



# The Pelican Post

Weeks Bay Reserve Foundation Newsletter

Fall 2001



*Jim Johnston's stunning photo of a pelican in flight over Weeks Bay captures First Place in the Fauna category of the Open Division in the 2001 Photography Contest.*

## Foundation Announces Photo Contest Results

The 2001 Annual Photography Contest sponsored by both the Foundation and the Reserve drew a record number of entries this year. More than 130 entries were submitted by the July 15 deadline.



*First Place in the Flora category of the Open Division is this beautiful photo of unusual plants in the Pitcher Plant Bog by A. Lee Swetman.*

The contest, which is in its second successful year, was expanded in 2001 to include photos taken within the Weeks Bay Watershed as well as the Reserve boundaries. The contest, which included three categories of flora, fauna, and habitats in both open and junior divisions, was for photographs taken between July 2000 and July 2001.

Plans are already underway for next year's contest. "We are so pleased with the

community's response to the photo contest," says Foundation Board member **John Borom**. "We received many wonderful photographs this year that truly reflect the beauty and wonder of the Reserve and the watershed."

First place award winners are featured in this issue of *The Pelican Post*. Watch future issues of the newsletter and the Foundation's web site at [www.weeksbay.org](http://www.weeksbay.org) for additional photos.

Special thanks to our sponsors AmSouth Bank, Regions Bank and Ritz Camera.

## Water Watch Programs Receive Awards

Weeks Bay Water Watch and Wolf Bay Water Watch were among the organizations and individuals honored in June at the Eighth Annual Meeting and Picnic of the Alabama Water Watch Association. Both Weeks Bay and Wolf Bay were awarded in the Education and Outreach Category for outstanding efforts. Other awards recognized **Margaret Sedlecky**, Education Coordinator at the Reserve, as Quality Assurance (QA) Officer of the Year. **Liz Langston** with Wolf Bay Water Watch was also awarded a Certificate of Appreciation. The Extra Mile Award went to Wolf Bay Water Watch for submitting the most bacteriological data.

Weeks Bay Water Watch is composed of 21 monitors who cover 23 sampling sites. Wolf Bay Water Watch has about 30 volunteers who monitor 25 sites. If you are interested in becoming a water quality monitor for the Weeks Bay area, contact the Reserve at 928-9792.

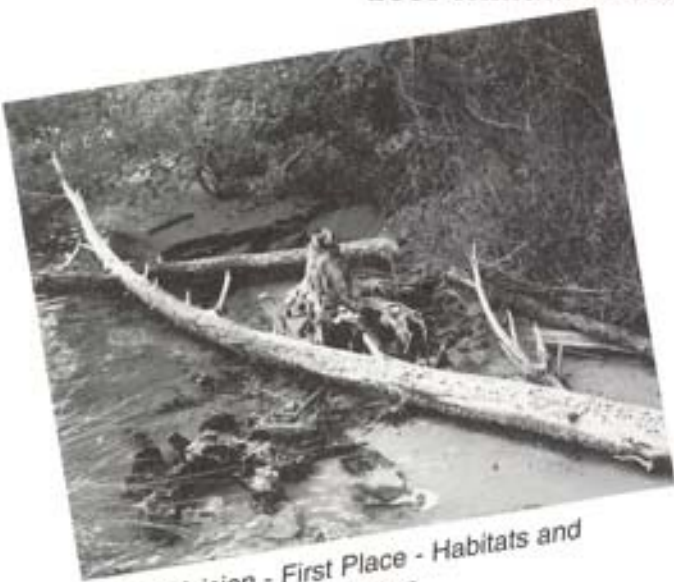


*Accepting state awards for Weeks Bay Water Watch and Wolf Bay Water Watch are Mike Shelton (left), Liz Langston and Gene Labrato.*

## 2001 Annual Photography Contest Winners

### Open Division

- Fauna
  - First Place - Jim Johnston
  - Second Place - Bob Wright
  - Honorable Mention - Rosie Fox
- Flora
  - First Place - A. Lee Swetman
  - Second Place - Amy French
  - Honorable Mention - Jeff Hobson
- Habitats
  - First Place - Dawn Tress
  - Second Place - Ann Smith Thomas
  - Honorable Mention - Sherry Eubanks



Open Division - First Place - Habitats and Best of Show - Dawn Tress

### Junior Division

- Fauna
  - First Place - Frances Mosteller
  - Second Place - Alex Thompson
  - Honorable Mention - Casey Rasinen
- Flora
  - First Place - Frances Mosteller
  - Second Place - Frances Mosteller
  - Honorable Mention - Jamie Rasinen
- Habitats
  - First Place - Bryan Quinn
  - Second Place - Casey Rasinen
  - Honorable Mention - Alex Thompson



Junior Division - First Place - Fauna - Frances Mosteller



Junior Division - First Place - Flora - Frances Mosteller



Junior Division - First Place - Habitats - Bryan Quinn

## NEWS BRIEFS

### Free Environmental Education CD-ROM

Ribbit's Big Splash is an environmental education and conservation CD-ROM on the topic of water. Designed and developed in Mobile, the program is the first in a series that will include the topics of Air, Soil, Energy, Recycling and Wildlife.

