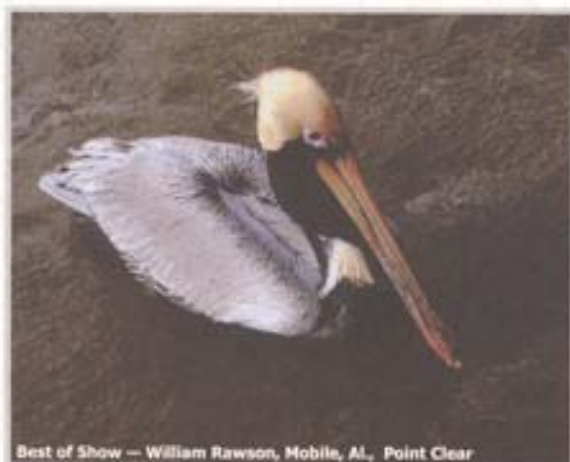




# THE PELICAN POST

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF  
THE WEEKS BAY RESERVE FOUNDATION  
FALL 2004



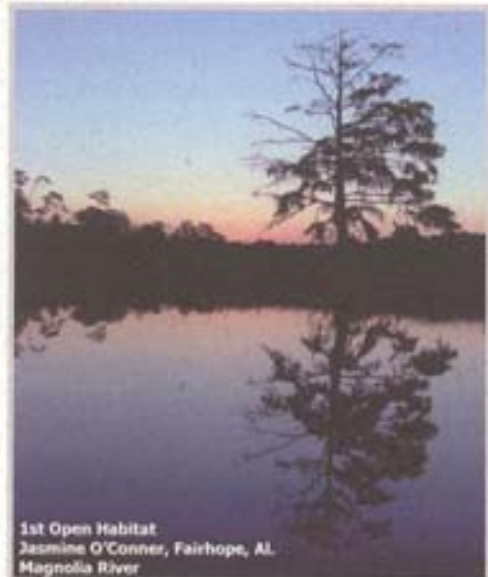
Best of Show — William Rawson, Mobile, AL, Point Clear



1st Place Fauna  
Jasmine O'Conner, Fairhope, AL,  
Weeks Bay Pitcher Plant Bog



1st Place Flora  
Karen Gibson, Albertville, AL,  
Weeks Bay Pitcher Plant Bog



1st Open Habitat  
Jasmine O'Conner, Fairhope, AL,  
Magnolia River



2nd Place Fauna  
Kathy Hicks, Fairhope, AL,  
Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge



3rd Open Habitat, Keith Nelson, Mobile, AL,  
Point Clear



2nd Place Flora  
David Dortch, Fairhope, AL,  
Apalachee River

## FIFTH ANNUAL PHOTO CONTEST

This year's photo contest had 193 entries that focused attention on the beautiful Alabama Gulf Coast. Sponsors included the Foundation, the Reserve, the Mobile Bay National Estuary Program, and the Eastern Shore Art Center. The winning photos were displayed during the month of July at the Eastern Shore Art Center. They have also been published in magazines, newspapers, and many photos can also be seen on the Foundation's website, [www.weeksbay.org](http://www.weeksbay.org).

**Weeks Bay Reserve  
Foundation  
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Walter Ernest IV

The 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.

**Memberships**

Students \$10 / year  
Individual \$30 / year  
Family \$50 / year  
Business \$250 / year

**Weeks Bay Reserve Foundation**  
Post Office Box 731  
Fairhope, AL 36533  
251-990-5004  
www.weeksbay.org

**From the Executive Director**

Weeks Bay Reserve Foundation was nominated by The Nature Conservancy of Alabama and selected Conservation Organization of the Year by the Board of Directors of the Alabama Wildlife Federation. Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Commissioner Barnett Lawley made the presentation at the AWF's Governor's Conservation Achievement Awards dinner in Montgomery in July. The Foundation also received a 3<sup>rd</sup> Place Gulf Guardian Award for its work in land conservation. The Gulf Guardian Award is given by the EPA's Gulf of Mexico Program. The presentation was made in September at the Southern States Environmental Conference in Biloxi, MS. The photography contest was the largest in the history of the event (193 entries).



The Foundation continues to work diligently on land transactions. We also entered into a third partners agreement with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to erect Wood Duck boxes on the Foundation's Bayou Sara tract.

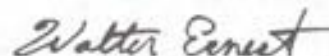
We have been assisting in the planning of the first Alabama Coastal BirdFest that will be held October 14-17<sup>th</sup> 2004. This is important because it focuses on ecotourism, education, and conservation. It will feature guided trips along the 240-mile long Alabama Coastal Birding Trail, excellent speakers and social events, and free environmental education activities. Don't miss this opportunity, register now! For more information, go to the Foundation's website [www.weeksbay.org](http://www.weeksbay.org) and click on BirdFest.

