

The Kreher Preserve & Nature Center

Where Leisure Meets

The Louise Kreher Forest Ecology Preserve and Nature Center is a 120-acre forest located in Auburn, Alabama. Established in 1993 when Dr. Louise Kreher Turner and her husband, Frank Allen Turner, endowed the property to the Auburn University School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences, it's more casually known as the Kreher Preserve & Nature Center. Once home to Creek Indians, this acreage was later used as a cotton farm by the Carter and Cooper families, who inhabited the homestead which still remains on the property. It was from the Cooper family that Dr. and Mr. Turner bought the land, using it for their cattle before allowing the forest to go back to its natural state. The Turners envisioned that their former farm could be used for educational purposes by Auburn University and the surrounding community.

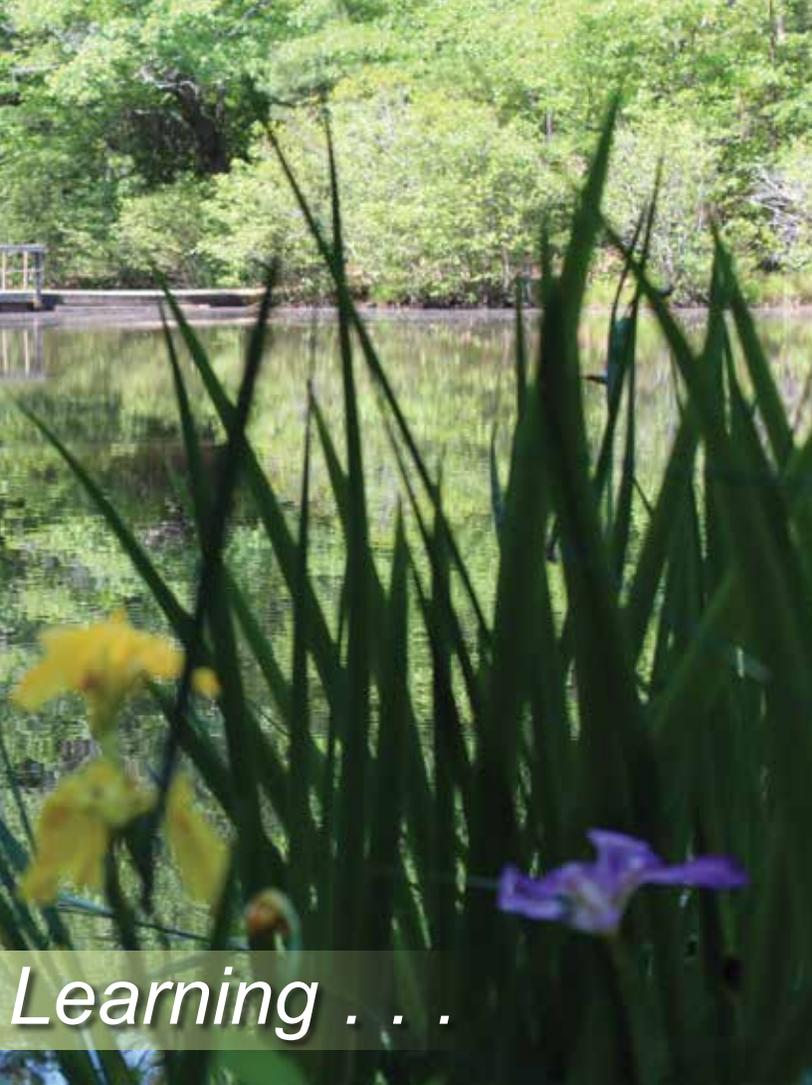
Dr. Louise Kreher Turner realized that preserving the forest while enhancing the land for public use would provide a haven where visitors could learn about and appreciate the world around them. She believed that the City of Auburn was developing at such a fast rate that in a short time, no green spaces would be left for people to enjoy. Dr. Turner wanted to guarantee that her forest preserve would be used for the purpose she envisioned. The Turners' vision provided the foundation for the Kreher Preserve and Nature Center's mission, which is "to provide programs, experiences, nature trails, and natural habitats for education, study, and relaxation for students and people of all ages while creating an atmosphere of discovery and stewardship toward our natural world." This mission is the compass that guides all the environmental education and outreach programs offered through the Kreher Preserve and Nature Center (KPNC). From sunrise to sunset, seven days a week, visitors have open access to enjoy nature at the preserve.

