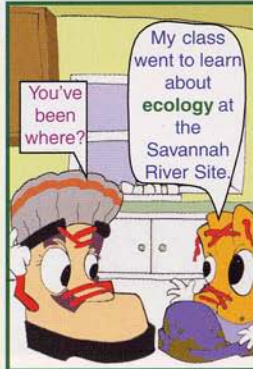
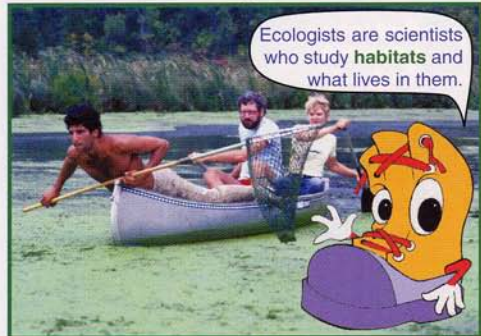
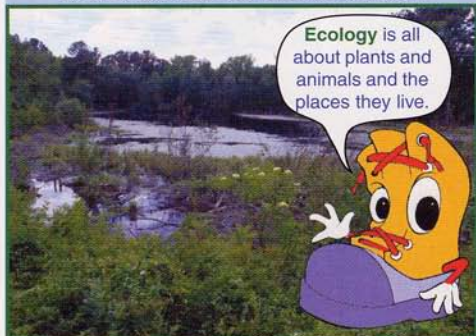


Mud E. Boot returns home from his day's adventures...



Mud E. tells his Mom what he learned...



A **habitat** is a place where a plant or animal lives.



Mud E.'s class begins their field trip by going to a wetland.



The **first** time Mud E. got muddy...



We learned about **Carolina bays** and all the cool things that live in them.

Carolina bays are special wetlands that often aren't wet all year—but they are still important **wetlands!**



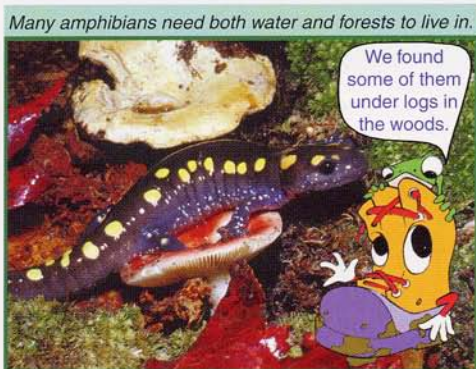
In the bay we saw wood storks...and a dragonfly...and a spider with more eyes than me!

A spider! Spiders are neat!



And we saw **LOTS** of cool amphibians.

Amphibians are frogs, toads, and salamanders.



Many amphibians need both water and forests to live in.

We found some of them under logs in the woods.



And did you know that sometimes bays get **SO** dry...you wouldn't even think they were wetlands!



Next we went to a really cool **blackwater stream**.

Let me guess...you went in the water again.



The water was **COLD!** It chilled me to my sole!

Blackwater streams begin on the Coastal Plain, not in the mountains like many whitewater streams.

Chemicals released from decaying leaves color the water dark.



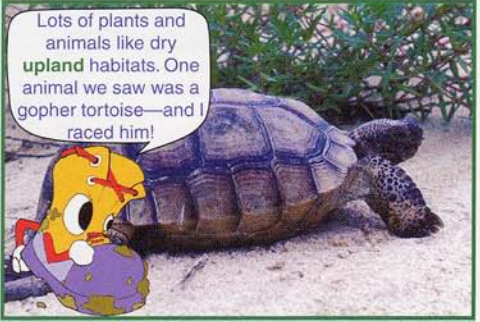
"Knees" may help support cypress trees in deep mud and water.



Mother alligators often stay close to protect their babies.



Sandhills habitats are VERY dry.



Many sandhills habitats have been turned into pine plantations or housing developments.



We saw lots of different kinds of oak trees, and a cool **southern hognose snake**. Did you know they eat toads?

You're kidding! That's toadily wild!

Southern hognose snakes have become rare in places where they used to occur.



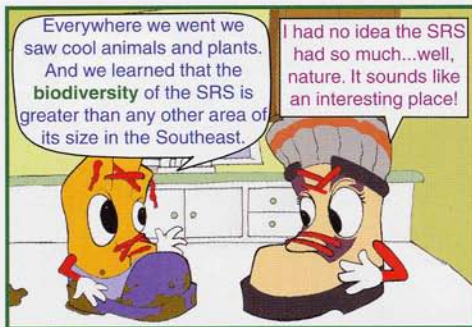
We also saw box turtles and longleaf pines and an endangered red-cockaded woodpecker!

Large stands of **longleaf pine**, which often grow in the sandhills, used to be common in the southeastern U.S.



The sandhills sound beautiful—even if there wasn't any water or mud.

Sandhills habitat is really ancient beaches and dunes from when the ocean was higher—millions of years ago.



Everywhere we went we saw cool animals and plants. And we learned that the **biodiversity** of the SRS is greater than any other area of its size in the Southeast.

I had no idea the SRS had so much...well, nature. It sounds like an interesting place!

Biodiversity is a measure of the variety of plants and animals and habitats that are found in an area.



We were **SO** busy exploring the habitats of the SRS that my tongue was **draggin'** by the time we got back to school!

You had a **VERY** busy day...no wonder you're so dirty and tired! Let's get your boot off to bed.

As Mud E. heads off to be bathed and waterproofed and tucked into his closet for the night, he is heard to exclaim:



Guess what, Mom! Our teacher said we might be able to go see more southeastern habitats later this year! I can't wait!!

"Stepping into Ecology" was a joint production of the Environmental Biosciences Program of the Medical University of South Carolina and the Savannah River Ecology Laboratory of The University of Georgia. *Text:* David E. Scott and Laura L. Janecek (SREL). *Photos:* David E. Scott (SREL). *Drawings:* Jacob Redmond. *Layout and design:* Laura L. Janecek (SREL). Funding was provided by the Centers for Disease Control to Catherine Musham of MUSC (award #413858) and by the SREL Environmental Outreach Program.



The University of Georgia
Savannah River Ecology Laboratory

MUSC
MEDICAL UNIVERSITY
OF SOUTH CAROLINA