



The Pelican Post

Weeks Bay Reserve Foundation Newsletter
Winter 2002



Weeks Bay Zone Co-Captain Bob McCormack rests with Georgia Robles and puppy found by Robles family.

ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL COASTAL CLEANUP

With one of the largest cleanup zone teams again this year, nearly 60 Reserve volunteers made the annual Coastal Cleanup another undisputed success, collecting 1,870 pounds of trash along our waterways, roadways, and public areas within the Weeks Bay area. No doubt, we collected the most unusual item – a live golden retriever puppy found tied up in debris in the brush! (Not to worry: The pup was brought back to the registration area, and a happy owner reports it quite healthy.)

In its 16th straight year, the annual cleanup was held on Saturday, September 21, and attracted volunteers from all across the Alabama coast, as well as around the globe, in the special one-day effort. More common trash found included tires, cigarette butts, plastic bottles, and paper. Volunteers **Bill & Willie Smoot, Paul Dowsey, Fred Jordan, Harry Anderson, John Glaze, Sally Burns, and Sarah Johnston** worked the registration table and provided a free lunch (yes, there is such a thing!). And a special, heartfelt "Thank You!" goes out to all our volunteers from the Reserve and the people of South Baldwin County for your time, energy, and sweat in picking up the debris. It is such a warm reward to see uncluttered places of beauty, thanks to all of you.

The event is always held on the third Saturday in September each year, so mark your calendars now for next year's 17th Annual Coastal Cleanup on Saturday, September 20th.

WEEKS BAY VOLUNTEERS' PLANT SALE

In other much-anticipated annual events, the Weeks Bay Volunteers held their Ninth Annual Weeks Bay Native Plant Sale, October 4-6. Not only a delightful event, and an opportunity to select some beautiful specimens for gardening, the annual event is so vital in helping to educate local gardeners about the benefits and beauty of our own native flora and the danger of some exotic species that can be invasive to natural habitats.



Our volunteers, along with the Baldwin County Master Gardeners, made a truly valiant effort this year, as they braved the heat and humidity, and a near miss by Hurricane Lili, to once again deliver several thousand trees, shrubs and perennials to area homeowners. The Master Gardeners worked hard to help unload the plants, keep them watered, and answer many questions from customers throughout the sale.

Joe Jenkins, manager of the Foundation's Safe Harbor R.V. Park, deserves special thanks for his help, making the park community center and kitchen available for our use during the sale. We are very grateful for his assistance.

WALTER M. LINDSEY MEMORIAL

The Foundation lost a longtime supporter in February of 2001, with the passing of Walter Lindsey. Walter was born in Monroeville in 1915 and lived in Bay Minette for 50 years before moving to Westminster Village in Spanish Fort. He and his wife **Eloise** were married for over 62 years.

Walter's daughter, **Gaye Lindsey**, of McLean, Virginia has generously donated 20 acres of timberland near Stockton, which will be sold, with the proceeds being used to establish a memorial for Walter Lindsey.

Walter will be missed by his many friends in Baldwin County and especially the residents of the Weeks Bay Watershed.

AQUATIC INVASIVES REMOVED BY RESERVE CREW



Water lettuce
(foreground) and water
hyacinth

Thanks to a citizen complaint, a team of Reserve staff and volunteers was able to remove two aquatic invasive plant masses from Weeks Branch at County Road 27 Extension before they could proliferate and cause further damage to native habitats. According to **Joe Jernigan** of the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, the few plants found in Weeks Branch are the first identified in a natural stream in Baldwin County.

Upon investigation of a complaint in Bay Haven, Watershed Manager **Mike Shelton** and Reserve Manager **L.G. Adams** spotted the floating water hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*) and water lettuce (*Pistia stratiotes*). Water hyacinth is a native of the Amazon that was introduced into the southeastern United States in 1894. The plant has a beautiful purple flower and was a popular ornamental in decorative ponds before its invasive nature was known. Water lettuce has been in this country since the late 1700s and is found worldwide.

Both of the invasives grow rapidly and have no natural inhibitors in the Weeks Bay watershed streams. The floating weeds choke streams and ponds, squeezing out the native plants, and their dense growth blocks the penetration of sunlight important to submerged aquatic vegetation. Recreational and commercial uses of waterways have also been impacted by these floating plant masses — which occur most commonly in the upper portions of the Mobile-Tensaw River Delta — by obstructing boat traffic.

Removal of the plants from ponds and streams is accomplished by herbicide treatment or manual retrieval, and the Weeks Bay Reserve crew selected the latter. Adams and Shelton were joined by Research Coordinator **Scott Phipps**, Stewardship Coordinator **Bob McCormack**, GIS Technician **Sarah Johnston**, and Reserve Volunteer **Pam Perkins**, to complete the mucky task. Despite difficult access to the stream, a "fire bucket line" was set up and, with some teamwork, the plants were removed in a little more than an hour. The amount of plant material pulled from the branch nearly filled the bed of the Reserve's pickup truck.