Funded by Project CATE (Conservation Action Through Education), a non-profit education fund, Ribbit's Big Splash is designed for children ages 8 - 12 and is Alabama specific. It teaches students about water through visiting ponds, rivers, wetlands and the Gulf. Each of the four sites has a story, a game, projects, facts and a glossary. An activity book can be downloaded easily from the CD-ROM.

This program addresses many of the Alabama Science Course of Studies Standards for grades 3 - 6 and is currently being used throughout Alabama, as well as in other states. Ribbit's Big Splash is available free of charge by contacting the web site [www.projectcate.com](http://www.projectcate.com) and selecting Order Info. For more information, call Neil Johnston at (251) 694-6247.

### Elected Officials Meet at Reserve

Area mayors, county commissioners and state legislators joined the Weeks Bay volunteers, Weeks Bay Watershed Project leadership and Reserve staff for a presentation by Patti Hurley of the Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM) on July 26. Hurley addressed the topic of non-point source pollution and issues which affect elected officials.

Non-point source pollution, such as water runoff from impervious surfaces in the entire watershed, is a major source of water quality problems. The environmental impact of development without proper planning and especially the consequences of the continuing increase in paved surfaces were some of the topics discussed.

Before the presentation, guests were treated to a seafood dinner sponsored by the Weeks Bay Reserve Foundation and the Weeks Bay Volunteers.



*Patti Hurley from ADEM presents a non-point source pollution program to elected officials meeting at the Reserve.*

The presentation was well received and the event opened positive lines of communication for maintaining and improving water quality in the Weeks Bay Watershed. Special thanks to the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) of the Weeks Bay Watershed Project for coordinating the program. Hurley's presentation is part of ADEM's Non-point Education for Municipal Officials (NEMO) initiative.



*Thanks to the fund-raising efforts of the South Alabama Pond Society (SAPS) and the hard work of a great group of volunteers, a new pond emerged at the Reserve on Saturday, June 9. The pond will be used to demonstrate the value of native aquatic plants in landscaping ponds around homes and businesses.*

Photos: Fred Nation

## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT



Mac Heslop

If you're out boating on the waters of Weeks Bay, watch for Weeks Bay volunteer **Mac Heslop** at the helm of the Reserve's *Estuarine Queen* pontoon boat. Mac is one of the boat captains responsible for taking out tour groups with Reserve staffer **Bob McCormack**. Mac speaks fondly of Bob McCormack and the boat tours and describes the tours as "a great way for people to see first-hand what the estuary is all about."

A volunteer for more than seven years, Mac, who hails from Ohio, became involved with the Reserve's volunteers the old-fashioned way - through a friend. He was a perfect match with the *Estuarine Queen* since he previously owned a pontoon boat. He is also involved with several other volunteer organizations in the area including Meals on Wheels.

Before retiring to Fairhope, Mac enjoyed a career of 35 years with the NCR Corporation in Ohio. His job took him to the Far East on a regular basis where he conducted business in India, Thailand, Taiwan and Indonesia. "My work overseas made me realize how fortunate we are to live in America," says Mac, noting the poverty he witnessed on his travels.

Mac enjoys the Fairhope area with his wife of 57 years, Almeda. They have a close-knit family of three children, nine grandchildren and one great-grandchild on the way.

## New Employee Spotlight

**Mike Shelton** is the newest addition to the staff of the Reserve. As Weeks Bay Watershed Project Coordinator, Mike takes on numerous roles and responsibilities within the watershed.

Mike primarily serves as a "watch" for the watershed. He is involved in water quality monitoring and serves as coordinator for the Alabama Water Watch volunteer monitors. He coordinates public outreach for the Watershed Project, which involves organizing events and workshops to educate the public about the watershed. An important part of the job calls for Mike to collaborate with state agencies and private individuals to organize best management practices for agricultural and construction activities within the watershed.

Over time Mike hopes to gain enough water quality data to produce a baseline to measure differences in the water as land use/land cover changes come about. He is also working on a revision to the watershed's management plan, which is a "blueprint" of the state of the watershed and program goals. "The management plan helps educate people on practices to maintain water quality," says Mike. "It's important to strike a balance between land use and conservation."