I hope everyone reads the article in this issue of the *The Pelican Post* about zoning or a Planned Use District and every registered voter in the Weeks Bay watershed signs the zoning petition. This effort was not successful several years ago, and the time has come to readdress this issue. Since Baldwin County is experiencing rapid population growth, a Planned Use District will protect the natural resources and the property values.

I invite all of our members and friends to visit the Weeks Bay Reserve Foundation's new office. The office is located directly across from the Reserve on U.S. 98. The address of the new office is 11401 U.S. 98 Fairhope, AL 36532.

I hope you enjoy reading the Fall 2004 Issue of the *The Pelican Post*.

Working for Conservation,



Walter Ernest, IV  
Executive Director

## Conservation Organization of the Year

Weeks Bay Reserve Foundation was selected Conservation Organization of the Year by the Board of Directors of the Alabama Wildlife Federation. The award was presented on July 30, 2004, in Montgomery at the Governor's Conservation Achievement Award Banquet.



Top: Willard Bowers, Barnett Lawley, Walter Ernest, Jyles Maches (l-r)  
Above: Walter Ernest, John Boreen, L.G. Adams (l-r)

The Foundation was founded in

1990 to serve as the non-profit friends group of the Reserve. Since then the Foundation has been an integral part of the success behind the Reserve. The Foundation is one of the strongest conservation organizations on the coast, with laudable achievements in land protection and public education.

The Foundation has avidly pursued its mission to protect the natural resources within the Weeks Bay Watershed through a combination of education programs, public outreach, and land acquisition. Over the last 13 years, the Foundation has protected more than 1,000 acres of wetland property, and has assisted the Reserve with land

### Governor Appointees to Advisory Committee

Six new members recently have been added to the Weeks Bay Advisory Committee as appointed by Governor **Bob Riley**. The Advisory Committee provides feedback on program developments and operations of the Reserve. The Committee has 12 seats held by various agency and institutional representatives and six seats appointed by the Governor. As seen in the photograph, *State Lands Director Jim Griggs* (near center) welcomes the Governor appointees (left to right) *Carey Bentley, Randy Roach, JoAnn Flirt, Jim Griggs, Dana Kasuba, Larry Morris, and Clark Stewart* (not pictured).



acquisition within the Reserve boundaries. The Foundation also has an active water quality monitoring program, testing within the Weeks Bay watershed for *Enterococcus* and *E. coli*. Within the Reserve, the Foundation has funded educational exhibits and boardwalk construction, in addition to

projects such as the Weeks Bay Pitcher Plant Bog and the Interpretive Center's specimen collection. Additionally, they have a strong public outreach campaign, hosting the annual children's fishing day and photography contests, as well as publishing a quarterly newsletter, *The Pelican Post* and hosting an informative website, [www.weeksbay.org](http://www.weeksbay.org).

The Foundation has been a leader in conservation efforts in coastal Alabama for many years and has been instrumental in securing private, state and federal funding for numerous additions to the Reserve. In addition, the Foundation has worked closely with the State Lands Division which has recently resulted in the acquisition of four tracts by the Forever Wild Land Trust from the Foundation. These projects have amounted to over 200 acres of wetland habitat being protected through this partnership.

The Board of Directors of the Weeks Bay Reserve Foundation appreciates this award from the Alabama Wildlife Federation, and it knows that your membership and your participation makes good things happen for conservation.

## Volunteer Spotlight—Brian Sedlecky

When the Weeks Bay Volunteers held their first plant sale, eleven years ago, **Brian Sedlecky** was on hand, from start to finish, to do whatever needed to be done to make the sale a success. This year will be no exception. Brian will help with loading and unloading, watering, plant labeling, and he will answer hundreds of plant questions throughout the sale.

Unlike many of our volunteers at Weeks Bay Reserve who are retired, Brian still works full-time, as a medical technologist at Providence Hospital. He takes vacation during the week of the sale, to help with the advance work, including site preparation and layout. Weeks Bay Volunteer Coordinator **Maureen Nation** says that "since the beginning, Brian has been indispensable; he has great organizational skills, and he can anticipate and solve problems before they occur." Maureen goes on to say, "we spend a day together, walking the plant sale site, to work out parking and traffic flow, and deciding where the plants will be located. I really value Brian's judgments, and it is great to have the bene-



fit of his experience from all of our previous sales!"

Brian likes to take the plant inventory list home, before the sale begins, to learn all he can about each of the plants that will be sold. Over the years he has become quite knowledgeable, and can answer most questions about how large each species will grow, cultivating conditions, and their water and shade requirements. Brian says, "The more we can tell our customers about our wonderful native plants, the more likely they will be to incorporate them

into their home landscapes, and that's what it's all about: to educate the public, and to promote native plants instead of exotics for landscapes in our area."

