

# THE Pelican Post

*A quarterly publication - Weeks Bay Foundation*



Fall 2007  
Vol. 22, No. 3



*"In losing stewardship we lose fellowship; we become outcasts from the great neighborhood of creation."*  
- Wendell Berry

*2007 Photography Contest  
Best of Show*

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

Cover photo by Sherry Stimpson-Frost

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# From the Executive Director...



The Weeks Bay Reserve Foundation was incorporated in 1990 as a non-profit organization to support the Weeks Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve in Baldwin County. The Foundation supports the Reserve through donations of land and through educational exhibits, public awareness and education programs, water quality monitoring efforts, and by helping provide volunteers.

The Foundation is a strong advocate for the Reserve, raising money to allow the Reserve to develop facilities, including the Boardwalk behind the Interpretive Center and the **Kurt G. Wintermeyer Boardwalk** at the pitcher plant bog. It funded the specimen collections, including live species and the cabinets in the Interpretive Center. The Foundation also pursues land acquisition activities in the Weeks Bay watershed, and publishes *The Pelican Post* newsletter quarterly.

The Foundation Board of Directors recently voted to change its name to the Weeks Bay Foundation. The change is to reflect the Foundation's existing watershed approach to conserving ecologically sensitive land.

The Foundation has been involved in land protection since it was first established. The largest land protection success stories would be the acquisition of the Safe Harbor RV Park and Marina in 1997 and the 684 acre Bayou Sara tract in Mobile County. The marina and RV Park were purchased at public auction and later conveyed to the State of Alabama. The Bayou Sara Tract was donated to the Foundation by **Dr. Thomas M. Roush** and later conveyed to the State of Alabama. The Foundation has also conveyed numerous other properties to the State of Alabama.

The Foundation is a member of the Land Trust Alliance (LTA). The LTA promotes voluntary private land conservation that benefits communities and natural systems. The LTA is the national convener, strategist and representative of more than 1,600 land trusts across America. The Foundation is working toward national accreditation as a land trust. The national accreditation program is a new program that will roll out in 2008 and be fully functional by 2012. Some of the requirements are to adopt implementation of the LTA's *Land Trust Standards and Practices*, perform an organization self assessment, conduct an annual audit, and have completed at least two land transactions in the last two years. The Foundation can accept land donations, conservation easements, bargain sales of property, life estates, and fee simple acquisition purchases. The Foundation looks forward to its continued role as the friends group of the Weeks Bay Reserve and its continued work as a land trust in Coastal Alabama. The primary focus area will continue to be the Reserve and the Weeks Bay watershed. To learn more about the Foundation, visit the website at [www.weeksbay.org](http://www.weeksbay.org).

The Foundation looks forward to working with the Weeks Bay Reserve's Coastal Training Program to present the **Land Conservation and Financial Strategies for Professionals and Landowners: Advanced Seminar on Conservation Easements and Land Stewardship** with **Stephen Small** in November. We also look forward to hosting the **Gulf States Land Trust Meeting**. We could not accomplish any of our work in environmental stewardship without the support of our membership. Enjoy reading the Fall 2007 issue of *The Pelican Post*.

Working for Conservation,

*Walter*

# Kemp's Ridley Turtle

by Rick Wallace

Recently, a Magnolia Springs resident found a Kemp's ridley sea turtle washed up on the beach near Point Clear and donated the shell and bones to the Reserve. The find was somewhat unusual because the population of Kemp's ridley is reduced from historical levels but it should not be a surprise to find this turtle in Mobile Bay.

Kemp's ridley sea turtles are found from the Gulf coasts of Mexico and the United States and the Atlantic coast of North America to as far north as Nova Scotia and Newfoundland. Adults come ashore to nest primarily on a 20 mile stretch of beach near Rancho Nuevo in Tamaulipas, Mexico. Nests are also found on other Mexican beaches and Padre Island, Texas. The recently hatched young are dispersed throughout the Gulf by currents until they reach about eight inches in length and then they tend to enter coastal shallow water habitats. Subadults are said to inhabit shallow waters where eelgrass beds occur and where there are shoal areas of sand, gravel and mud. Blue crabs and other crustaceans are an important part of the diet.