The effort was broadcast to a much larger audience on the local evening news, highlighting the danger that the exotics present to natural waterways and the importance of avoiding accidental or intentional introduction into our environment.



Scott Phipps and Reserve
Volunteer, Pam Perkins, pass
water hyacinth to the shore in
efforts to remove the invader from
Weeks Branch

Though the State of Alabama has banned the sale of both exotics, the plants still exist in ornamental ponds in many private residences. Since floodwaters can wash the plants from ponds and into streams, they should be removed. Once out of the water, the plants should be allowed to dry and to compost in an area not prone to flooding. Many native aquatic plants are as spectacular as the exotic ones and should be considered an environmentally preferable alternative to stock ornamental ponds. To learn more about invasive exotics and native plants, contact the Weeks Bay Reserve at 928-9792.



L.G. Adams (right), Reserve Manager,
shows the morphology of water hyacinth
to WKRG's Randy Woods

FROM Caught Inside © 1996

by Daniel Duane

So many disturbing traits, once you look into them . . . sharks are the world's only known intrauterine cannibals; as eggs hatch within a uterus, the unborn young fight and devour each other until one well-adapted predator emerges. (If the womb is a battleground, what then the sea?) Also, without the gas-filled bladders that float other fish, sharks, if they stop swimming, sink. This explains their tendency to lurk along the bottom—twenty-one-foot, 4,600-pound benthic land mines with hundred year life-spans. Hard skin bristling with tiny teeth sheathes their flexible, cartilage skeletons—no bone at all. Conical snouts, black eyes without visible pupils, black-tipped pectoral fins. Tearing out and constantly being replaced, their serrated fangs have as many as twenty-eight stacked spares (a bite meter embedded in a slab of meat once measured a dusky shark's bite at eighteen tons per square inch). And all of the following have been found in shark bellies: a goat, a tomcat, three birds, a raincoat, overcoats, a car license plate, grass, tin cans, a cow's head, shoes, leggings, buttons, belts, hens, roosters, a nearly whole reindeer, even a headless human in a full suit of armor. Swimming with their mouths open, great whites are indiscriminate recyclers of the organic—my sensitive disposition, loving family and affection for life, my decent pickup, room full of books, preoccupation with chocolate in the afternoon and tendency to take things too personally; all immaterial to my status as protein.

WEEKS BAY RESERVE EMBRACES DISTANCE LEARNING WITH LOCAL, INTERNATIONAL AUDIENCES

Distance learning, through teleconferencing and other new technologies, is a new and exciting endeavor for the Reserve staff and for many of those with whom we are now interacting. Our distance learning system is a "real time," fully interactive system of equipment and interconnects that includes a full range of audio and video capabilities, and is made possible through a partnership with Faulkner State Community College and funded by the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture through Auburn University.

The objectives of our distance-learning project are to:

- Develop an educational program utilizing the distance learning team station.
- Highlight the coastal resources associated with Weeks Bay Estuary.
- Convey the main topics associated with the programs at Weeks Bay Reserve.
- Encourage conservation of habitats through increased knowledge and action.
- Increase the appreciation of coastal science and stewardship at the local/regional levels.

Topics available include:

- Habitats in the Weeks Bay Coastal Area
- Food Web Ecology in the Weeks Bay Estuary
- Water Quality Monitoring in the Weeks Bay Watershed
- Polluted Runoff in Watersheds...a Non-Point Source of Pollution



In addition to scheduling live instruction by our staff through teleconferencing with many area schools and universities (listed at both www.weeksbay.org and www.faulknerstate.edu (click on the green and blue planet at the lower left of the screen)), our world class technology recently introduced the Reserve to an international audience. In celebration of National Estuaries Day, classrooms from around the globe tuned in October 3-4 to view a 20-minute video highlighting Weeks Bay Reserve, then subsequently e-mailed us questions that we answered live on the web. The international hookup was provided by Estuary Live!, an interactive web broadcast dedicated to education about our nation's estuaries. To learn more about National Estuaries Day and Estuary Live! visit www.estuaries.gov.

TALK ABOUT DISTANCE. . .



Both great spatial and temporal distances are covered by the Reserve in our new exhibit at the Mobile Regional Airport. As a member of the Mobile Area Museum Association (MAMA), in conjunction with the Mobile Bay area Tricentennial, we have created a unique display showcasing the Reserve and our collection of pre-Columbian Indian artifacts. If you haven't taken the opportunity yet to visit our collection at the Reserve – one that local archeologists and historians call one of the very best in the Southeast – the next time you fly, take a few minutes to check out our display, along with seven other area museums. They are located at the top of the escalator, near the Information Counter, and will be on display through Spring 2003. You'll be impressed with the exhibits and reminded about our area's rich and diverse cultures, habitats, and history.