Mike comes to the Reserve from North Carolina, where he managed an environmental laboratory. Having enjoyed the time he spent in Fairhope years before, Mike was happy to move back to the area. Away from the Reserve, Mike spends his spare time working on his newest "hobby" - a home in Fairhope that he shares with his wife and two small boys. He also likes to spend time outdoors walking in the woods or on the beach with his sons.



Mike Shelton

## ExxonMobil Summer Intern

A native of Michigan with a bachelor's degree in environmental science from the University of Maine, **Eric Brunden** is a long way south from his northern roots. As a "transplant" who has joined other family members in the area, Eric is now a graduate student in the University of South Alabama's education program and hopes to teach middle school or high school science. He lives in Daphne with his wife Lisa and stepchildren Stephanie and Devon.

"We need more hands-on science in the classroom," Eric says. He is certainly getting hands-on experience of his own this summer as the ExxonMobil summer intern at the Reserve. Eric, who had previously volunteered at the Reserve, is assisting Research Coordinator **Scott Phipps** in expanding water quality monitoring efforts; monitoring and maintaining data collectors; and beginning a new research project establishing the current profile of the maritime forest on Reserve lands near Bon Secour. The tract is accessible only by boat and the project involves wading in waist-deep water! Special thanks to ExxonMobil for funding this valuable position to assist research efforts and prepare for the future.



Eric Brunden

## ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

### Zoning?

*by Carey Bentley*

To zone or not to zone, that is the question that faced several Baldwin County communities this summer. In 1991, an act of the Alabama Legislature created the Baldwin County Planning and Zoning Commission, stating how the members were to be appointed and describing their duties and responsibilities. The County Commission was directed to divide the unincorporated areas of the county into planning districts. Also, provisions were made for the county to adopt ordinances and zoning regulations. The law further provided a process for each planning district to come under the zoning authority of the Commission. Baldwin County was subsequently divided into 32 planning districts. Ten of these districts have voted to come within the commission zoning authority. Four other districts are awaiting referendums on the issue.

The Baldwin County Commission has adopted Zoning Regulations for districts who have elected to come within their zoning authority. Briefly stated, the purpose of the regulations is to promote the health, safety, morals and general welfare of the people of Baldwin County; to encourage the use of the lands and natural resources in accordance with their character and adaptability; and to provide for the orderly growth and development within the county.

Zoning and its benefits are not well understood by many people and completely ignored by others. These are the biggest reasons for the controversy and emotional resistance to zoning in many cases. Without understanding people fear the unknown. "You can't tell me what to do with MY land," is a well known cry. Zoning is not a personal thing, it is a community thing. No man is an island. We are all part of a community and our actions can affect the whole community. As Baldwin County grows, this becomes more evident. No one should be able to do anything with his property that would harm his neighbor and his property or harm the community. "You can't paint your house the color you want" is a frequently heard myth and a bit of misinformation. There are many others as well. Zoning is a land use measure only and has nothing to do with architecture.

Growth management and preventing over development and development in unsuitable areas are benefits of zoning. Growth and urbanization affect the quality and quantity of our water supply. As impervious surfaces are added to our landscape, increased runoff occurs carrying pollutants into our rivers and streams. Less water filters into the ground, which is the source of our water supply in

Baldwin County. As we allow less water to filter into the ground and use more water as we grow, we draw closer to salt water intrusion and a diminished fresh water supply.

We often hear people say that they want their community to stay as it is. They do not want it to change. Zoning is the means to accomplish that. Zoning in Baldwin County is necessary to create and maintain the kind of communities and neighborhoods that people find desirable to live in. There are many benefits to zoning.

Promote zoning in your area and when the opportunity comes, be an informed voter. Get the facts for yourself. Beware of myths and false rumors.

### Stewardship

*by John Borom*

Estuaries are priceless in terms of the ecological, economic and social benefits they provide. They naturally filter and purify water and support public health. They reduce flood risks and support public safety. They provide essential habitats for a tremendous variety of plants and animals and support a prosperous economy.

Life in and around estuaries is important and beautiful, but it is also fragile, vulnerable and worthy of our appreciation and thoughtful care. Hopefully, we are slowly moving away from an exploitation mentality toward one based on stewardship and environmental sustainability.

Estuaries like Weeks Bay can be listed as Outstanding National Resource Waters and can be designated as National Reserves, but they can never be finally saved. They are always being saved through perpetual stewardship. The greatest threat to estuaries is a lack of public understanding and public indifference. Humans alone have the capacity to wound or heal our coastal environment, or not to wound it at all.