All of our treasured volunteers at Weeks Bay seem like family, but Brian Sedlecky really is "in the family." Volunteer Coordinator Maureen Nation is his sister, and he is married to **Margaret Holcomb Sedlecky**, the Reserve Education Coordinator. Where did Brian and Margaret meet? You guessed it. They met at the Plant Sale!



What's wrong with this picture?

**ZONING** Baldwin County is the second fastest growing county in Alabama, and a large portion of the county is unzoned. The Weeks Bay watershed is unzoned, but efforts are underway to establish a planning district. A planning district will not change your current property use and will not cause an increase in taxes.

Local Act No 91-719, as amended created planning districts countywide. In order to come under the planning authority of the Baldwin County Commission, 10% of the registered voters in the designated area must sign a petition (350 signatures). Upon receiving and verifying the signatures, the Probate Judge calls for a referendum upon which the votes must be in favor of zoning. After developing a map that is satisfactory to the public, the commission adopts the zoning maps and the area becomes zoned. Thirteen planning districts have elected to be zoned. Specifically, District 20 (Magnolia Springs) and District 26 (Battles Wharf, Point Clear and county road 1 south to Big Mouth) are zoned areas around Weeks Bay. However, several areas adjacent to Fish River are not zoned. A lack of zoning means no land use control whatsoever (see photo)! Zoning can effectively maintain similar land uses, cross check environmental permitting and allow for citizen input during the early phases of development. Baldwin County's Population grew 42.9% between 1990 and 2000... What will it be between 2000 and 2010? **Please contact the Foundation at (251) 990-5004 if you are interested in signing the zoning petition.**

## Best of Luck to Bob McCormack

**Bob McCormack**, Stewardship Coordinator, worked his last day at the Reserve on July 9, 2004. Bob has worked at the Reserve since 1993. His future plans include a move to New York and marriage. Over the years Bob McCormack has been involved in many roles related to conservation of coastal resources and various environmental issues. His efforts included review of human impacts on local resources, removal of trash from local rivers, exotic species eradication, and working in concert with various regulatory agencies. Bob's work also involved outreach activities such as speaking engagements, trail interpretation, directing eagle-scout projects, developing informational topics, writing newsletter articles, and working with visiting researchers. Recently, the Weeks Bay Advisory Committee presented Bob McCormack a plaque recognizing his contributions to the Reserve over the last decade. Best of luck to Bob McCormack in his new endeavors and hopefully he will come back for a visit upon occasion.



## Environmental Education Notes

Summertime at the Reserve is a busy time for environmental education. Instead of the steady stream of school buses and students arriving, there is a parking lot full of vehicles with out of state tags bringing summer visitors as well as workshop participants. A Nonpoint Source Pollution and Solutions Workshop for 4<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade science teachers was conducted in May. Teachers received a Watershed Tour Curriculum Kit that included everything needed to teach a week long unit about watersheds and nonpoint source pollution. The highlight of the workshop was a canoe trip down Magnolia River to view examples of riparian habitats and riverside development. Special thanks go to **Lee Yokel** of the Mobile Bay National Estuary Program and **Mike Shelton** with the Weeks Bay Watershed Project for helping to make this workshop a success.

On July 27, a Wet and Wild Workshop was held for K-12 teachers and on July 28 a Project Learning Tree Workshop was held for K-8 teachers. On August 23-24, the Coastal Training Program hosted a coastal decision maker workshop that was open to regional surveyors, engineers, and other natural resource managers.

Be sure to mark your calendar for **September 23<sup>rd</sup>** when Weeks Bay Reserve will be featured during a two-day series of virtual tours of estuaries around the country. As part of **EstuaryLive**, the real-time Internet broadcast will bring together scientists, educators, and students to explore the natural and cultural history found in salt marshes, tidal creeks, and beaches along the nations coasts. You can find more information and register, at no cost, to view the broadcasts at [www.estuarylive.org](http://www.estuarylive.org). Please join the Reserve for this exciting event! We will be broadcasting live from Fish River Marina on Thursday, September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 9:10am-10:10am.

### Weeks Bay Water Watch Honored

At the 2004 Alabama Water Watch annual picnic and awards ceremony, Weeks Bay Water Watch was honored for its longtime participation in the volunteer program. The "Tried and True" Award was given to the dedicated volunteers for the years of service and the high number of data records contributed to the Alabama Water Watch program. Several members of the Weeks Bay group have been faithfully testing local waterways for more than five years. "Tried and True" describes Weeks Bay Water Watch to a tee. In addition, **Mike Shelton**, Weeks Bay Reserve Watershed Coordinator, was recognized as "Trainer of the Year" by Alabama Water Watch. Mike is one of over thirty-five certified monitor trainers spread throughout the state. Training workshops are standardized so that volunteers on the Fish, Fowl, Black Warrior or Tallapoosa rivers get the same expert instruction. For more information about Alabama Water Watch, go to [www.alabamawaterwatch.org](http://www.alabamawaterwatch.org). Contact Mike at the Weeks Bay Reserve (251-928-9792) for details on the October 2, 2004 water chemistry and bacteria certification workshops.