September - October 2002

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

| | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Roberta Billie | Dr. Caterina Kenworthy | Greer Radcliff |
| Lucy Buffett | Barbara S. Lane | Mary Riis |
| Rebecca Coggeshall | Dr. Ken Marion | James T. & Esther Robson |
| William & M.H. Davis | Karen McGuire Moore | Joe & Penny Shell |
| Donald Dohn | Pat Oberholtzer | David E. & Patricia H. Sutley |
| Dr. David Dykes | Tammy L. Parker | Thompson Company |
| Joe M. and Emalyn L. Johnson | Robin & Frank Parquette | Volkert Management Services |
| | | Larry Wilson |

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.

RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT - CARRIE YODER

Our newest Graduate Research Fellow here at the Weeks Bay Reserve is **Carrie Yoder**, a Ph.D. candidate at Louisiana State University, Department of Biological Sciences in Baton Rouge.

Carrie's research at Weeks Bay, entitled "Potential affects of global climate change on the wetland to upland transition zone," will specifically study sea level rise and hurricane disturbance on this transition zone. Upland communities have higher plant species diversity than adjacent wetland communities, and as sea levels rise, it is predicted that wetland plant assemblages will replace upland assemblages and, therefore, may result in an overall loss in biodiversity.

Carrie will determine plant diversity from the marsh to the uplands surrounding Weeks Bay with transect surveys, investigating potential changes within transects through a series of experiments, including flooding and transplanting to measure survivability and adaptability. Some plots will have the canopy removed to simulate effects of a hurricane and some plots will be subjected to fire, as she investigates the individual and cumulative effects of fire, flooding and wind damage to coastal plant assemblage diversity.

A Florida native, Carrie obtained her B.S. in Botany at the University of Florida, with honors, and her M.S. in Biological Science at the University of Central Florida. Her Fellowship at Weeks Bay has been funded for three years through the Graduate Research Fellowships competitive grant program funded by the National Estuarine Research Reserve System, Office of Coastal Resource Management, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

If you are interested in learning more about Carrie's research, or in volunteering to help, please contact Reserve Research Coordinator **Scott Phipps**. Carrie will be contributing her expertise in marsh plant identification, as well as collected specimens, to the Weeks Bay Herbarium, the subject of a future Research Spotlight. For more information about the Fellowship program, log on to: www.ocrm.nos.noaa.gov/nerr/fellow.html.



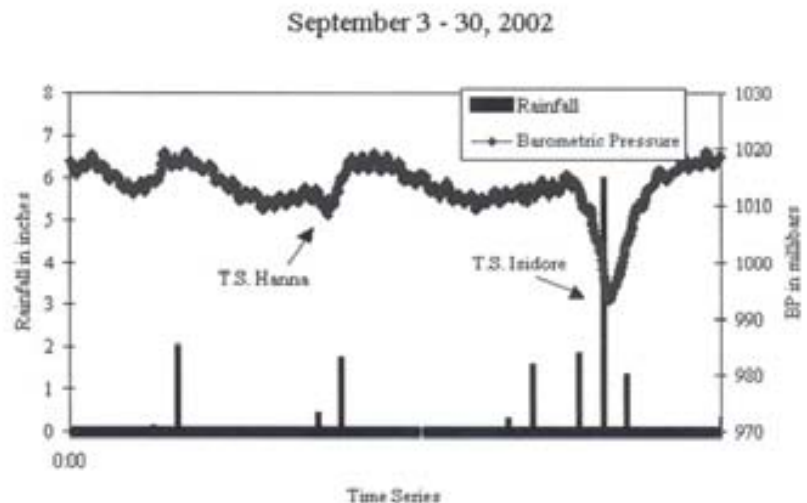
RESERVE GOES TO "CODE YELLOW" DURING TROPICAL STORM SEASON

Many visitors of the Reserve have recently asked, "What do you do to prepare for oncoming storms here at Weeks Bay?" There is quite a lot of preparation when a hurricane approaches, and the following actions — linked to such emergencies — are outlined in the Weeks Bay Reserve Management Plan

When a hurricane enters the Gulf of Mexico the Reserve goes to a status of "Code Yellow." This alerts all the staff to take note of potential actions in specific areas under their watch. If and when a hurricane "warning" is issued that includes Weeks Bay, the Reserve moves to "Code Red," signaling actions such as boarding up all windows, unplugging and covering electronics, filling vehicles with fuel, test running the generator, and anchoring the pontoon boat in a safe harbor.

During the month of September, the Reserve hovered around a Code Yellow for several weeks with a definite Code Yellow going into effect as Hurricane Lili entered the Gulf. Unfortunately, the Reserve did sustain some damage on two fishing piers in the wake of a subsequent storm, Tropical Storm Isidore, whose impact also took many meteorologists by surprise. Consequently, when we revise our Management Plan this year, we will be attaching additional actions to provide tropical storms significantly more attention.

Goals during storm events are to maintain water quality and atmospheric monitoring. The line graph at right illustrates the passing of two tropical storms with a drop in barometric pressure and increase in rainfall. Isidore's low point at Weeks Bay reached 993 millibars. Comparisons to other hurricanes are Danny-984, Fredrick-946, and Camile-909. Peak sustained winds at Weeks Bay during Isidore were 37 mph on the 25th of September, and rainfall over a three-day period (September 24-26) totaled 8.86 inches.



