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Wetumpka Wildlife Arts Festival returns for 5th year

Event features $30,000 in art prizes, dock-diving dogs & free admission

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (Oct. 19, 2026) – Championship dogs will launch off a dock into open water. Painters will work in the open air. And more than $30,000 in prize money will go to artists who best capture Alabama's wildlife and landscapes.

The fifth annual Wetumpka Wildlife Arts Festival, known as WEWA, returns to historic downtown Wetumpka on Saturday, Oct. 24, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Admission is free.

Presented by The Kelly Fitzpatrick Center for the Arts, the one-day festival gathers the state's art and outdoor communities for a celebration of Alabama's wildlife, landscapes and field sport traditions through the visual arts.

"Wetumpka sits on the Coosa River in the middle of some of the best hunting and fishing country in the state, so a festival about wildlife art isn't something that's imported — it's in the area's DNA," said Alabama Black Belt Adventures Association Director Pam Swanner, whose organization supports WEWA. "What has changed in five years is the stage. More than $30,000 in prizes tells Alabama artists this work is worth taking seriously, and it fills downtown Wetumpka with people who agree."

A juried competition with statewide reach

The Alabama Wildlife Fine Art Competition serves as the festival's centerpiece, awarding prizes totaling more than $30,000, including a $12,000 grand prize. Winners will be announced the morning of the festival, and the accompanying "Art Gone Wild" exhibition showcases work by contemporary artists from across the Southeast.

"Most people only ever meet a painting after it is finished and framed," said Jennifer Eifert, director of The Kelly Fitzpatrick Center for the Arts. "Here you can stand a few feet away and watch a heron come out of a blank canvas, and you can ask the artist why she made that mark instead of another one. Children figure out fast that it is a skill somebody learned, not magic. That is the moment that turns a spectator into an artist."

Dogs, demonstrations and hands-on conservation

Beyond the galleries, the festival fills the streets with:

- **DockDogs competition**: Canine athletes compete all day in Big Air, Extreme Vertical and Speed Retrieve.
- **Sporting demonstrations**: Local and regional kennels, dog trainers and fly-fishing experts show their craft.
- **Live painting**: Artists work in public view throughout the festival.
- **Casting lessons**: The four-time national championship bass fishing team from the University of Montevallo offers casting lessons to young anglers, courtesy of the Alabama Black Belt Adventures Association.
- **Animal encounters**: The Alabama Wildlife Federation and Raptor's Ridge Wildlife Education lead interactive conservation programming.
- **Guided birding tours**: Visitors can participate in intimate trips along the Coosa River.
- **Family activities**: Children's programming, live music and a vendor marketplace round out the day.
- **Basket weaving seminar:** Andrew McCall, known as “The Vine Man,” will lead a session in which students will be able to make a vine creation of their own

Supporting the local arts scene

Proceeds support the mission of The Kelly Fitzpatrick Center for the Arts, located at 301 Hill St. in Wetumpka. The festival is held annually on the fourth Saturday of October.

Sponsors include LIV Development, the Alabama Wildlife Federation, Smoot Harris, the Thomas & Cindy Harris Foundation, the City of Wetumpka, the Alabama Black Belt Adventures Association and Regions Bank.

Sponsorship, vendor, artist and volunteer opportunities remain available. For details, visit wewafest.org, email WeWA@TheKelly.org or call 334-478-3366. Follow @wewafest on Facebook and Instagram.

The Black Belt includes the following 23 counties: Barbour, Bullock, Butler, Choctaw, Clarke, Conecuh, Crenshaw, Dallas, Greene, Hale, Lee, Lowndes, Macon, Marengo, Monroe, Montgomery, Perry, Pickens, Pike, Russell, Sumter, Tuscaloosa and Wilcox.

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The Alabama Black Belt Adventures Association *is committed to promoting and enhancing outdoor recreation and tourism opportunities in the Black Belt in a manner that provides economic and ecological benefits to the region and its citizens. For information, go to AlabamaBlackBeltAdventures.org.*