

# The Pelican Post

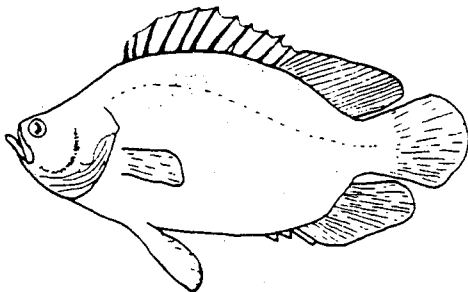
WEEKS BAY RESERVE FOUNDATION  
NEWSLETTER  
SEPTEMBER, 1993

*Welcome to the official newsletter of the Weeks Bay Reserve Foundation. Articles of interest to bay watchers, wetland watchers, and to others interested in the coast and in nature will be featured.*

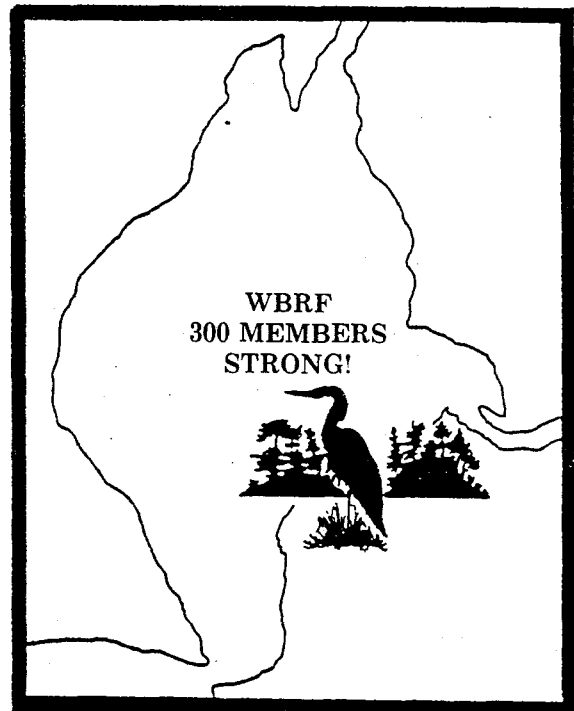
## FOUNDATION GROWTH THROUGH SUPPORT

In the past year, several corporations have lent their valuable support to the Weeks Bay Reserve Foundation. We would like to thank **EXXON** for its continuing support, through the sponsorship of two student employments during the summer. These students made significant improvements on the archaeological and biological exhibits. The skillful architectural design of the proposed Nature Trail Boardwalk was donated by **WALCOTT & ADAMS**. **JIM LAIER** of **SOUTHERN EARTH SCIENCES** donated the soil tests for this project. Many thanks to **INTERNATIONAL PAPER COMPANY FOUNDATION** for their donation designated for the purchase of a filmstrip projector and films. These items will be implemented as a vital tool in the educational programs here at Weeks Bay. The special efforts of all these organizations are greatly appreciated.

Two fish specimens have been donated to the Reserve: A mounted Atlantic Tripletail will soon be displayed at the Center, thanks to **PERRY & MOLLY LOWERY**; Also, a mounted Striped Bass was made available by **DON GAAR**. Thanks for your support! Other specimens and archaeological artifacts have been donated and will be highlighted in future issues.



Atlantic Tripletail  
*Lobotes surinamensis*



Thanks to **FOUNDATION MEMBERS SUCH AS YOURSELF**, 20 acres of land was acquired in the area of Turkey Branch (west of Hwy. 27). Eventually, this land will be transferred to the Reserve to be used for matching funds.

## WBRF WELCOMES BACK L. G. ADAMS, RESERVE EDUCATION COORDINATOR

L. G. Adams is returning this fall after enjoying a summer of fun and leisure on the vacation road with his wife and three sons. One of his sons, August, was chosen for the Allstar Dixie Baseball team. L. G. and his family travelled through the Appalachian Mountains where he visited many nature centers gathering ideas for the Reserve.

L. G. received a Bachelor's Degree in Marine Biology from Auburn University, and his Master's Degree from West Georgia College. We are proud that the Baldwin County Board of Education is supporting the Reserve by placing L. G. at the Interpretive Center. His contribution to the school children of our county has been outstanding!



## ARCHAEOLOGY AND INDIAN HERITAGE DAY CELEBRATED

On July 24th, the Weeks Bay Reserve featured an Indian Heritage Day at the Interpretive Center, promoting the heritage of Indian cultures of South

Baldwin County. Many exhibit booths featuring Indian crafts and jewelry were shown, and the art of making these crafts was also demonstrated.