Since its endowment, every aspect of the 120 acres has been improved to enrich visitors' experiences with trails and interpretive features, while preserving the beauty and environmental

integrity of natural habitats found within the nature preserve. Throughout the property, informational kiosks and demonstration areas allow visitors to learn about the local environment, conservation, and wildlife. Over 30 of these features were created as Eagle Scout projects, or by Boy Scout and Girl Scout troops to enable others to enjoy the outdoors. There are over five miles of walking trails, with eight natural habitats that include pine, hardwood, mixed pine and hardwood, meadow, natural creeks (both spring and waterfall), pond, rocky hillside, and a butterfly garden. Additional features include a nature playground, Big Oak and Longleaf outdoor classrooms, a vegetable garden, the old homestead site, a turtle pond and habitat area, Hidden Falls, a bog garden, bird observation areas, conservation and wildlife viewing areas, a honey bee demonstration site, a soil education site, and more. Visitors who enjoy "geocaching" can explore the nature preserve while searching for 15 geocaches hidden throughout the acreage.

As an outreach program of the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences, the KPNC is maintained largely by a small staff, volunteers, and service groups. A not-for-profit organization, the KPNC is dependent on community grants, private donations, membership, and fundraising events to fund its operations. This revenue allows the nature center to provide free to low-cost programs, maintain the grounds and facilities, and serve the needs of the community. With every program that they host, the KPNC staff strives to create an atmosphere that is both inspiring

By Ivy Sibley, Communication &



Learning . . .

Marketing Intern, Auburn University

and engaging so that more community members will see the value of the world around them.

“The KPNC is a tremendous asset to our community for visitors and locals alike. It provides an additional opportunity for our visitors to experience all the Auburn-Opelika area has to offer in a unique and natural setting . . . to explore a part of the community that they might never have known otherwise,” commented John Wild, President of the Auburn Opelika Tourism Bureau and KPNC advisory board member.

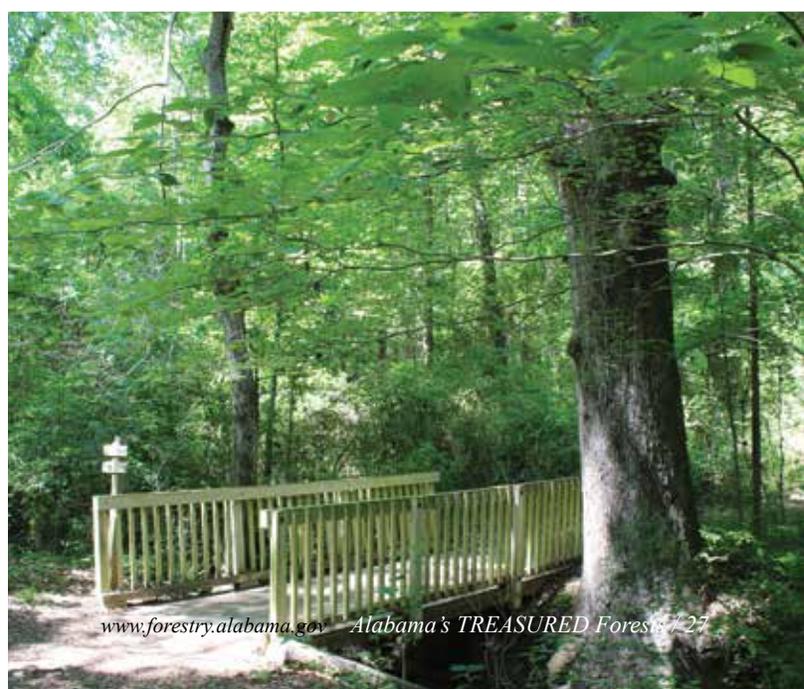
It is estimated that the Kreher Preserve and Nature Center welcomes over 25,000 visitors each year, including 3,000 who attend programs and over 5,000 children from surrounding schools who visit for field trips and environmental education programs.