### Eleventh Annual Watersheds, Nonpoint Source Pollution and Stormwater Workshop held at the Reserve

Resource managers from the Gulf Coast and throughout Alabama gathered at the Weeks Bay Reserve June 22-24, 2004 for the eleventh annual Watersheds, Nonpoint Source Pollution and Stormwater Workshop. The outreach event was sponsored by the Weeks Bay Watershed Project; the Weeks Bay Reserve, Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (ADCNR), State Lands Division, Coastal Section; the Coastal Training Program; Baldwin County Soil and Water Conservation District and the Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM). Qualified instructors provided information to workshop participants on development of better growth management, design for better erosion plans and controls and techniques for individual citizens to address stormwater in their own backyard. Also, seminars were presented to promote a better understanding of the regulations and of compliance requirements. Participants at the two and a half day workshop hailed from Jefferson and Baldwin Counties and the Cities of New Brockton, Tarrant, Auburn University, Montgomery and Talladega. In addition, officials from ADEM were present as well from citizens groups: the Alabama-Tombigbee Clean Water Partnership, the Vestavia Lake Association and the Upper Cahaba Watershed Study. All citizens and communities must promote the reduction of runoff contamination. The Watersheds, Nonpoint Source Pollution and Stormwater Workshop will continue to provide educational resources to assist in pollution prevention efforts.

## Reserve Staff & Intern Eradicate Exotic from Site

Reserve staff organized to eradicate an exotic plant commonly known as rattlebox or Chinese wisteria from Reserve property. This plant, *Sesbania punicea*, is native to South America (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay). In Argentina it is common on the islands of the lower Parana Delta, along the Rio de la Planta and on the island of Martin Garcia. Exotic species are known to displace native species and reduce biodiversity. A small population had become established under the Fish River Bridge at US Highway 98, on Reserve property across from the Fish River Marina. The seeds are adapted to float and spread by water so eradication from this site reduced the chance of spreading by water to other properties around Weeks Bay.

*Sesbania punicea* is a deciduous shrub or small tree, up to 4 meters tall. It has 10-20 cm long compound leaves each with 10-40 small dark-green leaflets in opposite pairs. Each leaflet is oblong and ends in a tiny pointed tip. The showy coral or red flowers appear in spring and early summer in dense sprays (up to 25 cm long) that droop or project outwards. The 2-3 cm long flowers are shaped like pea flowers. A characteristic feature are the seed pods, which are longitudinally 4-winged, oblong, 6-8 cm long, 1 cm broad, borne on short 1.5 cm stalks and may be dispersed by water. The tip of the pod is sharply pointed. The 4-10 seeds are separated by partitions and are freed only when the pod eventually breaks open. The legume genus *Sesbania* includes a number of annual and woody species, many of commercial value.



Reserve staff has eradicated other exotic species that have settled in around Weeks Bay and the larger watershed areas. Concern about the impacts of exotic species is an ongoing topic at the Reserve and several workshops have been provided over the years that offer opportunities to learn more about impacts in general and control methods. Exotic species are a concern at the national level, and the Estuarine Reserve Division of NOAA has supported research and workshops on such topics as Invasive Exotics, Monitoring and Control, and Impacts on Biodiversity. At Weeks Bay Reserve, exotic species will continue to be a topic of concern and ongoing efforts will continue in regard to identification, monitoring, and control.

### Coastal Cleanup Set for September 18<sup>th</sup>

The 18<sup>th</sup> Annual International Coastal Cleanup event will be held at the Fish River Marina on September 18, from 8 am-12 pm. The Reserve will captain a cleanup area which includes Weeks Bay, Fish River up to County Road 32, Magnolia River up to County Road 49 and Mobile Bay north to Mullet Point. Litter and debris are eyesores on the water and along the shoreline. Registration will begin at 8 am sharp under the shelters next to the south basin on the opposite side of the marina from the boat launches. Free Coastal Cleanup T-shirts will be available while supplies last. Lunch will be provided starting at about 11:30 am. Make sure proper attire is worn along with a sturdy pair of shoes.

### Wetland and Realtors Workshop

The Reserve and the Coastal Training Program hosted a Wetland and Realtors workshop on August 5th. The goal of the program was to provide real estate professionals with current, accurate and concise information about wetlands, their types and identification; the existing state of wetland regulation and permitting; and methods and options for wetland conservation to promote informed decision making and the distribution of educated advice about wetlands and their protection.

The workshop opened by an introduction to wetland types and identification methods by **Gena Todia**, president of Wetland Resources and member of the Week Bay Watershed Project Citizen Advisory Committee.