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

With over 10 years logged as a Weeks Bay Reserve volunteer, our recognition of **Fred Nation** is well past due! Though there is something of "the hero not being honored in his own country" at work here, this oversight is likely due to his role of husband to our Volunteer Coordinator, **Maureen Nation**.

Though Fred clearly serves in many and most volunteer roles – evidenced by his photo seen often among *The Pelican Post* pages – we often find him tucked away in the lab along with **Dr. Harry Larsen**, working on the Herbarium, which he admits is his favorite project. For those of you who were unaware, the Weeks Bay Herbarium now has more than 1000 specimens and is the only active plant repository in South Alabama.

Fred has always been interested in plants. Even though botany was not his major in college, a plant book could always be found in the stacks of literature next to his bed, and he is especially fascinated with the historic roles of plants in the development of Alabama and the South. Fred's interest met head on with an objective of the Baldwin County Historical Society and the result is a lovely book he authored on historical plants, entitled *Where the Wild Illcium Grows*. It can be purchased in the Interpretive Center at Weeks Bay Reserve, with all proceeds to the Historical Society.

As you would expect, Fred is in great demand as a lecturer, but he is also a tour guide throughout South Alabama, and has constructed many nature trails here, including those at Camp Beckwith, Blakeley State Park, and at The Turtle Point Science Center in Flomaton. Along the way, Fred has nominated 18 trees in Baldwin County for Alabama State Champion Tree status. In November, Fred was honored by the Alabama Urban Forestry Association for his many contributions to the preservation of the state's natural resources.

We are very fortunate to have Fred Nation as one of our treasured volunteers.



DID YOU KNOW?

by John Borom

Big-leaved Arrowhead (*Sagittaria latifolia*) is an erect perennial herb important to our history, once providing a major food and medicinal source for many Native Americans in coastal Alabama and across the United States. Though the specific, historical medicinal uses have since proved ineffective, refined compounds isolated from these plants are significant contributors to today's pharmaceuticals.

Growing up to four feet tall in fresh and very low salinity marshes, ponds, streams and ditches, the herb ranges across the United States and as far as Nova Scotia, British Columbia, to the north and Mexico to the south. At the Reserve, it occurs along the edges of waterways, streams and other wet areas.

The generic name, *Sagittaria*, comes from Latin for "of an arrow," referring to the shape of the leaf. The species name *latifolia*, is Latin for "wide or broad leaf." As they grow, partially submerged plants arise in shallow water from large rhizomes (horizontal underground stems) or from corms (short, bulblike, underground stems). The above-water leaves are dark green and arrowhead-shaped, appearing on long stems, while the submerged leaves are ribbon-like. The flower scape, which appears March-September, is taller than the leaves, with three-petaled white flowers, about one inch in diameter. Fruits are green nutlets joined by ball-shaped clusters.

The plant is often called duck potato since the corms contain stored starch, a food favored by ducks. Humans once, too, favored the plant for consumption. Boiled or roasted corms have a taste similar to water chestnuts, and they were used in soups, for trade, and to make bread. Native Americans also used both poultices and teas made from the leaves of the plant to treat wounds, sores, and fevers, as well as to end lactation in nursing mothers. Corm juice was used as a diuretic and to treat various kidney ailments. The Seminole used the plant medicinally in cases of shock following alligator bite. The Cherokee, Ojibwe and Chippewa steeped the rhizomes and corms and drank the decoction for indigestion. The Mohawk made an infusion of Sweet Flag (*Acorus calamus*) and the entire Big-leaved Arrowhead plant to give to infants suffering from night fever. Famed explorers Lewis and Clark found that the Multnomah and Chinookan people of the Oregon Coast considered the corms (called "wappatoo") so valuable that they would trade their most valuable possessions to obtain them. They are said to have opened muskrat houses to get at their cache of corms. Wappatoo Island, in the Columbia River was so named by the explorers because of the abundance of these plants growing there.



Big-leaved Arrowhead

Sagittaria latifolia

CALENDAR

The Weeks Bay Reserve Interpretive Center is open to the public Monday – Saturday 9am-5pm, and Sunday 1pm-5pm. The Interpretive Center is located at 11300 US 98 just west of the Fish River bridge. For more information call the Reserve at (251) 928-9792, or facsimile (251) 928-1792.

DECEMBER

American Woodcocks (*Philohela minor*) are roosting in swampy woods during the day and flying at dusk to feed in wet fields.

