 4-H'ers also learned to appreciate the support of their community, since over \$2,700 was raised locally to support the team, making their trip possible. All of these folks share in this victory."

"One team member plans to apply to Auburn University and pursue a degree in wildlife biology," Vines went on to say, "so the 4-H Wildlife program has been a great place to start." ❖



Alabama's Own 4-H National Champs - Coach Roger Vines (left) with team members (clockwise): Treavor Abrams, Samuel Cordner, Elijah Phillips, and Anna Vines.

state competition to earn the chance to compete nationally. The rule is that teams are allowed to participate in no more than one national WHEP, so each winning state team gets only "one shot." Through the years, the contest has been held all over the country as each year it moves to a different host state. Next year Oklahoma will host the event. The National WHEP is sponsored by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and International Paper.

According to Coach Vines, "The competition was very challenging. Our team members had to study really hard to learn an entirely new habitat that was so very