The introduction to wetlands was followed

by a presentation on wetland permitting, a U. S. Army Corps of Engineers perspective for realtors. **Cindy House-Pearson**, an environmental protection specialist with USA/COE, presented the workshop segment. In the final session of the workshop, **Neil Johnston**, of Hand Arendall, gave a talk on methods of wetland conservation. Workshop participants were given information regarding methods and practices for the preservation and conservation of wetland property and function within the current regulatory framework. Neil discussed the use of conservation easements for wetland conservation. The workshop supports the efforts of the Reserve and the Coastal Training Program to reach out to coastal resource managers with information that enables them to make good decisions based on the best science available.

## Research Notes

### Graduate Research Fellowship Studies Weeks Bay Watershed

**Lucie Novoveska** is from the Czech Republic and came to Hampton University as an undergraduate on a tennis scholarship. Lucie is a Masters of Science student in the Biological Science Department at Eastern Illinois University under the advisement of **Dr. Charles L. Pederson** and has received a Graduate Research Fellowship to fund her thesis research in Weeks Bay. Lucie's research is entitled: "Benthic algal community structure and bioaccumulation of mercury in a coastal watershed." Since the Fish River has been listed under Section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act



for non-support based on mercury contamination, it provides an excellent setting for a project with both applied and theoretical aspects. This fellowship has been funded through the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) for \$20,000.00 and matching funds from Eastern Illinois University bring the total funding to \$34,927.00. The project is funded through June 2005. Lucie has considerable expertise in the field of water chemistry and we are pleased to have been the beneficiary of this expertise as she has been assisting in the lab doing nutrient determinations for the System-Wide Monitoring Program. We are pleased to welcome Lucie to our lab.

### 2004 Exxon Mobil Summer Intern—*Hannah Barks*

**Hannah Barks** was the recipient of a \$2,000 grant to the Foundation from Exxon Mobil. She assisted the Foundation and the Reserve for eight weeks.

Hannah is a sophomore attending Warren-Wilson College in Asheville, North Carolina where she is majoring in Biology. Hannah first learned of the Reserve when she was trying to find a topic for her roommate's environmental education class presentation. She was so impressed with the facility and the work of the staff and researchers that she submitted an application for the summer intern program.

She has conducted water quality sampling, has assisted with invasive plant removal and habitat restoration, data entry and workshops. When asked what her favorite task has been, Hannah replied "All of the work has been very rewarding, however, the most memorable task was dissecting fish heads for **Mike Shelton's** mercury study. This consisted of opening up the fish head to find the otolith so I could determine the age of the fish by counting the number of growth lines on the otolith." Hannah also compiled a portfolio of all of the entries in the photo contest. The Foundation thanks Exxon Mobil for funding this position.



Exxon Mobil Summer Jobs intern, Hannah L. Barks taking ecoli samples in the Weeks Bay Watershed

### Management Plan Preliminary Draft

After much effort by Reserve Staff and other involved partners, a Preliminary Draft of the revised Management Plan is available for review and can be found at [www.sarpc.org/enviro.htm](http://www.sarpc.org/enviro.htm). The management plan is required by the Estuarine Reserve Division of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration as part of the Coastal Zone Management Act authorizing funds used for operations of the Reserve. The Weeks Bay Management Plan will describe development of programs related to areas such as administration, facility development, resource protection, research, education, and stewardship. The management plan will continue revision until final approval is obtained whereby it will become a new living document for the Reserve. Once approved and published, this new document will provide guidance for program development over a five year period.

## Nature's Calendar

By John Borom

Lizardfishes not only look like lizards but also act like lizards. The inshore lizardfish (*Synodus foetens*) ranges from Massachusetts to Brazil and is usually encountered in Mobile Bay and adjacent waters during summer and autumn.



INSHORE LIZARDFISH  
*Synodus foetens*

It is greenish brown with sandy blotches dorsally and whitish laterally and ventrally. Color is variable depending upon conditions of background and light. Maximum length is about 16 inches, and it is slender and cylindrical. The dorsal and anal fins are spineless, the caudal fin is forked, and there is a small adipose fin. The depressed head, pointed snout and the large mouth filled with needle-like teeth lining the jaws, roof and tongue give it a reptilian appearance.

Regularly occurring inshore and in the bays, this is the only lizardfish which commonly enters estuaries; however, the larger individuals occur farther offshore in depths out to one hundred fathoms. It often sits comfortably camouflaged out in the open on the bottom, propping up on the front end on the ventral fins. Sometimes it conceals itself in the substrate with only its eyes exposed. When small fishes and invertebrates come into the area, the prey is usually swallowed in one gulp.

Newly hatched inshore lizardfish larvae can be collected near the surface at depths from 80 to 140 feet in the Gulf. Pelagic juveniles can be collected in the open Gulf from April to June.