*Kemp's Ridley Turtle  
(Lepidochelys kempii)  
Photo: Kim Bassos-Hull,  
Mote Marine Laboratory*

The odd name, Kemp's ridley, comes from **Richard Kemp** who sent specimens from Florida to Harvard University for identification.

It is commonly said that the Kemp's ridley is the most endangered of the sea turtles and, while still considered endangered, this sea turtle is making a remarkable comeback. The original concern for the conservation status of the Kemp's ridley derived from the documented decline in the number of nests found each year at Rancho Nuevo. A widely repeated report of 40,000 turtles nesting in a single day in 1947 (recently revised to around 6,000 in a single day) was compared to total nest counts of less than 1,000 for the 3 month nesting periods during the 1970's and 1980's. Since that time the number of nests has increased dramatically. In 1985, a low of only 702 nests were counted. In 1995 there were nearly 2,000 nests and, amazingly, in 2006, 12,143 nests – a six fold increase in 11 years.

This impressive increase is attributable primarily to the efforts of the Mexican government, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, several turtle conservation groups and the seafood industry. These unlikely partners have supported nest protection at Rancho Nuevo for many years resulting in large reductions in egg poaching, predation by wildlife, and losses due to other natural causes. These efforts, combined with widespread use of turtle excluder devices by the shrimp industry, have resulted in there being 17 times more nests than in the 1980's.

Perhaps more impressive is the number of hatchlings that now emerge from the nests. In 1996 an estimated 119,000 hatchling turtles emerged from nests to enter the sea. By 2007, the number of emerging hatchlings had reached 782,000.



*Photo courtesy Texas Parks and  
Wildlife Department © 2006*

It should be noted that the number of nests is only an index of the population size. Obviously, only females nest, they may not nest until they are seven to fifteen years old, and they may only nest every other year. Clearly there are lot more turtles than just the counted nests. On the other hand, females nest more than once in a season so the 12,000 nests represent an estimated 4,800 nesting females.

W E E K S B A Y  
*Native Plant Sale*  
1 4 t h A N N U A L

Friday, Saturday, & Sunday  
October 12 - 14, 2007  
8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Safe Harbor at Weeks Bay  
Across US Hwy. 98 from  
Weeks Bay Reserve



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



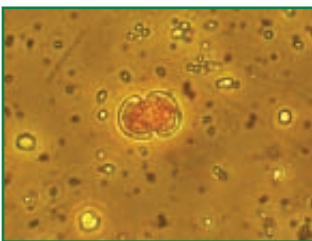
## Fish Kills & Harmful Algal Blooms

Reserve staff, in collaboration with the Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH) lab in Mobile, **Dr. Hugh MacIntyre's** lab at the Dauphin Island Sea Lab and Alabama Department of Marine Resources staff, have been monitoring and investigating several instances of fish kills and algal blooms this summer. There was a fish kill in the Magnolia River in June that consisted almost entirely of Gulf menhaden. In July, we have had several fish kills within Weeks Bay. Two were localized kills that consisted of many different species and one was a more widespread kill of only violet gobies. This last is especially mysterious because violet gobies are rather resistant to changing conditions, including low dissolved oxygen.



