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Public interest increases

Girl Scouts donate bluebird boxes

Last month, two Girl Scouts donated 12 bluebird boxes to Saturn to fulfill a requirement towards earning the Silver Award, the highest honor in Cadette Girl Scouts. Amanda Adams, 8th grader from E.A. Cox Middle School and Krystal Weber, 9th grader from Spring Hill High School, committed many hours to build the bluebird nestboxes from design plans they found through research. They knew of the Land Use Project and wanted to donate the nestboxes to help preserve the bluebirds in Middle Tennessee. Half of the bluebird boxes were placed along the east-facing fencerow along Ephlin Parkway near Northfield. The others were installed at the walking trail so people can enjoy the bird activity while exercising.



From left to right: Karen Smith, Krystal Weber, Amanda Adams and Bill Miller

Spring Hill Rotary Club presentation

Ed Killgore, Saturn team member, invited Karen Smith of the Land Use Team to give a presentation to the Spring Hill Rotary Club on March 27. The presentation focused on the goals and accomplishments of the Land Use Project in terms of preservation of Saturn's natural environment and wildlife habitat. Approximately 30 members of the local community were present.

GM Website features Land Use Project

The Saturn/UT Land Use Project was recently featured on General Motor's Corporate website. GMAbility is a section of the gm.com website which focuses on stories and news events related to GM's "corporate social responsibility in action," in terms of citizenship, values, and vision. The story highlighted many of the accomplishments Saturn has made in ecology and habitat preservation on site. To read the featured story, please visit http://gm.com/company/gmability/environment/plants/plant_db/saturn_feature/index.html.

Land Use Update

The past couple of months have been busy as we prepare for the spring and summer months:

- no-mow habitat areas redefined for mowing borders
- recently revived mulchbeds in great shape thanks to Premier's efforts
- wildflower seeds spread at the erosion area near the South Gate Entrance
- limited control of musk thistle along Ephlin Parkway
- integrated pest management introductory interviews complete
- preliminary heat loads estimated for south and west walls for energy savings through tree-planting
- purple martin house raised for returning birds
- bluebird boxes installed on Ephlin Parkway and walking trail

For questions, comments, or suggestions please contact: Karen Smith at (931)486-5029; email KarenELSmith@aol.com
Please visit our website for more information about the Saturn/UTK Land Use Project: <http://eercut.utk.edu/slup>

Species Spotlight:

Musk Thistle

Carduus nutans L.

Many of you may be aware of an aggressive pest plant that is quite evident this time of year—musk thistle, commonly called nodding thistle. Musk thistle originated in western Europe primarily as an ornamental. This exotic, invasive species was first introduced to the eastern U.S. in the early 1800s and was discovered in Davidson County in 1942. It is found in approximately 40 states to date. Musk thistle is best described as an aggressive biennial herb with



showy red-purple flowers and painful spiny multi-branched stems and leaves. Mature plant

heights vary from 1½ to 6 feet tall. The flower heads may produce up to 1,200 seeds and a single plant can produce up to 120,000 seeds. The seed can remain viable in the soil for over ten years and is easily wind-blown. Musk thistle is most commonly found in open areas such as meadows, prairies, and roadways and is very difficult to control. Hand-pulling and spraying with an herbicide (e.g. Round-up) prior to the seeds forming is perhaps the most effective control at this time.



Did you know?

Earth Day, founded by Senator Gaylord Nelson in 1970, is now a world-wide celebration which occurs every April 22. The purpose of Earth Day is to honor, renew responsibility for, and to bring awareness to communities about protecting the environment so future generations may enjoy the natural world.

Springtime—New Beginnings

Many bird species call Saturn their home. In fact, previous bird surveys numbered the total species seen on site at approximately 55 species. Since spring is in the air, many birds are breeding and nesting at this time. Below are a few pictures and descriptions of the nesting activity of some of our feathered friends.



The **American bluebird** has suffered great habitat loss due to residential and commercial development, as well as competition with European starlings and house sparrows. Bluebird trails are an extremely effective method of reestablishing bluebird populations. The nestboxes should be spaced approximately 100-150 yards apart and hung about 5 feet high. Open fields with a few scattered trees for cover are the best location. For building specifications of bluebird boxes, contact Karen at 931-486-5029.

Canada geese mate for life. They usually build their nests in areas of high visibility and close to water. The female makes a depression in the ground and builds the nest around her with grass and feathers. The goose pictured here is nesting on the rock cliff near the entrance to GA-2. Please be especially careful when driving in this area as the male goose is keeping close watch over his mate, often while standing in the road. Geese are especially aggressive during nesting.



The **purple martins** arrived from wintering in Brazil on April 5th. At last count, there were 6 nests and approximately 12 individual birds at the purple martin castle located near the red barn on Ephlin Parkway. Usual nesting behavior involves building nests of small twigs, pine needles, straw, pieces of bark, dry leaves and wet mud. Martins build a mudwall near the entrance of the nesting cavity as protection from weather and predators.