As the Gulf Coast becomes more crowded and the push and pull of hectic daily life wears and tears at the fabric of our emotional being, we will want and value natural areas uncluttered by the doings of man. We will reach for tranquillity and solitude in nature and find the beauty of landscapes as relief from the press and pace of urban existence. People in growing numbers will travel to the natural coast to embrace its soothing and healing power. Public lands, open spaces and reserves will be treasured, and the public will realize the importance of stewardship.

## CALENDAR

The Weeks Bay Reserve Interpretive Center is open to the public Monday - Saturday 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. and Sunday 1 p.m. - 5 p.m. Trails and boardwalks are open until sunset, even on holidays. For more information, call the Reserve at (334)928-9792.

### September

*Transient Blue-winged Teal (Anas discors) are abundant and feeding in shallow estuaries.*

*Built for speed, the fairly common Merlin (Falco columbarius) and the rare Peregrine Falcon (Falco peregrinus) are transients over open areas, especially coastal beaches, marshes and meadows.*

*Migrating Least Sandpipers (Calidris minutilla) are abundant around estuarine mudflats and beaches.*

- 3 Labor Day holiday. The Interpretive Center will be closed. All trails and boardwalks will remain open.
- 4 Citizens Advisory Committee of the Weeks Bay Watershed Project meeting, Tuesday 6 p.m. at the Reserve.
- 8 Boating Safety Course 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. taught by the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary. For reservations call 928-5534.
- 11 Guest Lecture Series. "Biodiversity in Alabama" presented by **Greg Lein**, Chief, Natural Heritage Section, State Lands Division, Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. 7:30 p.m. Faulkner State Community College Fairhope Campus, Centennial Hall. Bring a friend. For more information, call 990-0423.
- 13 Weeks Bay Reserve Advisory Committee meeting, Thursday 2 p.m. at the Reserve.
- 15 14th Annual Alabama Coastal Cleanup, in conjunction with National Coastal Cleanup, Saturday 8 a.m. - 1 p.m. Check-in and Registration at Weeks Bay Reserve Interpretive Center, Hwy. 98 just west of the Fish River. Free lunch and T-shirts to all Cleanup volunteers. Please bring all trash to the Center to be weighed. Contact **Bob McCormack** or **Mike Shelton** at the Reserve, 928-9792 for more information.
- 21 "Make a Splash" event at Meaher State Park - a water education day for fifth graders.
- 22 Audubon Society boat tour of Weeks Bay Estuary. Field trip to Weeks Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve aboard the *Estuarine Queen* to observe birds, fall wildflowers and butterflies along the Kurt G. Wintermeyer Boardwalk at the pitcher plant bog. Meet at Big Bob's Marina at 8 a.m. Bring a friend. Lunch on your own at Lulu's Sunset Grill around noon. For reservations, call 990-0423. Limited seating.
- 28 Estuaries Live with on-line broadcast from around the nation's coast. Find out more by calling the Weeks Bay Reserve or visit [www.estuaries.gov](http://www.estuaries.gov).
- 29 National Estuaries Day. Contact the Reserve or Coastal Programs office at 626-0042 for more information and a list of activities.

### October

*Landbird transients peak in mid-month.*

*Migrating flocks of American White Pelicans (Pelecanus*

*erythrorhynchos) are riding air currents and feeding in shallow estuaries.*

*Transient Herring Gulls (Larus argentatus) are abundant around estuarine docks and beaches.*

- 2 Citizens Advisory Committee of the Weeks Bay Watershed Project meeting, Tuesday 6 p.m. at the Reserve.
- 5 - 7 Annual Native Plant Sale, hosted by Weeks Bay Volunteers, Friday through Sunday 8 a.m. - 5 p.m., across the road from Reserve at Safe Harbor RV Park. Contact **Maureen Nation** at the Reserve for more information, 928-9792.
- 5 - 7 Bay Fest in Bienville Square in Mobile - children's activities and family fun.
- 8 Closed for holiday. The Interpretive Center will be closed. All trails and boardwalks will remain open.
- 9 Guest Lecture Series. "The Challenges of Bird Migration" presented by **Eric Soehren**, Terrestrial Zoologist, Natural Heritage Section, State Lands Division, Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. 7:30 p.m. The Environmental Center, 6101 Girby Road in Mobile just west of Knollwood Hospital. Bring a friend. For more information, call 990-0423.
- 13 Field trip to Fort Morgan State Historical Park to observe migrating hawks and neotropical migrants. Meet at the entrance to the park at 8 a.m. There will be a \$3.00 per person admission fee. Expect some moderate walking, and bring a friend. For more information, call 990-0423.

