

Your skull throbs to the rhythm of the radio. “Let me out.”

Nothing happens. The car is hot, unbearable. You raise your voice. “Let me out. Now.”

Brett stops the SUV and puts it in park. The interior lights fade on as he turns to face you. Brett isn’t smiling. Corey raps his fingers against his window. “Come on, man. Chill out.”

“It’s only a joke,” Alyssa says in a voice more fragile than glass.

“Go back,” you say.

Brett turns off the radio. “No.”

Eric belches, and one of the cheerleaders shushes him. Alyssa scans your face. Her dark eye shadow has smudged down to her bottom lids. “Maybe—”

“No.” Brett reddens in the yellow light. “Are you serious? Are you?” His eyes bulge.

You throw the door open. The night air

dulls the throbbing pain in your temples. You slide out of the vehicle and slam the door shut. Before you can get your duffel, the SUV hurtles away. The bass beat starts up again and fades as the vehicle disappears around the corner.

You stand in the street for a moment. You are alone, surrounded by only quiet suburban homes. You inhale and jog toward the clearing. The world smells like jasmine and freshly cut grass. You increase to three-quarters speed, breathing in through your nose and out through your mouth like Coach taught you. And then you sprint. You bound past porch swings and wind chimes, oak trees and kitchen windows. The air twirls through your hair and stings your cheeks. It enters your lungs and courses through your veins. Your feet fly on the pavement. They carry you back to Delaware and the oak tree. Back to the Loup-garou. ▲▼▲



Director Eric Maynard inside the Governor Mike Huckabee Delta Rivers Nature Center .  
Photograph courtesy of the GMHDRC (see next page).

# Delta Sources and Resources

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**The Governor Mike Huckabee  
Delta Rivers Nature Center  
1400 Black Dog Road  
Pine Bluff, Arkansas**

The Governor Mike Huckabee Delta Rivers Nature Center was the first of four nature centers built by the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission with revenue from Amendment 75, a one-eighth of one percent statewide sales tax passed in 1996. It was designed to resemble a waterfowl hunting lodge set among Pine Bluff Regional Park's Delta bottomland, Lake Langhofer and Black Dog Bayou. The Delta and its rivers are the star attractions, and exhibits vividly describe how meandering waterways have changed this land and why swamps are incredibly valuable ecosystems. A model of the Arkansas River reveals how oxbow lakes form. A simulated crop duster buzzes fertile fields. A short film follows Hernando De Soto's early trek through forbidding land. Hides and bones are part of a hands-on laboratory. Those are just a few examples of what's inside.

The Arkansas Delta is a land made by the constant change in its rivers. This constant state of change creates a unique cast of characters to inhabit its plains, from katydids, cicadas, tree frogs and goat suckers to skunks, rabbits, opossum, and bats—even bobcats, mink, weasels, shrews, and alligators, not to mention the bass, paddlefish, gar and sturgeon swimming in her waters. Hunting and fishing provide a spiritual link that will get visitors connected with past generations, family and friends, if they have an appreciation for the animals and the ecosystems. Hop in the crop-duster and experience the Arkansas Delta from the sky. A landscape of meandering rivers on a vast alluvial plain, most of the natural bottomland forests

have been converted into rice, soybeans, cotton and catfish culture.

Learn the value of the wetlands and the wildlife on it. These areas naturally store water underground, absorbing river overflows, and lessening the destructive effects of flooding; and native wild turkeys, black bears, waterfowl, and deer thrive in these wild aquatic spaces. The wetlands also provide a natural flood control; a nursery for fish and shellfish; an area to purify and filter groundwater; food and habitat for numerous species of wildlife; as well as recreational opportunities, such as boating, duck hunting, and fishing. With more than fifty game species of fishes, Arkansas boasts some of the best fishing in North America.

See how the Arkansas River flowed more than 150 years ago and how the 1927 flood almost washed Pine Bluff away. In bayous and oxbows, water levels are constantly fluctuating, depending on floods and droughts. The water is very cloudy and dark with all of these changes, and oxygen levels are low. So how do plants in bayous and oxbows survive under such conditions? How do animals know where they are going in these murky waters? In the oxbow aquarium, meet the fishes and other aquatic animals that can tolerate the murky, slow current, and oxygen-poor environment found in oxbows. In the Delta rivers aquarium see the Arkansas River's variety of habitats, some with sandy bottoms and fast-flowing current areas, and others that are slow-moving with muddy bottoms. Come and discover the experiences that the first explorers had to go through in the wilderness of Arkansas. Learn how the settlements got adapted for the last four and a half centuries in the deepest swampy areas of our state. Something of interest awaits every visitor. For more information, call (870) 534-0011. Open daily, except Mondays and major holidays. ▲▼▲