*Gulf menhaden (Brevoortia patronus) is a common fish found in Weeks Bay and all along the northern Gulf Coast. This illustration is from Diane Rome Peebles of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.*

Many interested parties have asked about the causes of these fish kills. Known causes of fish kills fall into two broad categories that are usually interrelated: presence of a toxin and low levels of dissolved oxygen (DO). Toxins may be introduced through chemical spills or other forms of pollution or through harmful algal blooms (HABs). Chemical spills and pollution can also cause a sudden decrease in DO. An HAB is when there is a proliferation of an alga that negatively affects natural resources or humans. Some species of planktonic algae produce toxins that become concentrated when populations levels increase. Whether toxic or not, an algal bloom can cause DO levels to drop. Although planktonic algae produce oxygen via the

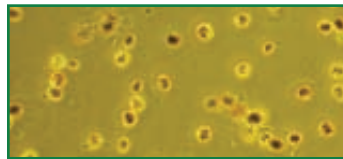


*Karlodinium micrum, a dinoflagellate, is known to produce toxins when populations reach high levels. This photo was taken by Carol Dorsey and Bill Smith of the ADPH.*

process of photosynthesis, they also use oxygen through respiration. Photosynthesis produces oxygen only during daylight hours and many HAB algae are not that efficient at photosynthesis anyway. When a bloom begins to die off, the dead algae are consumed by aquatic bacteria, further reducing DO. DO is also lost when terrestrial organic material (such as dead

leaves) is washed into a body of water where it then decomposes. Of course, the aquatic system is further stressed in the warmer months because as the temperature increases, the concentration of oxygen possible in water decreases.

Reserve staff, with the help of **Bill Smith** and **Carol Dorsey** of the Alabama Department of Public Health, has identified two algal blooms in Weeks Bay this year. A *Prorocentrum* bloom occurred in February with counts reaching 42 million cells per liter in Weeks Bay and even higher numbers in Mobile Bay. In July we had a smaller *Karlodinium* bloom with counts approaching 7 million cells per liter. *Prorocentrum* is not known to produce toxins in this area but *Karlodinium* is a known toxin producer and this bloom occurred close to the same time as the violet goby fish kill. Samples from this bloom are being analyzed for toxins as this goes to press.



*Prorocentrum minimum, a dinoflagellate, produces what is known as "mahogany tides". This photo was taken by Carol Dorsey and Bill Smith of the ADPH.*

As you can see, the many causes of fish kills and HABs are often interrelated. Determining a direct cause effect relationship for a specific fish kill can be difficult. However, the ultimate causes are more obvious and we can simplify them to these: **loss of wetland habitat and riparian buffers**, and, **increase in impervious surfaces**. Wetlands reduce nutrients that fuel algal blooms through a variety of processes. They are traps or "sinks" for organic material, both terrestrial and aquatic in origin. Impervious surfaces increase the speed of water as it moves through the landscape. This increased speed moves more terrestrial materials into the rivers and bays and reduces the amount of nutrients taken up by remaining wetlands. Of course, increased impervious surface increases the likelihood of floods and droughts and increases the temperature of the water, further stressing the oxygen cycle. As development increases and wetland habitat decreases, we will see more harmful algal blooms and more fish kills in Weeks Bay.



*Violet goby (Gobiodes broussonetti) is a common resident of Weeks Bay. It likes the mud bottoms and is tolerant of the rapidly changing environmental conditions found here. This photo was taken by Maggie Edmondson.*

The Foundation has authorized \$5,000 from the **Scott Ireland** Memorial Water Quality Fund to be utilized to fund research to determine the source of these fish kills. Look for updates in future issues of *The Pelican Post*.

# 2007 River Cleanup

The Eleventh Annual Weeks Bay Area River Cleanup was held on Saturday, June 9, 2007 at the Fish River Marina. Volunteers picked up debris by boat, canoe, kayak and vehicle from Weeks Bay, Fish and Magnolia Rivers and their tributaries.



*Cleanup veteran, Paul Dowsey, unloads batteries found on Polecat Creek at County Road 9.*

**Sharon Wheeler** and Boy Scout Troop 97 of Magnolia Springs brought 15 scouts and leaders to clean up Fish River at U.S. Highway 98. The Middle Bay Sportsmans Association patrolled the bay and rivers with nine of its members in boats. **Tony Greathouse** paddled around Fish River picking up trash then was the lucky winner of a kayak donated by **Tom Schlinkert** of Elberta. Long time cleanup participants **Katherine Allen** and son, **Will**; **Mike, Alesha, Moriah** and **Morgan Ray**; and **Tommy and Sherry Nelson** were a few of the River Cleanup veterans present at the 2007 event.