### November

*Migrating from west to east, the rare Groove-billed Ani (Crotophaga sulcirostris) occurs in low brush or trees near water. The call (Tee-ho) is distinctive.*

*Transient Bonaparte's Gulls (Larus philadelphia) are abundant around bays and the open Gulf.*

*Migrating Long-billed Curlews (Numenius americanus) are common around coastal lagoons and in the nearby mudflats and grassy areas.*

- 3 Field trip to the Mobile Tensaw Delta to observe waterfowl and wildlife aboard *The Delta Explorer*. Meet at Tensaw EcoTours next to the Bluegill Restaurant at 8:30 a.m. There will be a \$17.00 per person fee. Bring a friend. Lunch on your own at the Bluegill Restaurant around noon. For reservations, call 990-0423.
- 13 Guest Lecture Series. "Jubilees" presented by **Dr. Tony Lowery**, Program Coordinator, National Seafood Inspection Laboratory, National Marine Fisheries Service, Pascagoula, Mississippi. 7:30 p.m. Faulkner State Community College Fairhope Campus, Centennial Hall. Bring a friend. For more information, call 990-0423.
- 22 Closed for holiday. The Interpretive Center will be closed. All trails and boardwalks will remain open.

## **CARA - LANDMARK LEGISLATION FOR ALABAMA'S WILDLIFE**

With your help, Alabama's wildlife and wild places may receive an important infusion of funding thanks to federal legislation now working its way through Congress. The **Conservation and Reinvestment Act (CARA)** is historic conservation legislation presently before the 107th U.S. Congress (H.R. 701).

CARA guarantees \$3.1 billion annually for 15 years to state, federal and local conservation programs such as wildlife restoration, parks and other outdoor recreation, coastal conservation and historic preservation. CARA's funding comes from a portion of the income of federal offshore oil and natural gas leases.

Since the mid-1950s, all of the revenue (about \$4-5 billion annually) collected from oil and gas leases in the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) has been sent to the Federal Treasury. In contrast, revenue from oil and gas development on interior federal lands is generally shared 50-50 with states where development occurs. CARA extends this onshore precedent by sharing offshore revenues with states and needed federal conservation programs.

CARA reinvests one of our nation's finite resources into a lasting natural legacy of wildlife, lands and waters. It is considered the most important conservation-funding legislation in half a century, leading to broad bipartisan support within Congress and across the nation.

### **Impact in Alabama**

If CARA is enacted, Alabama would be allocated about \$52 million annually, or about \$780 million over the next 15 years. This legislation will provide predictable funding that will go a long way toward halting the early decline of many species. It will help maintain the quality of life in our area for future generations.

### **An Overview of the Bill**

Following is a summary of this important legislation:

#### **Impact Assistance and Coastal Conservation (Title I)**

Establishes a coastal conservation fund of \$1 billion annually directed at the 35 coastal states and their local governments to:

- Mitigate marine and coastal impacts of OCS activities;
- Collect data about fisheries and marine mammals;
- Conserve, restore, enhance or create coastal habitats; and
- Promote research, education and training in marine resources.

#### **Land and Water Conservation Fund Revitalization (Title II)**

Establishes \$900 million annually to:

- Support the creation of national, state and local parks, forests, wildlife refuges and open spaces for outdoor conservation and recreation; and
- Safeguard interests of private landowners with a "willing seller" clause and other requirements for federal acquisitions.

#### **Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Fund (Title III)**

Establishes \$350 million annually to assist state fish and wildlife agencies to:

- Manage a diverse array of wildlife and associated habitats by carrying out state wildlife conservation and restoration projects, in recognition of each state's primary role in fish and wildlife conservation;
- Enhance outdoor recreation projects; and
- Foster a responsible stewardship ethic through conservation education.

#### **Urban Park and Recreation Recovery (Title IV)**

Establishes \$125 million annually to institute a matching grant program for local governments to:

- Improve existing recreation areas and facilities, including ball fields; and
- Create new recreational programs, sites and buildings.

*continued on page 8*

## **CARA - LANDMARK LEGISLATION** *continued from page 7*

### **Historic Preservation Fund (Title V)**

Establishes \$160 million annually to enable states to:

- Manage and maintain the National Register of Historic Places;
- Develop preservation projects on historic properties; and
- Supplement National Maritime Heritage Act with \$10 million.

### **Federal and Indian Lands Restoration (Title VI)**

Establishes \$200 million annually to federal agencies and Indian nations to:

- Restore degraded lands and preserve resources threatened with degradation; and
- Protect public health and safety.

### **Endangered and Threatened Species Recovery (Title VI)**

Establishes \$50 million annually to provide incentives to private landowners for the recovery of threatened and endangered species on their land.

### **Payment in Lieu of Taxes and Refuge Revenue Sharing (Title VIII)**

Establishes an annual fund of \$350 million that will match, dollar for dollar, the amount appropriated during the Congressional Appropriations process.