Also, talks on archaeology and indian culture were featured. Professional archaeologists identified and documented many interesting historic and Indian artifacts brought in from local residents. Approximately 600 persons came to celebrate the day.

### CRAFT EXHIBITS:

Indian exhibitionists were present to share their heritage. One, Muskhogean (Lower Creek) Indian Bobby Thomas Johns (A.K.A. Bearheart), demonstrated the Indian art of wood carving. Johns is of the Poarsch Creek tribe, which has reservations in Alabama, Georgia and Florida. The jewelry (mainly turquoise and silver) and hand crafts by Johns and the other exhibit booths were testimony to the unique beauty of Indian crafts. According to Johns, these crafts are made "mainly to promote my heritage and keep alive the spirit of the Creek Indians. These skills are passed along from generation to generation." Johns resides in Pensacola, Florida.

### CLASSIFICATION OF ARTIFACTS:

Scientists and researchers of archaeology were available to classify artifacts. One such team, Mary Ann Fabbro of the University of West Florida and Lee McKenzie of the Archaeological Institute of West Florida examined various artifacts brought in to them by Bay residents. McKenzie commented, "Many interesting artifacts have been brought in for us to look at, some of them 4,000 to 8,000 years old." Most were projectile points, which are larger and also pre-date the arrowhead.

## BOARDWALK CONSTRUCTION TO BEGIN SOON

Construction of a boardwalk nature trail should begin in the near future. The plans are awaiting approval from the State Building Commission. When the approval is received, the bidding process will begin. Reserve staff are eagerly anticipating the construction of the handicap accessible boardwalk which will include an observation platform overlooking Weeks Bay. The boardwalk will be utilized by visitors to the Reserve and in the Reserve's educational program. The trail was laid out by the Reserve staff with the help of some of the Reserve's volunteers. The trail may be as long as 3,000 feet, depending on the bids received and the amount of money raised for the project.



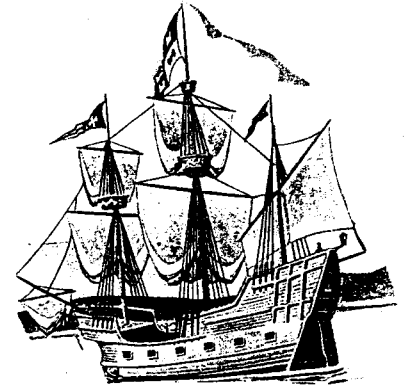
Sweetbay  
(*Magnolia virginiana*)

## NEW EMPLOYEES

Welcome to our two newest employees, Betty Schulte and Bob McCormack, and to two contract employees, Susan Boser and George Ewert.

**BETTY SCHULTE** is the Reserve's new receptionist. She began employment part time in October '92 and was given full time status May 1, 1993. Her friendly smile greets all the visitors at the Reserve as she introduces them to all the exhibits and information currently available. Betty also helps in supervising the volunteers. Her enthusiasm and outgoing personality are real assets.

**BOB McCORMACK** is the Reserve's Interpretive Coordinator. He recently returned to the States after being sponsored by Texas A&M University to document a 17th century shipwreck of archaeological importance on video. Bob has a Master's Degree in Marine Science Education from the Virginia Institute of Marine Science.



Bob will be developing, implementing, and evaluating education programs for the Reserve. He will also be assisting in the development and installation of indoor and outdoor exhibits and displays for the Reserve.

**SUSAN BOSER** is working on contract to develop programs for the physically challenged. She is a nationally certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist. Susan received both a Bachelor's Degree in Recreation Administration and a Master's Degree in Therapeutic Recreation from the University of South Alabama.

Before coming to work at Weeks Bay Reserve, Susan taught horseback riding to children and adults with disabilities at the Therapeutic Riding Academy in Lake Forest. She will be working on a manual for all 21 Reserves on how to make their facilities adaptable for the handicapped. In addition, she will be working with Reserve programs for special education classes and groups with disabilities.

**GEORGE EWERT** has been contracted to produce an interpretive exhibit of the historical period of Weeks Bay Reserve. The exhibit is intended to convey the importance of environmental, economic, and social themes which form the history of Weeks Bay. Artifacts with captions and explanatory text will be on display focusing on the interdependence of man and the ecosystem. The exhibit items will cover the period of 1715 to the present.