*Scouts of Magnolia Springs Troop 97 assisted by James Shelton (far left) dispose of trash collected under the U.S. Highway 98 Fish River bridge.*

**Harry Anderson, Joan and Randy Bentz, Joyce and Allan Rochford, Diane Ireland and Paul Dowsey** helped fill the dumpster, assist with registration and prepare lunch for hungry cleanup participants. **James and Charlie, sons of Michael Shelton,** Reserve Watershed Coordinator and cleanup organizer, aided in the retrieval of a derelict boat from the marsh near the mouth of Magnolia River. Including two derelict boats, it is estimated that 10,000 pounds of debris were removed from area waters and bridge crossings. Unusual items included about 40 tires, 13 car/boat batteries, about 100 feet of floating sediment boom, chairs, a small safe, grills and a television.



*Harry Anderson, Reserve Volunteer, adds one more bucket to the River Cleanup dumpster.*

Weeks Bay Area River Cleanup 2007 was part of Alabama Power's Renew Our Rivers Campaign for the first time which provided volunteer shirts. Generous sponsorship was provided by Weeks Bay Watershed Project and its Citizens Advisory Committee, the Baldwin County Soil and Water Conservation District, the Baldwin County Commission, the Fairhope Single Tax Corporation, **Greer Radcliff, Tom Schlinkert,** Bay Animal Clinic North, the Reserve and the Foundation.

# Safe Harbor Arboretum

Safe Harbor, the former recreational vehicle park across U.S. Highway 98 from the Reserve Interpretive Center, is being transformed into a natural area. As the concrete slabs are removed, native trees are being planted to take their place. This restoration project not only enhances the natural beauty of the site, but is intended to function as an educational arboretum to showcase many of the trees that are native to South Alabama.



The Baldwin County Master Gardeners are working with the Weeks Bay Volunteers, contributing their time, expertise, and financial support to this ongoing restoration project at Reserve. These two organizations have written and been awarded grants from the Alabama Urban Forestry Association and the Alabama State Master Gardeners' Association. They have also contributed funds directly from their own memberships. The Foundation has generously provided matching funds for the installation of a well, pump and irrigation equipment needed to maintain and expand the arboretum.

Nearly 50 native trees have been planted so far, with volunteer labor, in the first area being restored, just north of the volunteer center in the park. Each of the 25 species is identified with an attractive sign. Some of the native trees which have been planted include Longleaf Pine, White Oak, Catalpa, and the endangered Loblolly Bay. An adjacent second site along the canal will be planted in the fall.

The arboretum at Safe Harbor will be an important educational tool in the future, and this worthwhile project at the Reserve is a powerful example of what can be accomplished when volunteer groups join forces.

The Foundation purchased this property in 1997 and sold it to the State of Alabama in 2004 so that it could be included in the Reserve.

# Volunteer Spotlight



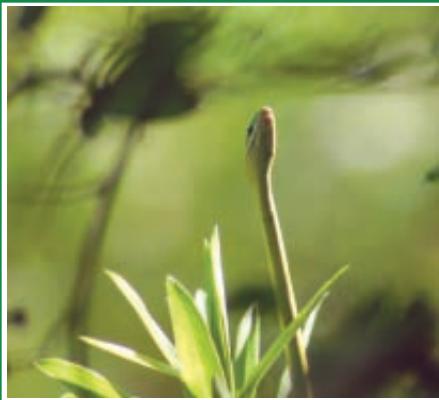
**Mary Murchison** has been a member of the Foundation Board of Directors for over 10 years, and currently serves as secretary. She is the Municipal Judge of the City of Foley and a practicing attorney. She was born in Foley and has practiced law in Baldwin County for 29 years. She and her husband, **John Nelson**, reside in Lillian, Alabama, and have two daughters, **Mary Marks** and **Lockett**. Mary Marks is a student of the Alabama School of Math & Science in Mobile and Lockett attends St. Benedict School in Elberta. In addition to her work with the Foundation, Mary currently serves on the Board of Directors of the Baldwin County Mental Health Association, and is involved in numerous other civic organizations including the Performing Arts Association, Friends of Perdido Bay, Clean Beach, and YMCA of Foley.

