



A Cope's gray tree frog (*Hyla chrysoscelis*) on a branch in the E.O. Wilson Land Between the Rivers Preserve © MacStone

## The E.O. Wilson Land Between the Rivers Preserve

Before he became one of the greatest natural scientists of our time, before his more than 150 international awards, and before receiving Pulitzer Prizes for his books *On Human Nature* and *The Ants*, E.O. Wilson would explore the woods and waters around Mobile, Alabama.

We are proud to announce that 8,000 acres of those lands and waters will be forever known as the E.O. Wilson Land Between the Rivers Preserve.

On June 10, on what would have been Dr. Wilson's 96th birthday, we announced our partnership with the E.O. Wilson Foundation to rename The Nature Conservancy's Land Between the Rivers Preserve in the Mobile-Tensaw Delta. This critical tract's creeks, rivers, ponds and oxbow lakes contribute to the Delta's recognition as home to the greatest number of freshwater species in the United States, making it one of the most ecologically diverse—and important—places on the planet.

### Common Cause

Over the last four decades, The Nature Conservancy has worked with partners to protect some 100,000 acres of habitat within the Mobile-Tensaw Delta. The forests and wetlands of the Mobile-Tensaw Delta and its surrounding buffers are vulnerable to development efforts that would clear and carve up the landscape for timber and riverfront construction.

We have always believed that it is possible to protect the Delta, and Alabama. It is a belief we shared with Dr. Wilson, who joined The Nature Conservancy as a trustee and helped to guide us through important conservation decisions—including our work in the Delta.

Dr. Wilson's commitment to The Nature Conservancy was crucial to charting our own path forward and putting the Delta at the forefront of our conservation efforts in Alabama.

There is perhaps nobody more associated with the Delta than Dr. Wilson. It is a place as unique and iconic as he is, and it is fitting that his name and legacy be forever connected with the place that inspired him on his incredible journey.



The E.O. Wilson Land Between the Rivers Preserve © MacStone

## The Delta

The Mobile-Tensaw Delta lies within a network of floodplains, rivers and wetlands that extends across the southeastern United States. That region, in turn, is part of a critical corridor that stretches from the Gulf to the Appalachian Mountains. Conserving the capstone “land between the rivers” at the confluence of the Tombigbee and Alabama Rivers is a priority in TNC’s ongoing efforts to establish resilient and connected landscapes across the southeastern United States.

In 2024, The Nature Conservancy, with support from Patagonia’s Holdfast Collective, acquired the land that many consider EO Wilson’s backyard. The vast expanse of bottomland forests is a critical migratory corridor for birds with more than 300 species recorded, including 110 nesting species. The range of 38 amphibian species and 58 reptile species overlap with the Delta. At least 26 families and 115 species of fish have been reported from the Delta.

**“The great thing about growing up in old Mobile was not the history that was all around me, and it was wonderful history, but the natural history that I had available to me. In just a few minutes, I could leave on my bike and be on my way to the Mobile dock area, or I could get on the causeway that cuts off Mobile Bay from the Mobile-Tensaw Delta Wilderness Area to the north. I wish every child could have a chance to wander and experience natural environments, natural history, the way I was able to do it.”**

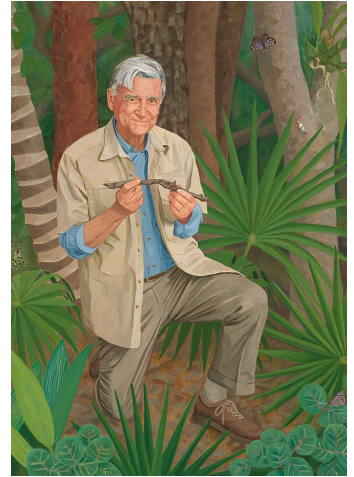
— E.O. Wilson

The Delta’s human communities are also diverse. The region was traditionally the land of the Naniaba, the “people of the forks.” The Naniaba’s land between the Tombigbee and Alabama rivers long served as an important neutral ground between the Choctaw confederacies and the Creek confederacies.

Today, the Delta region is intertwined with the culture and livelihoods of southern Alabama. The communities that live in this special place are deeply invested in its future—and well aware that long-term conservation is critical to ensuring survival of native species, as well as local and state economies, recreation and community life.

## ALABAMA

**“Most children have a bug period, I never grew out of mine.”**



E.O. Wilson on Lignumvitae Key by Jennie Summerall / Oil on canvas, 2006.  
© 2006 Jennie Summerall

## E.O. Wilson

Edward Osborne Wilson (1929–2021), University Research Professor Emeritus at Harvard, was the guiding force that shapes the mission of the E.O. Wilson Biodiversity Foundation. Widely considered one of the greatest natural scientists of our time, he was a pioneer in efforts to preserve and protect the biodiversity of our planet, receiving more than 150 international awards, including Pulitzer Prizes for his books *On Human Nature* and *The Ants*.

While still in high school, Wilson discovered the first colony of fire ants in the United States. After earning a B.S. and M.S. in biology at the University of Alabama, he received his Ph.D. from Harvard University in 1955. From 1953 to 1956, he was a Junior Fellow in Harvard’s Society of Fellows. During this period he commenced a series of research field trips that took him, to many parts of the South Pacific and New World tropics. In 1956, he joined the Harvard faculty.