- 3 Citizens Advisory Committee of the Weeks Bay Watershed Project meeting, Tuesday 6pm at the Reserve.
- 10 Guest Lecture Series: Birds of Bhutan, Northern India – “**Mountain Fortress of the Gods**” presented by **John and Beverly Winn**. Government Street Baptist Church, Mobile, 7pm. Bring a friend and a plate of your special holiday goodies (finger food only) to share around the Wassail Bowl.
- 12 Weeks Bay Advisory Committee meeting, 1pm at the Reserve. Merry Christmas!
- 25 Closed for Christmas holiday. The Interpretive Center will be closed Wednesday. All trails and boardwalks will remain open for your pleasure.

JANUARY

Henslow's Sparrows (*Ammodramus henslowii*) are local residents in open boggy pine flats with pitcher plants and moderately tall grass.

- 1 Closed for New Year's Day holiday. The Interpretive Center will be closed Wednesday. All trails and boardwalks will remain open for your pleasure.
- 7 Citizens Advisory Committee of the Weeks Bay Watershed Project meeting, Tuesday 6pm at the Reserve.
- 8 Discovering Alabama Film Series. “**Alabama Forests and Dugger Mountain.**” Where: Faulkner State Community College Fairhope Campus, Centennial Hall, Giddens Auditorium. Time 10-11am. Open to the general public. No charge. Refreshments provided.
- 11 Alabama Water Watch Training for interested volunteers. Contact **Mike Shelton** at the Reserve to register and for information, (251) 928-9792.
- 14 Guest Lecture Series. “**Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge Update**” Presented by **Allyne Askins**, Reserve Manager. Where: Faulkner State Community College Fairhope Campus, Centennial Hall, Giddens Auditorium. Time: 7:30pm. Bring a friend!
- 15 Discovering Alabama Film Series. “**Sipsey River Swamp and Forever Wild.**” Where: Faulkner State Community College Fairhope Campus, Centennial Hall, Giddens Auditorium. Time 10-11am. Open to the general public. No charge. Refreshments provided.
- 16 Film “The Highlands of Scotland” presented by wildlife photographer/narrator **Tom Sterling**. Faulkner State Community College Fairhope Campus, Centennial Hall, Giddens Auditorium. Time: 7:30pm. Free. Bring a friend.

- 22 Discovering Alabama Film Series. “**Longleaf Ecosystem and Alabama Trees.**” Where: Faulkner State Community College Fairhope Campus, Centennial Hall, Giddens Auditorium. Time: 10am-11am. Open to the general public. No charge. Refreshments provided!
- 29 Discovering Alabama Film Series. “**Village Creek and Mobile River Basin.**” Where: Faulkner State Community College Fairhope Campus, Centennial Hall, Giddens Auditorium. Time: 10-11am. Open to the general public. No charge. Refreshments provided.

FEBRUARY

Orange-crowned Warblers (*Vermivora celata*) are fairly common in coastal woods and brushy areas.

- 4 Citizens Advisory Committee of the Weeks Bay Watershed Project meeting, Tuesday 6pm at the Reserve.
- 5 Film Series. “**The Blue Planet-Ocean World and Frozen Seas.**” Where: Faulkner State Community College Fairhope Campus, Centennial Hall, Giddens Auditorium. Time: 10am-12noon. Open to the general public. No charge. Refreshments provided!
- 11 Guest Lecture Series. “**National Audubon Society Conservation Issues and Legislative Priorities**” presented by **Emily Byram**, Grassroots Coordinator, National Audubon Society Office Washington D.C. Where: Government Street Baptist Church in Mobile. Time: 7:30pm. Bring a friend.
- 12 Film Series. “**The Blue Planet-Open Ocean and the Deep.**” Where: Faulkner State Community College Fairhope Campus, Centennial Hall, Giddens Auditorium. Time: 10am-12noon. Open to the general public. No charge. Refreshments provided!
- 17 Closed for President's Day holiday. The Interpretive Center will be closed Monday. All trails and boardwalks will remain open for your pleasure.
- 19 Film Series. “**The Blue Planet-Seasonal Seas and Coral Seas.**” Where: Faulkner State Community College Fairhope Campus, Centennial Hall, Giddens Auditorium. Time: 10am-12noon. Open to the general public. No charge. Refreshments provided!
- 19 Erosion Control Workshop, Wednesday 8am-4pm, at the Weeks Bay Reserve Auditorium. Contact **Mike Shelton** at (251) 928-9792.
- 26 Film series. “**The Blue Planet-Tidal Seas and Coasts.**” Where: Faulkner State Community College Fairhope Campus, Centennial Hall, Giddens Auditorium. Time: 10am-12noon. Open to the general public. No charge. Refreshments provided!

FOUNDATION CONVEYS PROPERTIES FOR STATE PROTECTION

In its efforts to further the resource protection goals of the Weeks Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, in October, the Weeks Bay Reserve Foundation conveyed two parcels of ecologically significant watershed lands to the Alabama State Lands Division's "Forever Wild" program.

The 91-acre "Riverlands" tract – originally purchased by the Weeks Bay Reserve Foundation in November of 2001 with proceeds from a Compass Bank loan that was repaid at closing – is located just north of Highway 33 and has approximately 2,000 feet of frontage on Fish River.