George has a B.A. and M.A. degree in history which he received from the University of South Alabama. He has twice published in the *Gulf Coast Historical Review* in the "From the Archives" feature, and has received the E. Lewis B. Curtis Award for Outstanding Scholarship in History for three consecutive years.

## BARRED OWL

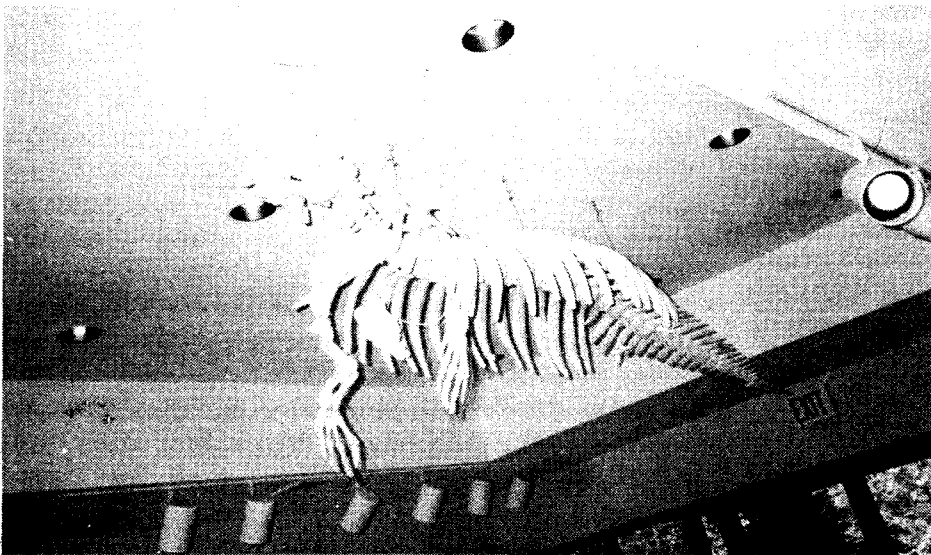
The barred owl (*Strix varia*) is a hoot owl and speaks up loud and clear. In the bottomland hardwood swamps of the WBNERR, sometimes one hears a medley of "hoos" and "hoaws" even in the daytime. Small groups hoot back and forth as if they were holding a conference. Hooting ushers in the nesting season which begins about the middle of February and continues until about the end of March. The nest of this owl is usually in a large natural hollow in a tree, the eggs being deposited on rubbish at the bottom of the cavity; rarely an old nest of a hawk or crow is utilized. Dependent young are cared for from late March to late May. After young have flown, the birds may wander widely and hooting may be heard.

During the day it remains hidden, but if its retreat is discovered by crows or bluejays it is quickly surrounded by a noisy mob composed of most of the feathered inhabitants of the neighborhood, who pursue the unfortunate owl until it has flown to a distant or more secure hiding place. This species is solitary in habit and usually resents the intrusion of a strange individual of its kind. It hunts chiefly at night, but is occasionally seen on cloudy days. It eats a variety of small mammals, small birds, snakes, frogs, large insects and other cold-blooded animals.

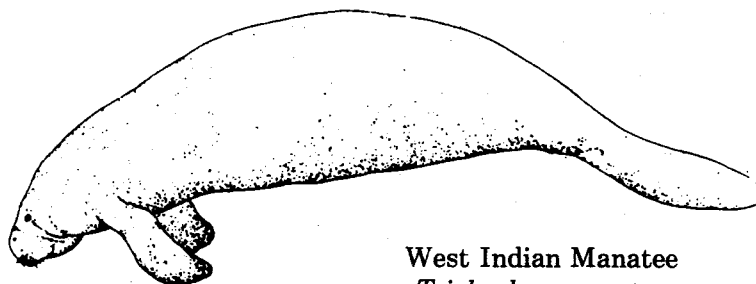


Barred Owl  
*Strix varia*

## THE VANISHING MANATEE



Manatee Skeleton Exhibit



West Indian Manatee  
*Trichechus manatus*

The Reserve has articulated a 10 foot skeleton of a West Indian Manatee, or Sea Cow. This exhibit will hopefully aid in familiarizing visitors to the Center with this large, docile mammal. The manatee is not widely known, this particular species being on the brink of extinction with a mere 1800 estimated in existence today. It is, however, an important species ecologically.