Jennifer Lolley, Outreach Administrator for KPNC, and the nature center staff create and present environmental education programs that engage and captivate people of all ages throughout the year in an enriching outdoor learning environment. Designed to serve a broad audience, these programs include monthly guided nature walks for adults and families, science and hobby programs, arts and cultural activities, trail runs, workshops, special events, and birthday parties. The KPNC also offers field trips for local schools, camps, and programs for pre-school through high school ages, which

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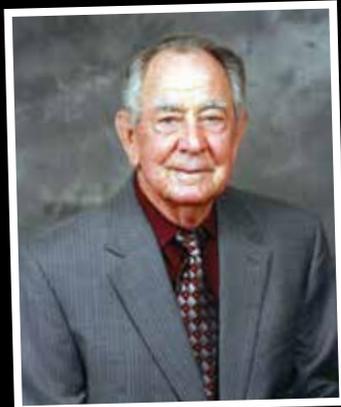


Photos by Ivy Sibley



MEMORIAL

Bob Erskin Blanks 1929-2015



Lauderdale County TREASURE Forest landowner Bob Blanks passed away on April 11, 2015, at the age of 85. Originally from Marion County, he and his wife, Tincy (also deceased), had moved to Rogersville, Alabama, living along the banks of the Tennessee River for over half a century. Here he quietly went about living and leading by example, serving and helping others all along the way.

Following his service in the U.S. armed forces during the Korean conflict, Mr. Blanks had been employed many years with Sears in Florence. Upon retiring, he volunteered his time and carpentry/woodcraft skills in numerous special construction projects throughout the community. An active member of Rogersville United

Methodist Church, he was also a member of the Rogersville Civitan Club and the Rogersville Area Chamber of Commerce, as well as a 50-year member of the Masonic Lodge 147 of Rogersville. In addition to leading his neighborhood watch for several years, Mr. Blanks was instrumental in the development and construction of the Rogersville Volunteer Fire Department's second fire station. For this lifetime of community service, he was recognized by induction into the Rogersville Hall of Honor.

Mr. Blanks also leaves a legacy of stewardship in the Tennessee Valley. Owning forestland in both Lauderdale and Marion counties, he practiced conservation and encouraged preservation of natural resources. He was a charter member of the Alabama TREASURE Forest Association (ATFA), remaining very active in the statewide landowners' organization and in all forestry issues in general. 🌲



Forest landowner Bob Blanks (center) proudly displaying his TREASURE Forest, Stewardship Forest, and Tree Farm certification signs at his Lauderdale County property with grandson John Patterson (left) and AFC Lauderdale County Forester Steve McEachron (right).

Kreher Preserve

(Continued from page 27)

provide hands-on learning experiences, live animal encounters, and educational activities. "Nature centers are important components of every community. They provide not only a way to teach children to learn and appreciate nature in a fun and engaging environment, but also a place for the residents to hike and enjoy the great outdoors," said Lolley.

Along with the native species of plants and wildlife found within the preserve, there is a live animal collection known as the "Critter Caravan" that is a key component of the environmental education programs. Staff naturalists are also available to take their "Critter Caravan" to homes, businesses, schools, and other public facilities to provide educational programs.

The Frank Allen Turner Amphitheatre is utilized to host the "Music in the Forest" outdoor concert series, which was created recently to attract a part of the community that might not have previously visited the KPNC. Many of the other programs are held under a covered pavilion which was financed with a grant from the Alabama Forests Forever Foundation. The amphitheater and nature center pavilion also offer a unique and desirable location for private events such as weddings and corporate outings.

The rental of these facilities helps to supplement income needed for operating the preserve.

In addition to its educational programs and features, the nature center offers convenient access to restroom facilities, shaded benches, and drinking fountains. The KPNC protects the natural flora and fauna of the preserve with a "Leave No Trace" policy that prohibits littering, smoking, pets, and biking throughout the acreage.

According to Lolley, "There is really so much here for the community, no matter their interests or fitness level. Whether they are looking for a peaceful place to have lunch, do some birdwatching, run a 5k race, or attend one of the many programs we offer, the KPNC is here for the public's use and enjoyment. Our goal is that everyone knows that this is available to them."

Located at 2222 North College Street in Auburn, the Kreher Preserve and Nature Center is truly a place "Where Leisure Meets Learning." For more information on upcoming programs and events, visit the KPNC's website at <http://auburn.edu/preserve>. 🌲