## **CARA's Current Status**

CARA was nearly enacted last year. It garnered the bipartisan support of 315 members of the House of Representatives, 65 Senators and over 5,000 businesses and organizations who recognized CARA as an effective solution to the need for dedicated conservation funding. Alabama's Representative Sonny Callahan is a strong supporter.

Despite the broad support for the bill which resulted in overwhelming passage in the House, CARA was not brought before the Senate for a final vote. Unfortunately, Alabama Senator Richard Shelby's lack of support last year was a factor in the Senate Appropriations Committee's failure to move the bill. There was opposition from Western states' senators who contend the legislation is a threat to private property. This year's introduction of the legislation offers Senator Shelby an opportunity to reverse his stance.

Senator Jeff Sessions supported the bill last year but has not yet committed to this year's version. When CARA makes its way to the Senate, Senators Shelby and Sessions will be doing what is best for Alabama if they get behind it.

## **What You Can Do**

- Review the full language of the bill and share your views with your congressional representatives. If you support the legislation, ask your representatives to co-sponsor the bill. They are interested in your views and welcome your comments.
- Share this information with other individuals who are interested in conserving Alabama's wildlife and wild places.
- Refer to H.R. 701, the Conservation and Reinvestment Act (CARA), in your communication.

Senator Richard Shelby  
110 Hart Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510  
(202) 224-5744

Senator Jeff Sessions  
495 Russell Senate Office Bldg.  
Washington, D.C. 20510  
(202) 224-4124

Rep. Sonny Callahan  
2418 Rayburn Bldg.  
Washington, D.C. 20515  
(202) 225-4931

## Celebrate National Estuaries Day and Coast Weeks

*Estuaries, where rivers meet the sea, are among the most biologically productive systems on earth. More than two-thirds of the fish and shellfish commercially harvested in coastal waters spend part or all of their lives in estuaries. Millions of people enjoy fishing, boating and related activities and also benefit from the food and enjoyment created by resources nurtured in estuarine systems. Estuaries also provide other benefits, including storm and flood protection and pollution control.*

National Estuaries Day, September 29, is an annual celebration to increase the public's understanding of estuaries and the need to protect them. "Coast Weeks" refers to the period of weeks surrounding National Estuaries Day. Numerous activities are planned during this time to celebrate Alabama's estuaries.

Coastal Cleanup kicks off Coast Weeks on Saturday, September 15. Come out and help clean up our coastal waters! Join us between 8 a.m. - 1 p.m. (see enclosed flyer). Sign up Saturday morning at the Reserve's Interpretive Center to help clean up the Weeks Bay zone. Volunteers can look forward to a free lunch and T-shirts.

Estuary Live is an on-line program supported by the National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS) originating from the North Carolina NERR. Estuary Live will be broadcast on Friday, September 28 with live interaction among many reserves and

participating schools. Join this broadcast from your own home or office computer or sign up to join us at Weeks Bay by calling 928-9792. A new website, [www.estuaries.gov](http://www.estuaries.gov), has been established to share more information about National Estuaries Day, Estuary Live and estuaries in general. Visit this site, [www.estuaries.gov](http://www.estuaries.gov), to learn more about activities at other reserves and what you can do to protect your coastal areas here in Alabama.

Other activities scheduled during Coast Weeks include a Boating Safety Course scheduled for September 8 (call 928-5534 for reservations), a boat tour of Weeks Bay estuary for the Audubon Society on September 22 and a Native Plant Sale, October 5-7 (see enclosed flyer). For more Coast Weeks activities around our area, see the calendar on page 6.

### Visit United Bank in Magnolia Springs for Coast Weeks Special Gifts

United Bank has recently opened a branch in Magnolia Springs and in partnership with Weeks Bay Reserve is offering special gifts in recognition of National Estuaries Day and Coast Weeks. Several years ago United Bank established an *Affinity* card with Visa that provides a donation to the Weeks Bay Reserve Foundation with every new card member.

Visit the Magnolia Springs branch of United Bank during Coast Weeks (September 15 - October 6), fill out an application for the Visa card and pick up your free gift. You can also get the information on the community page of United Bank's web site at [www.ubankal.com](http://www.ubankal.com).