When asked what is unique about her work with the Weeks Bay Foundation, Mary replied, “Weeks Bay is a wonderful place for all ages: the Reserve’s Interpretive Center, the educational exhibits, the pitcher plant bog, the protected areas of Weeks Bay and the staff of the Reserve and Foundation. It is a pleasure to serve as the secretary of the Foundation and to work to help ensure the protection of ecologically-sensitive properties for future generations.”

## 2007 Photo Contest Winners!

The 8th Annual Weeks Bay Photography Contest was recently conducted by the Foundation. There were 131 entries in this year’s contest. The winning photos were displayed during the month of July in the Wilson Gallery of the Eastern Shore Art Center. They are also displayed on the Foundation’s website, [www.weeksbay.org](http://www.weeksbay.org). Thanks to all who submitted the beautiful pictures of coastal Alabama’s natural wonders.

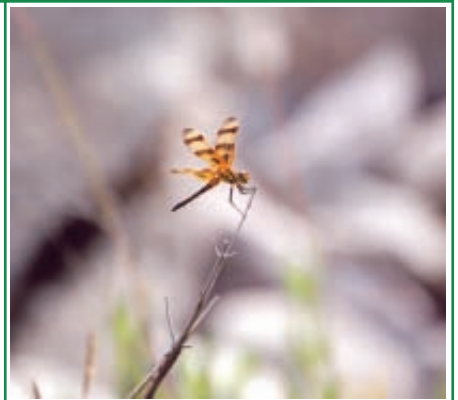
Junior Fauna



1st Place  
Sarah Diard



2nd Place  
Chase Diard



3rd Place  
Chase Diard

Junior Flora



1st Place  
Sarah Diard



2nd Place  
Bess Diard



3rd Place  
Bess Diard

*Junior Habitat*



**1st Place  
Chase Diard**

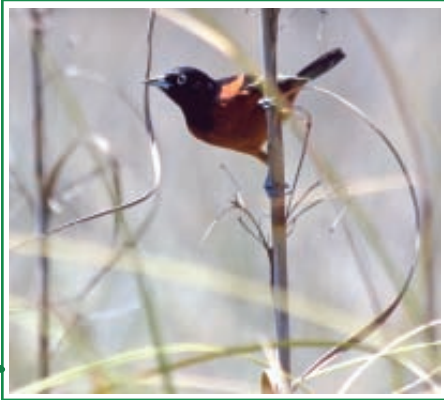


**2nd Place  
Bess Diard**



**3rd Place  
Sarah Diard**

*Open Fauna*



**1st Place  
Dorie Parsons**



**2nd Place  
Patrick C. Kenny**



**3rd Place  
Patrick C. Kenny**

*Open Flora*



**1st Place  
Sherry Stimpson-Frost**



**2nd Place  
Cheri Forte**



**3rd Place  
Marlin Gipson**

*Open Habitat*



**1st Place  
Dorie Parsons**



**2nd Place  
Dianne Golemon-Herzog**



**3rd Place  
Cecil Thompson**

# Floodplain Management

Over the last several years, flooding caused by tropical events, catastrophic hurricanes and powerful thunderstorms have made headlines and the effects have caused ongoing problems even several years after the initial impact. The Reserve Coastal Training Program, the Association of State Floodplain Managers and several local sponsors hosted a No Adverse Impact (NAI) Workshop on July 18, 2007. The program introduced the 34 participants to the principles of NAI in floodplain management. Students can now return to their communities with the ability to incorporate NAI into all ongoing local activities including master planning and adopting regulatory and policy language. They can also initiate new projects or revise existing programs that address the activities that impact flooding. The program was delivered in the form of a “Toolkit” which assists in the implementation of NAI principles.