The second parcel, the "Turkey Branch" tract, consists of 20 acres along Highway 27 where the headwaters of Turkey Branch provide much needed filtering of suspended soil, chemicals and the absorption of storm water. This parcel was purchased in 1992 through donations from residents of Turkey Branch.

Your support, through land and cash donations, makes these extremely important acquisitions possible, and other tracts may be conveyed to the State in the future. Please support resource protection by giving generously to your Foundation.



FOREVER WILD—ALABAMA'S LAND TRUST PROGRAM

Alabama's first state land trust program was created in 1992 when citizens of the state voted for constitutional amendment No. 543. The amendment passed by a vote of 83%, the largest margin for a land trust amendment in any southeastern state. Funding for the program is derived from a percentage of the interest earned from state royalties on offshore natural gas leases belonging to Alabama. These funds began to accumulate during the 1992-1993 fiscal year, and the Forever Wild program made its first purchase in 1994. Upon purchase, 15% of the appraised value for each acquired tract is set aside in a stewardship account that provides funding for on-site management. Funding for property acquisition will be available through the fiscal year 2012-2013.

The Forever Wild Land Trust was created to purchase and manage unique lands within Alabama, thereby securing property for public use which would be maintained as "forever wild." All lands acquired through Forever Wild are managed under the principle of multiple-use, targeting four principle designations that secure property for the most common groups of outdoor interests: 1) nature preserves, 2) recreation areas, 3) state parks, and 4) wildlife management areas.

Nature preserve acquisitions focus on areas of land throughout Alabama representing unique natural communities, or lands that contain distinct compositions of rare plants and animals. *Recreation area* acquisitions are designed to focus on properties that often serve a multitude of purposes. *State park* acquisitions may target land purchases that could create a new state park, or provide additional acreage to an existing state park. *Wildlife management area* acquisitions are designed to create new wildlife management areas or provide additional acreage for existing wildlife management areas.

Any citizen of the state of Alabama may write to the State Lands Division and nominate their personal property, or property belonging to someone else. Once nominated, information is compiled for each tract to assist with assessing the properties' respective attributes and measured against a common set of criteria which helps identify the best category under which a tract may be purchased. After careful review, the Forever Wild Board members typically direct the scoring team to proceed with on-site assessments for the three highest scoring tracts from each of the four categories, in the north, central, and southern districts of the state. With this information in hand, the Forever Wild Board votes to either drop a nomination from further consideration, or to proceed with having the property appraised at the program's expense. Once appraisals have been made, the Board will once again vote on proceeding with an offer to purchase, which by law cannot exceed the property's appraised value.

The activities involved in this entire process may require 12-24 months, depending on the multitude of circumstances that arise. However, the end result ensures the acquisition of only the finest property into Alabama's Land Trust Program. To nominate land or receive additional information on the Forever Wild Program, write:

Alabama Department of Conservation & Natural Resources
State Lands Division
64 North Union Street
Montgomery, AL 36130

NOW AVAILABLE



FREE PERSONALIZED CAR TAG

Would you like a FREE personalized car tag and help a very worthwhile environmental cause at the same time at no cost to you? Sounds too good to be true? For once, it is NOT too good to be true!

The Friends of Forever Wild are sponsoring a car tag to raise money to be used to buy and protect even more of Alabama's wild lands. To date Forever Wild has acquired more than 85,000 acres throughout our entire state, from the Tennessee state line to the Gulf of Mexico! In fact, the largest purchases to date have been in Baldwin and Mobile Counties.

The state requires 1000 prepaid orders before the first tag will be printed. The Friends will pay the \$50.00 fee for the first 1,000 tags to begin the project. All we need are 1,000 car owners to give us their names, addresses, and car identification information so we can order the first 1,000 tags. But, don't delay, because we already have several hundred who have requested their tag. If you are number 1001 — NO FREE TAG! But, of course you may still buy one for \$50.00. You will be notified to personalize and pick up your tag when they become available.

WHY ARE WE DOING THIS?

Once the tags are available we are confident tens of thousands of Alabamians will buy their own Forever Wild tags each year. For each tag that is bought, Forever Wild will receive \$41.25 to be used solely to purchase and protect more Alabama Land.

Please note: Even if you accept your free tag, you are NOT obligated to purchase one the next year. Of course, we hope you will and encourage your friends to do so also. If you do buy a Forever Wild personalized tag in the future it is tax deductible as a donation to Forever Wild.