Inshore lizardfish are occasionally caught on hook and line, and they show up regularly in shrimp trawls; however, they are of no commercial value. The flesh is totally unpalatable and decomposes rapidly when left in the hot sun. The scientific name *foetens* refers to the unpleasant odor.

In some parts of its range inshore lizardfish are mistakenly believed to be poisonous. They might inflict a painful bite, but they are not known to possess any venom or toxin.



Look for the Weeks Bay Reserve Foundation Holiday Ornament.....soon to premier on our website at [www.weeksbay.org](http://www.weeksbay.org).

## Did you Know?

By John Borom

Whether birds have a sense of smell or not has been a much debated question. Scientists have had a difficult time trying to determine which species have a well-developed sense of smell and to what extent they use it. Data based on experiments and anatomy of both nasal cavities and the olfactory lobes of the brain suggest that most birds have practically no sense of smell.

However, the sense of smell of the Turkey Vulture (*Cathartes aura*) is phenomenal. From 200 feet in the air they can smell a dead mouse under leaves in a forest. Their beak has a hole all the way through it that allows odors to pass through from both sides. When they soar on thermals in the sky they are attempting to scent carrion. The similar Black Vulture (*Coragyps atratus*) also a carrion eater, relies almost completely on sight to locate food.

Black Vultures often follow Turkey Vultures to find food. Once a food source is located, the more aggressive Black Vultures will run the Turkey Vultures off of the carcass.

When gas lines in Texas develop leaks, the scent of a dead animal is injected into the pipes. Repairmen then go out in helicopters looking for circling Turkey Vultures without any carrion on the ground, and they know that they have found the leak.

It was once thought that vultures spread livestock diseases. They do not; they actually help to prevent the spread of disease due to specialized digestive enzymes and bacteria in their systems. These enzymes destroy hog cholera, rabies, and other contagious diseases in their digestive system that would be spread if another animal ate the contaminated carcass.

The Turkey Vulture will allow its feces to drop straight down onto its own legs and feet and coat them with the enzymes. This prevents the bird from contracting diseases through cuts on its own legs and feet while standing in a carcass. The white coating is also believed to help cool the legs as the excrement evaporates.

## Turkey Vulture

*Cathartes aura*



## Hand Arendall Receives Environmental Award

The Land Use and Environmental Practice Group of Hand Arendall received the Environmental Award at the Annual Membership Meeting of the Eastern Shore Chamber of Commerce on June 10 at the Daphne Civic Center.

The members of the Land Use and Environmental Practice Group are **Jack Edwards, Neil Johnston, Michael Niemeyer,**

**Hodge Alves, Christopher Gill, Bruce McGowin, Louis Norvell, David Ryan, Mark Waggoner, and Shane Black.** The group encourages conservation of natural resources and good stewardship throughout their representation of clients in their daily professional work, and in their community involvement.

The members are actively participating, hands-on, with programs designed for the conservation of land, restoration of habitat and use of best management practices in the natural resources industry, as well as residential, commercial and industrial development. They are conscious of the community benefits from their activities, their client



*Jack Edwards, Michael Niemeyer, Neil Johnston (left-right)*

relationships, and their educational programs.

Their community involvement is evident in the numerous conservation and environmental organizations in which they are involved. For example, the members of the Land Use and Environmental Practice Group are active members of Alabama Coastal Foundation, the Mobile County Wildlife & Conservation Association,

The Project CATE Foundation, Coastal Conservation Association, Weeks Bay Reserve Foundation, the Alabama Forestry Association and many other organizations. Jack Edwards and David Ryan are also members of the Weeks Bay Reserve Foundation Board of Directors.

Client, community, and student education are among the highest priorities of the group. Members readily volunteer and sponsor professional environmental seminars around the State and the Gulf Coast. In addition, they have written numerous articles on environmental and conservation issues.

### 1<sup>st</sup> Alabama Coastal BirdFest

October 14-17, 2004

**REGISTER NOW**

The Alabama Coastal BirdFest includes guided birding trips, great Southern hospitality, afternoon seminars, children's activities, educational exhibits, evening keynote lectures, and a few workshops. Come let us show you the wild and beautiful Alabama Coast and join us for some spectacular birding and a wonderful time! For more information, call (251) 929-0922 or visit



[www.alabamacoastalbirdfest.com](http://www.alabamacoastalbirdfest.com)

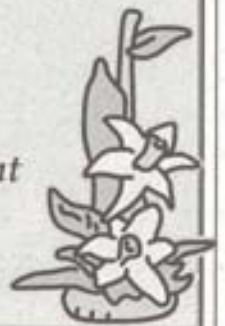
### Weeks Bay Native Plant Sale

October 8-10, 8 am—4 pm

Safe Harbor RV Park

*(across from Weeks Bay Reserve)*

- *Butterfly Plants*
- *Hummingbird Plants*
- *Perennials*
- *Shrubs*
- *Trees*
- *Wetland Plant*
- *Dune Plants*