**Bruce Baird** and **Alan Lulloff**, Association of State



*Aaron Immel, Volkert; Fran Lowe, City of Mobile; Steve Pumphrey, Volkert and L.G. Adams, Weeks Bay Reserve (from left to right) study maps as part of exercise at the CTP No Adverse Impact workshop.*

Floodplain Managers in Madison, Wisconsin, were the primary instructors. **Carl Ferraro**, ADCNR/State Lands, provided information based on Alabama regulations while **Lannie Smith**, City of Orange Beach, and **Tina Sanchez**, South Alabama Regional Planning Commission (SARPC), discussed local floodplain programs. **Todd Davison**, NOAA Coastal Services Center, presented information on coastal hazards.

The training identified the most effective ways to prevent increased flooding problems and protect property. The benefits of the training for participating communities are preventing flooding from increasing in rapidly developing areas, reducing flood losses over time and avoiding the challenges and lawsuits over causing and aggravating flooding problems. The workshop audience consisted of city and county governments, private engineers, real estate professionals and state coastal

managers. Partners in presenting the educational workshop included the Reserve, ADCNR/State Lands, Baldwin County Soil and Water Conservation District, Auburn University Marine Extension, Gulf Coast Resource Conservation and Development Council, NOAA and SARPC.



*Mike Shelton (standing) outlines No Adverse Impact workshop activity instructions to participants.*

# Exotic Fish Species

Recently **Mr. Hitt W. Arnold** brought a fish to the Reserve that he was unable to identify. He had caught it while fishing for flounder in Fish River, approximately a mile and a half north of the Highway 98 bridge. He said that he had seen at least two more of the same type and size fish in that area. The Reserve staff along with **Drs. John Borom** and **Rick Wallace** identified the fish as a tilapia, an “exotic” species.

Exotic species are plants and animals introduced outside of their native range, either intentionally or accidentally. The occurrence of non-native species in North America has been documented for decades, and most introductions, including many agriculture products, provide positive benefits. However, some non-native species, such as popcorn trees and nutria, overwhelm areas and are considered “invasive” when they negatively impact local ecology by out competing native plants and animals.



Tilapia, also known as Nile Perch, are good to eat and are pond raised and sold in local stores and restaurants. Until recently, it was thought that tilapia could not survive in the wild in our area due to cold water temperatures during the winter months, and therefore could not become invasive. Catching a tilapia in Fish River is cause for concern since this species has been known to become invasive in other areas in the southeastern United States.

Many invasive species of plants and animals have been identified in Florida, Mississippi and the Mobile Bay drainage basin. Please assist in preventing the spread of these species by practicing the following safeguards:

- Empty bait buckets and clean boat trailers in the same place they were filled and launched to prevent introducing species to other water bodies.
- Make an effort to buy and display only native species in aquariums and water gardens and never release a non-native species into the wild.
- Support state and regional management efforts by visiting [www.ProtectYourWaters.net](http://www.ProtectYourWaters.net) to find out how to identify and report invasive species that may be found in our area.

Additional information can be found in the Alabama Marine Information Calendar available free of charge at the Reserve Interpretive Center and other locations.



Want to “make a difference” to conserve and protect Alabama’s abundant wildlife and natural resources? That’s easy and costs a measly \$10. The new vehicle that people can use to contribute to the conservation effort is the Wildlife Heritage License. That license gives the holder privileges to hunt and fish—freshwater fish statewide with hook and line from the bank and to fish in Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries operated public fishing lakes (permits still required), hunt small game (except waterfowl) on wildlife management areas (permits still required) and use Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries operated shooting ranges. A resident who buys a hunting or fishing license would be entitled to limited privileges in addition to whichever basic privilege they purchased.

