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Wetlands among city's wonders

Ecosystems can be teaching tool, tourist stop

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Kids enjoy a walk at the Discovery Center's wetlands. / dnj file

Written by **Samantha E. Donaldson**

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MURFREESBORO — Like the rain forests and coral reefs, wetlands are some of the most fascinating and active ecosystems in the world. And Murfreesboro is home to several of them.

"Murfreesboro (Parks and Recreation Department) is very lucky to manage several wetland sights, and we try to educate the public on the importance of these places," said Rachel Singer, program coordinator for the local wetlands.

"Many times these areas are viewed as wastelands that are simply breeding grounds for mosquitoes, snakes, and other unwanted critters. Wetlands serve as nurseries for several species of wildlife to raise their young. And yes, you may find mosquitoes in these areas but they are a very important piece of the food chain for our beautiful song birds, native mammals, and sport fish," Singer added.

The restoration and preservation of this irreplaceable resource in Murfreesboro serves not only local wildlife, but also teaches our citizens to love, appreciate, and protect wetlands everywhere.

"The city has put an investment in the parks and our natural resources such as the wetlands and it is something our citizens benefit from," said Angela Jackson, assistant director for Murfreesboro Parks and Recreation Department. "Wetlands are a key resource to any ecosystem. As Murfreesboro has become more and more urban, it has become especially important to protect them. The wetlands are an essential part of the health of our community, not just for the wildlife that lives there, but for our children who can learn from them."

"The fact that you can see muskrats and herons inside a city is amazing. There are children in other cities who don't know and don't understand that," Jackson added.

The short drive to a wetlands area has many educational benefits, but it can be great for outdoor enthusiasts as well.

"Wetlands provide great recreational areas as well. People can take advantage of hiking, wildlife watching, kayaking, and photography," Singer said. "For me, it is really important to educate the public on the value of these areas which is why we offer so many wetland programs. I want everyone to be able to see the benefits of wetlands so in turn, we as a community, will take better care of these crucial and fragile ecosystems."

—Samantha E. Donaldson, 615-278-5155

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