The Weeks Bay manatee perished as a result of pneumonia after over extending its stay in the waters of Weeks Bay instead of migrating to the warmer waters of Florida, where manatees usually congregate during the winter. Manatees are fragile and must have a minimum water temperature of about 74 degrees.

The manatee is of the order Sirenia, named for its legendary following as "Sirens" or sea nymphs, as perceived by ancient sailors.

## A Species of Special Concern

Mississippi diamondback terrapins (*Malaclemys terrapin pileata*) are found from the Florida Panhandle to Eastern Louisiana. In Alabama, they are confined to the salt marshes and nearby shallow waters of lower Mobile and Baldwin counties, including Dauphin Island. The size of the populations and precise distribution are poorly known. They are medium-sized dark turtles reaching a carapace (dorsal shell) length of 9-3/8 inches in females and 5½ inches in males. The toes are webbed, the head is greatly broadened in large females and the head and limbs are grey, heavily freckled with dark spots. The Carapace has strongly developed concentric grooves and ridges on each scute (horny plates that make up the carapace), and a prominent middorsal keel. The plastron (ventral shell) is yellow, often clouded with darker colors.

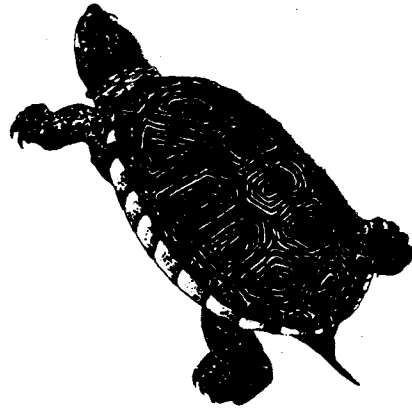
These turtles are restricted to salt marsh and estuarine habitats, but within the coastal marsh they prefer the more open channels to the "grassy flats". Fishermen sometimes take this species in shrimp trawls in Mobile Bay, where they often bask on mud flats or float in channels. They spend the night buried in soft mud in the shallows. They also overwinter in the mud, but occasionally emerge during warm spells. Salt concentrations in estuaries may vary considerably, and terrapins have special glands in the eye region that can excrete excess sodium ions and help this species maintain a proper physiological state during variations in salinity. The excretory capacity of the glands in terrapins is intermediate between those of terrestrial and marine reptiles.

Feeding occurs mainly at high tide, when the turtles cruise the flooded marshes for snails found on *Spartina* stems and can forage easily along the bottom for small crabs, clams and worms. They also feed on the tender shoots and rootlets of marsh plants and may wander a few yards into the grassy low land during high tide in search of insects. Dead fish are eaten on occasion.

Copulation takes place in the water in early spring. Two to five clutches are laid by each female per season, beginning in April or early May, producing four to 12 oblong, pinkish-white and thin-shelled eggs each time in nests dug in sandy areas above the high tide mark. Incubation takes up to 12 weeks, and the young may overwinter in the nest. Many nests are destroyed by fish crows and raccoons, and the hatchlings often fall prey to large wading birds. Growth is rapid; in Alabama, the males are mature in five years and approximately seven years in females. Maximum egg production occurs at about 25 years of age. The upper age limit is thought to exceed 40 years.

The species is under a growing series of pressures in

Alabama. The major threat continues to be reduction of marsh habitat as a result of dredging and filling operations associated with real estate and industrial development. Increasing numbers of crab traps placed close to marsh areas, resulting in inadvertent capture and drowning of the terrapins, is also a problem.



Mississippi Diamondback Terrapin  
*Malaclemys terrapin pileata*



## BUTTERFLIES AND GARDENS

This summer, a beautiful butterfly/hummingbird garden was planted at the entrance of the Interpretive Center. The **BALDWIN COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS** volunteered their expertise and time to develop the garden. They designed the garden, secured donations of plants and materials, then landscaped the appropriate attractant plants. The Master Gardeners will continue to maintain the lovely garden. Along with the help of the summer rains, the garden is flourishing. As visitors approach the Center, they can enjoy the beauty of nature by watching the butterflies leisurely attend to their everyday business of living.



## RESERVE FOCUSES ON EDUCATION

An exciting year in education is anticipated at Weeks Bay National Reserve. New exhibits are upcoming and the specimen collection is growing. In the last school year some 3,000 students participated in educational programs at the Reserve. Most programs centered around two core activities: a touch lab showing a diversity of marine organisms, and an ecological trail walk through the coastal environment. These programs have been received with such enthusiastic interest that the expected number of students visiting the Reserve in the 1993-94 school year is sure to surpass last year's total.