#### THE WEEKS BAY RESERVE FOUNDATION THANKS OUR NEW AND RENEWING MEMBERS AND DONORS

*May - August 2001*

Hodge & Allison Alves  
Beverly Jean Bible  
R. Michael Booker  
Lucy Buffett - Lulu's Sunset Grill  
Paul Cherney  
Rebecca Coggeshall  
Robert & Irene Comalander  
Richard Coram  
William & M.H. Davis  
Isabelle Dreher  
Eugenia Emmett  
Tom Fleming  
Bernie Fogarty - Alabama  
Power Company  
Win Hallett  
Tommy & Wanda Harris  
Kathy Hicks  
Mary Shannon & Robert Hope  
Bucky Jakins - Baldwin EMC  
Catherine Jording  
Dr. & Mrs. Eugene Keebler  
Beth Kenhamer  
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Skipper Tonsmeire -  
Tonsmeire Properties  
Linda Waselkov  
Laurel Wilson  
Ben K. & Ruby Worcester

*The Weeks Bay Reserve Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization. Donations to the Foundation are tax deductible. In addition to membership dues and cash donations, other gifts range from stocks and bonds to land, equipment and professional services.*

## A Few Good Reasons to Like Sharks

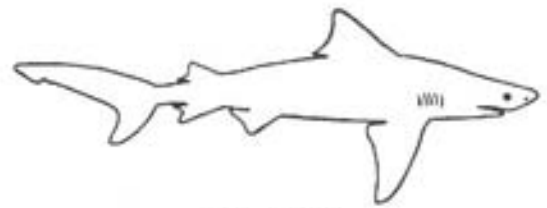
Most sharks are apex predators that help maintain the oceans and estuaries. Not only do they keep prey populations in check, but they also tend to eat the slowest, weakest and least wily individuals. In doing so, they improve the target species gene pool, leaving the smarter, stronger and healthier individuals to reproduce.

The idea that sharks can be beneficial to human health was established decades ago: vitamin A came primarily from shark liver oil until 1947, when it was first synthesized in the laboratory. Today, sharks have immense practical value, and there is a growing interest in the medicinal uses of shark products.

Sharks have a unique and effective immune system. It forms nonspecific antibodies that attack disease immediately. Humans have a specific immune system and must be exposed to a disease before the specific antibody to fight that disease can be formed. Research on shark immune systems may help scientists discover new medicines for treating diseases that mutate like AIDS.

Shark blood contains anticoagulant compounds valuable in the treatment of coronary conditions in humans. Sharks can heal major wounds in short periods of time, often within 24 hours. Unlike most animals, sharks can heal a torn cornea. Shark corneas have been transplanted to human eyes. Shark cartilage is used for cancer research, as a potential skin replacement for burn victims, and as a treatment for arthritis.

Shark liver oil is used for tanning leather, for preserving wood, and as an ingredient in cosmetics, paints and highly specialized lubricants. Shark liver oil compounds are used to inhibit the growth of tumors, to treat wounds and burns, and to aid white blood cell production. It is also highly effective in shrinking swelling of irritated hemorrhoidal tissues and is an active ingredient in of all things, Preparation H.



Bull Shark  
(*Carcharhinus leucas*)

## Smooth Cordgrass



Smooth Cordgrass  
(*Spartina alterniflora*)

The ebb and flow of salty tidal currents, a waterlogged, oxygen-poor substrate, and a soft muddy bottom that does not offer much support are unfavorable conditions for thousands of species of land plants. However, smooth cordgrass (*Spartina alterniflora*) has adapted to these conditions.

Smooth cordgrass forms the outer edge of the intertidal marsh near the saltier mouth of Weeks Bay. Because tidal currents and soft, muddy soils produce mechanical stress, these plants are doubly anchored. Thick rhizomes just under the soil surface have two

kinds of roots: deep, stout roots that act to anchor the plants and thin, water-absorbing roots with root hairs.

These plants have special glands scattered over the leaf surfaces which can remove salt that gets into the sap through root membranes. These glands secrete the salt in a very concentrated solution through special pores that lead to the surface of the leaves. The water secreted with the salt usually evaporates and leaves little salt crystals, which give off minute sparkles in the sun, until the next high tide or rain washes them from the leaves.

Because they are rooted in anaerobic soil,

there is a problem getting oxygen from the leaves to the rhizomes and roots. Like most living things, cells in the roots require oxygen for their life processes. They suffocate if deprived of oxygen. Since bacteria and other organisms in the top layers of mud have used most of the available oxygen, the plants are left with a real problem. In response to that stress, air tubes run from the leaves down into hollow spaces within the roots. All of these spaces are filled with air and are open to the air through the stomata (tiny openings) on the leaves. This provides oxygen by a direct pipeline from the air, in through the stomata, down the leaves, through the stems and rhizomes, and into the roots.

## Weeks Bay Reserve Foundation T-Shirts and Caps

for sale at the Weeks Bay Reserve  
Information Desk.

Several designs are available including  
pelicans and pitcher plants.



T-shirts:

- Long sleeve \$15
- Short sleeve \$12

Foundation members receive  
a discount. Purchase  
T-shirts for \$10.