**Barnett Lawley**, Commissioner of the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, said the Wildlife Heritage License provides a way for people who love nature to be good stewards of our great outdoors. “Everybody who enjoys the outdoors and wildlife doesn’t necessarily hunt or fish,” Lawley said. “This is an avenue for those people who enjoy the outdoors to contribute to conservation. We can get three-to-one matching federal funds to use to purchase habitat; and, the habitat that benefits the wild turkey also benefits the Eastern Bluebird and the Red-tailed Hawk.”

The way the license was created allows conservation officials to count it as a fishing or hunting license.

“That \$10 will go a long way,” Lawley said. “It will go for biology and habitat for all wildlife, not just huntable or fishable wildlife. Before, people who kayak or mountain bike or participate in some other outdoor activity and wanted to participate couldn’t buy a license without a hunter safety course. It’s not mandatory, but it gives these people a way to contribute.”

Lawley said wildlife is being pressured because of rapid growth throughout the state, especially in the coastal region and along the Tennessee Valley Authority managed waterways. “It’s exploding,” Lawley said. “We’ve got to protect our lakes, estuaries and coast line. The money will be used for the whole state, improving and protecting our natural resources. In conjunction with what we’re doing with Forever Wild, we will be able to protect enough wild space for people to enjoy for years and years to come.”

“What we have tried to do is create a positive situation that you can pass on. If we don’t protect and conserve the things that we enjoy—God’s creations—it will be gone. Look at the change in the last 20 years. These programs are so important for passing on values, passing on the appreciation of the outdoors, passing on the need to protect the habitat.” For more information go to [www.outdooralabama.com](http://www.outdooralabama.com).

According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service survey done in 2001, almost as much money is spent on birding (\$626 million) in Alabama as hunting (\$663 million). Nationally in 2006, 12.5 million hunters spent 22.7 billion dollars. Nearly 30 million anglers spent 40.6 billion dollars and over 71 million people spent nearly 45 billion dollars observing, feeding, and photographing wildlife.

Another vehicle that helps preserve habitat for wildlife is the Alabama Coastal BirdFest. Proceeds generated from this event are used to purchase habitat for birds on the Alabama coast. The 2007 festival is scheduled for October 18-21 in Fairhope. It will focus on the Alabama Coastal Birding Trail, Mobile Bay, and the Mobile Tensaw Delta. Field trips will leave from the new Five Rivers – Alabama’s Delta Resource Center on the Blakeley River in Spanish Fort. For more information go to [www.alabamacoastalbirdfest.com](http://www.alabamacoastalbirdfest.com).

It is important to remember that the choices we make not only affect our lives but often affect other creatures around us as well. It is also important for us to remember that we are the recipients of the choices that past generations have made, and that our choices will affect the quality of life for future generations. The purchase of an Alabama Wildlife Heritage License and attending the Alabama Coastal BirdFest are two good choices that we can make.

# BirdFest 2007



This year's Alabama Coastal BirdFest, October 18-21, will feature some favorite trips and events from years past as well as several exciting new trips, said **Fran Morley**, BirdFest coordinator.

"The biggest change this year is that all of our trips will be staged from the new Five Rivers – Alabama's Delta Resource Center on the causeway. It's a beautiful facility located half way between Mobile and the Eastern Shore, so we think it will be convenient for people coming from any direction," Morley said. "Also, at the suggestion of many birders, some of our trips will be leaving a little earlier in the morning and that should make for improved birding."

Five Rivers is also the site of BirdFest's Thursday night reception. "Not only will guests get to see the wonderful birding photos of **Dave Cagnolatti**, our presenter that night, but they'll also get to enjoy the beautiful views of the Delta from the boardwalks and porches at Five Rivers," Morley said.

New trips for 2007 include a Backyard Wildscaping tour of homes and parks on the Eastern Shore; a trip that will cover birding spots at Five Rivers, Meaher State Park, and Daphne Bayfront parks; and several new boat trips departing from Five Rivers. Favorite trips to Bayou La Batre, Fort Morgan, Dauphin Island, and other locations will be repeated this year.