This summer, the Baldwin County School Board supported teacher inservice programs at the Reserve. The programs were prepared to target four levels of education (grades K-12) and inform teachers of available educational activities. Several new activities were introduced such as "Harry the Horseshoe Crab" and "If It's a Fish". In addition to these, the topic of student research was fully discussed in an attempt to stimulate teachers to use Weeks Bay National Reserve as an extension of their classroom laboratory. In support of educational activities, the Baldwin County School Board has provided a powerful computer system which will make multimedia programs available. An example of such offerings was presented to teachers this summer, "Mammals, a multimedia encyclopedia" from *National Geographic*.



This CD-ROM technology displayed information on mammals in a fun and exciting way. Written information was projected on a screen along with graphed data, color slides, motion picture clips and even animal sounds could be

heard. A laser disc retrieval system for estuarine related topics is also included in this state of the art multimedia computer system.

Another educational addition to the programs at the Weeks Bay National Reserve is a donation from the International Paper Company Foundation's Volunteers Fund (VIP). This was in recognition of Mr. Harry Anderson, an International Paper Company employee who has volunteered many hours at the Reserve in trail maintenance. This donation will be in the form of a filmstrip projector and three filmstrips covering the "Alabama Story" of Crabs, Oysters, and Shrimp. This automated audio/filmstrip system will make available a rotating theme of the month for individual or school group use.

Classes will begin coming out to the Reserve in October and continue through the fall months. After a winter break, classes will resume in the early spring and continue until the end of the school year. In addition to the expected classroom students, educational topics will extend to the drop-in tourist, concerned public groups and the guest lecture series. The concern to educate all individuals on the value of the estuarine environment will remain an underlying theme of programs offered at the Weeks Bay National Reserve.

## VOLUNTEERS

The Reserve staff and contract employees express our appreciation for all of the wonderful volunteers who have shared their time and skills with us.

We recognize the hard work of our volunteers by designating an outstanding volunteer each month. The following volunteers have been chosen since this program was implemented: **LESLIE McDOWELL, SUE CAIN, LINDA GARMAN, HARRY ANDERSON, BAYSIDE ACADEMY '93 SENIOR CLASS, EILEEN KNAPP, LUKE NOWLIN, OSCAR RICH, DORIS RICH, HETHALYN GODWIN, BENJAMIN FEW, WENDI GLADDEN, AND MARY MOTTE WALKER.**

We welcome any individual or group interested in becoming involved in the activities of the Reserve. Call Brenda Spivey at 928-9792 for more information.

## CARPENTER EXTRAORDINAIRE!

When you step inside the new Interpretive Center lobby, the room comes alive with the hardwood display cabinetry — all of which have been constructed by **MARK COOPER**. Mark's multi-talented abilities have been a real asset to the Reserve.

## JOIN US!

Currently, we have approximately 300 active memberships, and we are continuing to grow through your support! If you are a member, please tell a friend about the Weeks Bay Reserve Foundation. If you are not a member and would like to join, please send your tax-deductible donation to:

Weeks Bay National Reserve  
11300 U. S. Highway 98  
Fairhope, AL 36532

Membership categories are as follows:

Student	\$ 5.00	Family	\$ 30.00
Senior Citizen	\$10.00	Commercial	\$100.00
Individual	\$15.00	Corporate	\$250.00

Funds for publication of this newsletter provided by members of the Weeks Bay Reserve Foundation.

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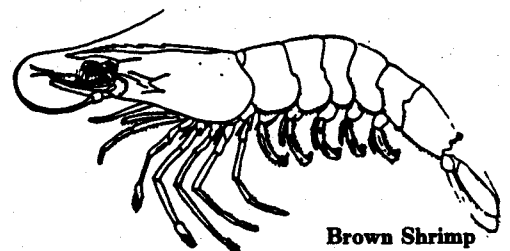
Suggestions and comments from readers on future topics of interest are welcomed by the editors. If you know of others who would be interested in receiving this newsletter, please have them send requests to be included on the mailing list to the return address shown on panel below.

**WEEKS BAY RESERVE FOUNDATION**

11300 U. S. Highway 98

Fairhope, AL 36532

**BULK RATE  
PERMIT  
# 50  
FAIRHOPE, AL  
36532**



**Brown Shrimp**  
*Penaeus aztecus*