Caps sell for \$12.

## Self Awareness

Researchers have long known that children begin to recognize themselves in the mirror at around 18 to 24 months. That mirror recognition, many scientists say, usually marks the beginning of self-awareness and the ability to perceive mental status of others. There are now two, new, unrelated studies that raise profound questions about bottlenose dolphin self-awareness, intelligence and introspection. These studies are certain to intensify debate over the ethical treatment of these animals by humans.

Described in the March, 2001 issue of *The Journal of Comparative Psychology*, an international team of researchers found that bottlenose dolphins are able to interpret human pointing and gaze direction without prior training, signs to some experts that bottlenose dolphins can interpret thoughts and intentions of other animals. These tests were conducted in South Africa.

Described in the May, 2001 issue of the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, researchers from Emory University in Atlanta and from the Osborn Laboratory of Marine Sciences at the New York Aquarium reported that bottlenose dolphins are able to recognize themselves in mirrors and use reflective surfaces to examine marked parts of their own bodies. One of the most important implications of this study is that it shows that the ability to recognize one's own appearance is not limited to primates.

These studies raise questions about the self-awareness of bottlenose dolphins and the ethics of using these animals in scientific experiments. The topic of animal consciousness is controversial, and these research projects strengthen scientists' conviction that bottlenose dolphins have an acute sense of themselves and others.



Bottlenose dolphin  
(*Tursiops truncatus*)

### Did You Know?

The survival of a brief squid (*Lolliguncula brevis*) in Weeks Bay depends on its ability to move very quickly when danger arises. Squid defense strategy includes lightning fast reflexes, rapid acceleration and quick direction changes. The squid is able to flex the muscles in a part of its body called the mantle, creating what looks like a bag. The mantle takes in water and, in less than a tenth of a second, expels it out again in an all or nothing impulse. The jet propulsion system can be directed in any direction, giving the squid an extraordinary defense mechanism.

The means to accomplish this comes from a nervous system featuring some of the largest neurons found in nature. Neurons are conducting cells that form nerves, and that part of the cell, called the axon, is so small in mammals that it can only be seen with a microscope. The squid's axon can be up to four inches long and 100 times as wide as those found in mammals. This system provides the squid with a means to move quickly away from danger.

Because the brains of animals use similar mechanisms for sending signals along their axons, studying squid axons has provided the foundation for understanding how messages are transmitted in human brains. Researchers are studying how nerve impulses travel along squid axons for clues to

diseases such as Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, multiple sclerosis and, most recently, herpes virus.



Brief Squid  
(*Lolliguncula brevis*)

### You Can Make A Difference!

*We share our world with many other creatures, so our actions have far-reaching impact. You can help wildlife in the following ways:*

- Educate children to respect and care for all wild creatures and their habitats.

- Pick up litter that could harm wildlife, including six-pack connectors (cut each circle to reduce the risk of entanglement), monofilament fishing line and watch batteries (if consumed by waterfowl they can cause mercury poisoning).



- Do not attempt to raise or keep wildlife yourself. Wild creatures do not make good pets and captivity poses a constant stress on them. Young wild animals raised without contact with their own species fail to develop survival skills and to fear humans, virtually eliminating their chances of survival in the wild.



- Be alert when driving, especially near wildlife refuges, reserves and in rural areas, to avoid hitting or running over wild creatures. Animals do not recognize the danger from an oncoming vehicle.



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Suggestions and comments from readers on future topics of interest are welcome. If you know of others who would be interested in receiving this newsletter, call the Foundation at 990-5004. *The Pelican Post* is produced quarterly by PRADCOM, Inc. of Fairhope, AL. Karen McGuire Moore, President. Funds for publication are provided by members of the Weeks Bay Reserve Foundation.

## JOIN US!

### Weeks Bay Reserve Foundation

Weeks Bay Reserve Foundation is a non-profit organization whose members provide assistance and support to the Weeks Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve's goals and programs.

As a member, you will be joining a group of people with similar interests and concerns for natural resources. You can become directly involved with the Reserve's research and educational programs by volunteering to help with field trips, seminars, cultural events, newsletters, and special projects.

You will be regularly informed of Reserve activities through newsletters, special mailings, and meetings. The opportunities for involvement are unlimited. Whatever your talents or interests, the Reserve can use your support. You, the environment, and your community will benefit as a result of your membership. If you are not a member and would like to join, please mail this form along with your tax-deductible donation.

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*"No one person has to do it all but if each one of us follow our heart and our own inclinations we will find the small things that we can do to create a sustainable future and a healthy environment."*

*-John Denver*

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Least Sandpiper  
(*Calidris minutilla*)