Won't you help us to keep more of Alabama Forever Wild for our children, our grandchildren, and for all generations to come? To obtain a free tag complete the form on the back, have your signature notarized and return it to us to the address below. For more information contact:

Tom Hodges, Chairman
2135 Hwy 180
Gulf Shores, AL 36542
Phone: 251-540-2121 or Email: hodges@gulftel.com



Limited Power of Attorney ONLY for Purchase of Forever Wild License Plate

I, Name: _____ (as it appears on your tag receipt) of:

Address: _____

City: _____, County: _____, Alabama, Zip: _____

Phone (Home): (____) _____, Phone (Daytime): (____) _____ do hereby

appoint Joe Copeland of 671 County Road 244, Cullman, Alabama 35057 limited attorney-in-fact to

do all things necessary for the limited purpose of obtaining a distinctive Forever Wild License Plate for my motor vehicle(s) described as follows:

| Make of Vehicle | Model of Vehicle | Year of Vehicle | Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) |
|-----------------|------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------------|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

I further authorize Joe Lynn Copeland to submit the \$50.00 Distinctive License Plate fee (per vehicle) with my application. This limited power of attorney terminates upon acceptance of the application for my plate(s).

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Notary: _____ Date: _____

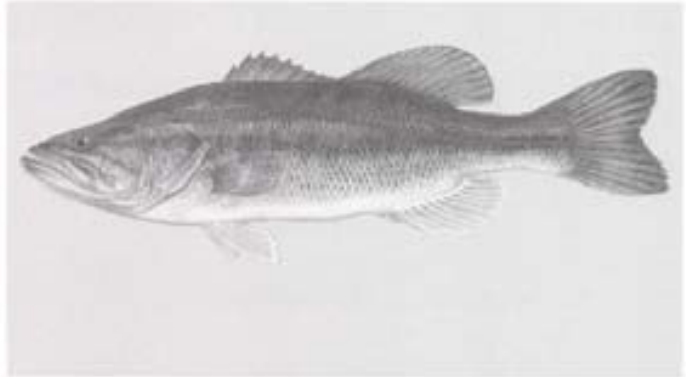
WATERSHED PROJECT RECEIVES FUNDING FOR MERCURY MONITORING

The Weeks Bay Watershed Project has been awarded funding from both the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and the Mobile Bay National Estuary Program to expand mercury testing of fish tissue and water samples from Fish River and its tributaries. In partnership with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, the expanded collection will occur at a minimum of seven previously untested sites (two on Fish River and five on its tributaries) that will be located via Global Positioning System.

Mercury contamination in the Gulf of Mexico and Mobile Bay has been a source of growing concern in the past year based on expert testimony, media reports and limited hair sampling from local citizens. A potential source of human contamination is consumption of fish tainted with mercury, and in the Weeks Bay watershed, mercury contamination in fish tissue has been identified as an environmental problem. A fish consumption warning has been issued by the Alabama Department of Public Health for largemouth bass (*Micropterus salmoides*) caught in Fish River due to mercury contamination in bass filets exceeding 1 ppm. And in 1996, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Alabama Department of Environmental Management included Fish River on the Clean Water Act's §303(d) list of impaired waterways due to the mercury detected in largemouth bass tissue. However, to date, the extent of the bass tissue sampling has been limited to a small segment of the Fish River.

With the new funding and expanded monitoring, at least three isolated ponds have also been selected for sampling as control sites, and the Watershed Project is seeking the participation of private bass fishermen in collecting this data. Posters placed at marinas and public boat launches will solicit participation of individuals, fishing clubs and guides in collecting samples. A one-day workshop will be offered to those individuals wishing to participate, and will include information about mercury contamination and toxicity, mercury cycling and biological accumulation, as well as the present state of mercury research in Coastal Alabama.

Goals of the project are to 1) learn the extent of mercury contamination in largemouth bass in the Fish River watershed and 2) take additional steps toward identifying its source. Project outcomes will be made to the general public by use of the print and broadcast media, the quarterly *The Pelican Post* and the semiannual Weeks Bay Watershed Project newsletter.



Largemouth Bass (*Micropterus salmoides*)

HISTORY OF THE WEEKS BAY NATIONAL ESTUARINE RESEARCH RESERVE PART III

The Weeks Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (originally the Weeks Bay National Estuarine Sanctuary) was officially established in 1986. However, the seeds of this great event were sown in the late 1970s with The Nature Conservancy's purchase of the Swift Tract. The original Reserve lands consist of this 615-acre parcel between Weeks Bay and the Bon Secour River with about 3 miles of frontage on Bon Secour and Mobile Bays.

In the mid 1970s, National Vice President of Land Acquisition for The Nature Conservancy **David Morine** was leading the effort to establish the Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge (BSNWR), and the Swift Tract was included in those proposed lands. Concurrently, **Congressman Jack Edwards** was securing both the funding and the legislation necessary to establish the Refuge.

In the early 1980s, local interests were pursuing the expansion of the BSNWR westward along the Ft. Morgan peninsula. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service supported the expansion, but recommended that the Swift property be deleted from the Refuge because it was geographically remote and difficult to manage. The ever-innovative Morine suggested that the locals consider using the Swift property to establish an Estuarine Sanctuary, a cooperative undertaking with the State that would increase the State's participation in non-game land conservation and establish a foundation for education and research, as well as conserving land and water resources.

The Nature Conservancy donated the Swift Tract to establish what would become the Weeks Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (WBNERR), relieving the State of the 50% match requirement for Federal dollars for land acquisition.