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

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Five Star Plantation  
Frank & Kitten Burge

Gene & Cherry Rozelle  
Geoff Ferland  
Geoff Houlditch  
Henry F. & Elizabeth Weatherly  
Henry Gaudin  
Alabama Ducks Unlimited  
Herbert & Eleanor Skjenar  
Homer & Leona Griffith  
J. Martin Gaines  
Jack H. Bickwell  
James & Emily Frost  
James & Mary Jo Mackin  
Pearson & Ann Mathews  
Jean Moughon Murphy  
Mary Murchison  
W. Dean Nix  
Jeanne E. Cunningham  
Jim & Barbara Cox  
Jim & Norman Clay  
Joan C. Harrison  
John & Diane Hall  
Kelly O'Donnell  
L.G. & Margee Adams  
Les & Martha Farmer  
Lynn & Fritz Woehle  
M. Crawford Johnson III  
Margaret R. Monaghan  
Bobbie & Jim Parsons  
William & Marian Phillips  
Melanie Kandil  
Michael & Kevin Garrett  
Michael R. Odonnell  
Miller M. Gorrie  
Mr. & Mr. Charles S. Houser  
Mr. & Mrs. David S. Hawkins  
Mr. & Mrs. J. Sharp Gillespy  
Mr. & Mrs. Dixon Brook, Jr

Mr. & Mrs. J.W. Waltzman  
Mr. & Mrs. John K. McCullough  
Mr. & Mrs. John R. Thomas  
Mr. & Mrs. Larry Hawkins  
Mr. & Mrs. N. Thomas Williams  
Mr. & Mrs. R.C. Craft  
Mr. & Mrs. Richard B. Booth  
Mr. & Mrs. Richard I. Pigford  
National Bank of Commerce  
Nimrod W. E. Long  
Phillip & Heather McWane  
R. Forrest Pitts  
R.K. & Florence Richey  
Ricahrd S. Riley  
Robert & Elberta Reid  
Robert & Kimberly Moore  
Lewis Smith  
Robert C. Stobert, JR  
Samy El Feraly  
Skipper Tonsmeire  
Southern Nuclear Operating Co.  
Ed & David Dixon  
The Nature Conservancy of Alabama  
The UAB Educational Foundation  
Presidents Restricted Fund  
Thomas E. & Lena Clark  
W.G. Hairson, III  
Walter & Bee Morris  
Wendy Allen  
Black Warrior Cahaba Land Trust  
William & Betty Whitehurst  
William F. Denson, III  
William M. Spencer, III  
WM H. & Ann Kessler  
Woodward Academy

## Henslow's Sparrow

By John Borom

Henslow's Sparrow (*Ammodramus henslowii*) is a short-tailed and rather chunky little bird. It has the most flat-headed profile of all sparrows, making its bill appear a few sizes too large. Striped olive-green head, streaked breast, and rufous-toned back and wings are most distinctive field marks.

It is seldom seen except when suddenly flushed at one's feet. When it flies away it zigzags slightly just over the top of the grass. After traveling 20 yards or so, it abruptly pitches into the grass and disappears.

This bird breeds in the tallgrass prairies and agricultural grasslands from South Dakota, southern Ontario, and central New York south to Kansas, Missouri, and North Carolina. It migrates south to spend the non-breeding season in open longleaf pine savannas and pitcher plant bogs from Texas along the Gulf Coastal Plain to central Florida. It arrives on the Alabama coast in mid-October and usually is gone by the end of March.

Data from the North American Breeding Bird Survey indicate Henslow's Sparrow has declined by more than 80 percent since 1966. This is among the most drastic population declines of any bird species in North America for more than 30 years. Its native tallgrass breeding habitat has declined by more than 90 percent due to agricultural practices and succession of grasslands to shrub and forest. Loss of wintering habitat is also a contributing factor. More than 97 percent of Gulf Coast pitcher plant bogs have been destroyed or severely altered.

Partners In Flight assessment scores indicate Henslow's Sparrow occurs in low relative abundance, has a very restricted non-breeding distribution, and that deterioration of non-breeding habitat is expected. The National Audubon Society WatchList includes Henslow's Sparrow as a species at risk. The Alabama Natural Heritage Program gives Henslow's Sparrow the rank of S2, which means the species is imperiled and rare making it very vulnerable to extirpation from the state.

In the end, the way we treat other creatures is a reflection of the way in which we treat each other. If this rare little grassland bird loses, then so does everyone else. A good place to see Henslow's Sparrow is along the Kurt G. Wintermeyer Boardwalk. Your continued support of the Foundation is appreciated.