Other land purchases on behalf of the WBNERR have also resulted from a cooperative effort among Federal and State governments, and local community members.

Without the leadership of Jack Edwards (current Chairman of the Weeks Bay Reserve Foundation) and David Morine (now a writer in Virginia, and Director of the Coastal Land Trust) neither the Weeks Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, the Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge, nor the Coastal Land Trust in the Mobile Delta would exist today as we know and cherish them.

GROUNDWATER PROTECTION WORKSHOP HELD AT WEEKS BAY RESERVE

Ever increasing population and development in Alabama's coastal counties and the Gulf Coast put more and more pressure on groundwater supplies, and in some Gulf Coast counties, such as Baldwin, drinking water supplies come exclusively from groundwater sources, so maintaining safe groundwater is essential. The Weeks Bay Watershed Project recognizes the necessity of protecting underground water resources, including such directed action strategies in its watershed management plan. With this in mind, it planned the first Coastal Groundwater Protection Workshop in October.

With the cooperation of the Watershed Project, Weeks Bay Reserve, Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM) and Faulkner State Community College, a forum was held on October 16, 2002, at the Reserve to discuss and educate coastal decision-makers, such as water supply professionals, environmental proponents, engineers and municipal officials, on the many aspects of groundwater protection.

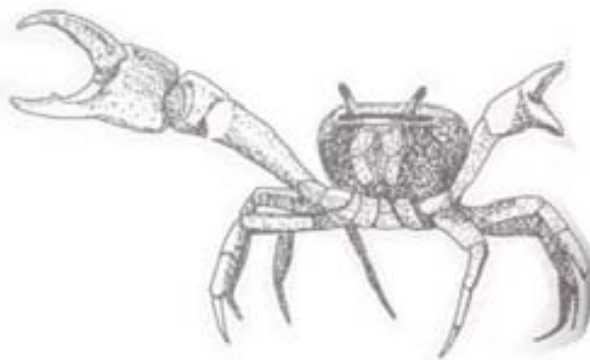
The day's presentations included those by state agencies, private businesses, and municipal officials involved in the protection of groundwater. Agency presentations included representatives from the Geological Survey of Alabama, (GSA), Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA)/Water Resources Office, and the Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM). Other groups represented were: STL Labs, Baldwin County Sewer Service, Wetland Resources, City of Fairhope, O'Donnell and Associates, and Eco Systems.

The one-day program was brought to a close by ADEM's **Enid Probst**. Ms. Probst supervises the Groundwater Guardian® program in Alabama. The Groundwater Guardian® is a nationwide program that informs and motivates people and communities to care about groundwater protection. Outreach provided through the program inspires citizen action and organization and promotes voluntary steps at the community level. Participants left the workshop informed of developing regulatory changes along the coast, and took with them a new appreciation of the importance of groundwater quality and protection. Each coastal community, its government, the professionals that advise and contract with the communities, and its citizens must be motivated with groundwater protection in mind to prevent problems in a rapidly growing area. The success of the first Coastal Groundwater Protection Workshop has prompted the Watershed Project to plan for an additional program in October of next year. For more information, contact the Watershed office at 251/928-9792 or e-mail to watershed.weeks@noaa.gov or eib@adem.state.al.us (Enid Probst/ADEM) to learn more about what our community can do as part of the Groundwater Guardian® Program.

EXOTIC VISITOR

by John Borom

Giant Land Crab
(*Cardisoma guanhumi*)



A Giant Land Crab (*Cardisoma guanhumi*) was brought to the Reserve on September 19, 2002, by **Lee and Elsie Zywicki** and given to **Margaret Sedlecky**. It is an adult male, blue in color, and looks like a fiddler crab, except that it covers the bottom of a five gallon bucket! Mrs. Zywicki discovered it in a flower bed at their home located on McKenzie Lane just north of the Highway 98 Bridge on Fish River.

The species occurs naturally throughout estuarine regions of the Caribbean, and Central and South America, including Colombia, Venezuela, the Bahamas, and Puerto Rico. Within the United States, it has been limited to the coastline of south Florida and Texas. This is likely the first recorded sighting of one in Alabama, and the exotic creature is most likely to have been transported here by someone who picked it up as a souvenir, or by the nursery trade.

Giant Land Crabs come out of their burrows, mainly at night, to feed on just about anything they can find, and are particularly fond of dead leaves, fruit, and fish. The Reserve staff discovered that they will also eat grapes, apples — and fiddler crabs, if given the chance.

It has been given to the Dauphin Island Sea Lab for its new "exotic species exhibit" at the Estuarium. For a shorter visual trip, look for the color photograph on the Foundation website at www.weeksbay.org.

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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 The Bellwether Group, of Mobile, AL, Mary Mullins, Partner. Funds for the publication are provided by members of the Weeks Bay Reserve Foundation.



WEEKS BAY RESERVE FOUNDATION
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**"Dogs look up to us. Cats look down on us.
Pigs treat us as equals."**

Winston Churchill

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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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