Henslow's Sparrow  
(*Ammodramus henslowii*)

## Weeks Bay Reserve Calendar

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

### September

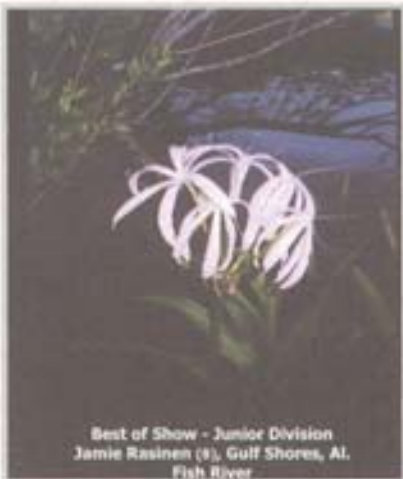
- 7 Citizens Advisory Committee of the Weeks Bay Watershed Project meeting, Tuesday 6pm at the Reserve. For more information contact **Mike Shelton** at 251-928-9792.
- 14 Nature Video. "Audubon Society's Video Guide to Birds of North America I" (94 minutes). Faulkner State Community College Fairhope Campus, Centennial Hall. 7pm, Bring a friend. For more information, contact **John Borom** at 251-990-0423.
- 16 Weeks Bay Advisory Committee meeting, Thursday, 2 pm at the Reserve. For more information, contact **Cathy Pembroke** at 251-928-9792.
- 18 Annual Alabama Coastal Cleanup, in conjunction with International Coastal Cleanup, Saturday 8am-1pm. For more information, contact **Mike Shelton** at 251-928-9792.
- 20 Weeks Bay Reserve Foundation Board of Directors meeting, Monday, 8:30am at the Foundation's new office. For more information contact **Walter Ernest** at 251-990-5004.
- 23-24 "Estuary Live" Live on the internet from Weeks Bay Reserve! Interactive educational program via live satellite feeds from different National Estuarine Research Reserves. Weeks Bay will be featured on September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 9:10am-10:10am. For more information contact **Margaret Sedlecky** at 251-928-9792 or visit [www.estuaries.gov](http://www.estuaries.gov).

### October

- 2 Alabama Water Watch Chemistry and Bacteria Monitoring Training Workshop, 8:30-4pm. For more information, contact **Mike Shelton** at 251-928-9792.
- 5 Citizens Advisory Committee of the Weeks Bay Watershed Project meeting, Tuesday 6pm at the Reserve. For more information, contact **Mike Shelton** at 251-928-9792.
- 8-10 Weeks Bay Volunteers Annual Native Plant Sale, Friday through Sunday. For more information contact **Maureen Nation** at 251-928-9792.
- 12 Nature Video. "Audubon Society's Video Guide to Birds of North America II" (78 minutes). Government Street Baptist Church in Mobile. 7 pm. Bring a friend. For more information, contact **John Borom** at 251-990-0423.
- 14-17 Alabama Coastal BirdFest. Birding activities and special events will be part of this inaugural. For more information, call (251) 929-0922 or visit [Alabama-coastalBirdFest.com](http://Alabama-coastalBirdFest.com).

### November

- 2 Citizens Advisory Committee of the Weeks Bay Watershed Project meeting, Tuesday 6pm at the Reserve. For more information, contact **Mike Shelton** at 251-928-9792.
- 9 Nature Video. "Audubon Society's Video Guide to Birds of North America III" (61 minutes). Faulkner State Community College Fairhope Campus, Centennial Hall. 7pm. Bring a friend. For more information, contact **John Borom** at 251-990-0423.



Best of Show - Junior Division  
Jamie Rasinen (8), Gulf Shores, AL,  
Fish River



1st Place Flora - Junior Division, Georgia Robles (10),  
Meyona Springs, AL, Kurt Wiedertroyer Boardwalk



2nd Place Flora - Junior Division, Jamie Rasinen (8),  
Gulf Shores, AL, Kurt Wiedertroyer Boardwalk



2nd Place Open Habitat - Junior Division,  
Jared Peyton (16), Slidell, La.,  
Gaillard Island



1st Place Fauna - Junior Division  
Jared Peyton (16), Slidell, La.,  
Dog River Marina



2nd Place Fauna - Junior Division  
Jared Peyton (16), Slidell, La.,  
Gaillard Island



1st Place Open Habitat - Junior Division  
Jared Peyton (16), Slidell, La.,  
Gaillard Island

To view more contest submissions, visit our photo  
album & past projects at [www.weeksbay.org](http://www.weeksbay.org).

**Weeks Bay Reserve Foundation**  
Post Office Box 731  
Fairhope, AL 36533

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Ring-billed Gull  
(*Larus delawarensis*)

*"One does not meet oneself until one catches the reflection from an eye other than human."*  
- Loren Eiseley