As before, the Friday night barbeque and seafood dinner with a silent auction and speaker, takes place at the James P. Nix Center in Fairhope. The speaker will be **Dr. Geoff Hill**, ornithologist and professor at Auburn University. Dr. Hill, recognized expert on bird coloration and author of several books, including *A Red Bird in a Brown Bag* and *Ivorybill Hunters*, has been heading up the team searching for the Ivory-billed Woodpecker in the swamps of northwest Florida.



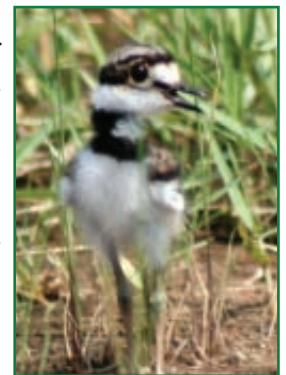
*Dr. Geoff Hill*

"We know that Dr. Hill and his team have heard the birds' distinctive calls and seen evidence of nests and feeding, and we hope they will have some conclusive proof by October, but in any event, he will have fascinating stories to tell about the search," Morley said. "Who would have guessed that this elusive bird might be living so close to us here on the Gulf Coast?"

Registration is open for the 2007 Alabama Coastal BirdFest and brochures are available at various public locations. For more information or to register, visit [www.alabamacoastalbirdfest.com](http://www.alabamacoastalbirdfest.com) or call (251) 621-1902.

## Listening to Nature by John Borom

A special thing happens to us when we see wild animals in the woods or along the shore – a mysterious response in us that comes close to our hearts. The special feeling is even stronger when the animals are unaware of our presence. Our presence in an area usually disrupts the animals' natural activity. However, the American Indians invented a way to get around this. It involved sitting absolutely motionless and waiting for the natural world to return to its normal routine. Young people were taught to do this as a way of learning things upon which their survival might depend later in life.



*Killdeer chick*

Choose a place in the woods or along the shore where there are signs of animal activity, or what you think would be attractive to animals. Sit where your profile is broken up by trees, shrubs, or other features in the landscape, and you are hidden by shadows. As you silently melt into the landscape, let the natural activities of animals come back to life around you. It helps to wear clothes that blend with the surroundings, and approach the site quietly. Sit still and quietly for at least 20 minutes, and do not expect to see a lot of large animals although some may come close. Your experience will be more enjoyable if you free your mind of expectations, paying attention to what you do see and hear: busy insects, fiddler crabs, singing birds, walking lizards, and listening as the breezes bring the vegetation around you to life.

# Fall 2007 Calendar

## September

- 3 **Labor Day Holiday.** The Interpretive Center will be closed. All trails and boardwalks will remain open for your walking and sightseeing pleasure.
- 4-5 **Wetland Rapid Assessment Procedure Workshop (WRAP).** Weeks Bay Auditorium, 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. For more information, contact **Mike Shelton** at the Reserve, (251) 928-9792.
- 8 **Volunteer Water Monitor Training** to train water monitors as part of the Alabama Water Watch. Weeks Bay Auditorium, 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. For more information, contact **Mike Shelton** at the Reserve, (251) 928-9792.
- 11 **Citizens Advisory Committee meeting** for the Weeks Bay Watershed Project. Weeks Bay Auditorium, 6:00 p.m.
- 11 **Guest Lecture Series.** "Bird Nests in Alabama" presented by **John Trent**, Bird Specialist, ADCNR Lands Division. Five Rivers – Alabama's Delta Resource Center, 7:30 p.m. Bring a friend.
- 20 **Weeks Bay Advisory Committee meeting.** Weeks Bay Auditorium, 2:00 p.m.

## October

- 2-5 **Wetland Identification and Delineation Workshop.** Weeks Bay Auditorium, 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. For more information, contact **Mike Shelton** at the Reserve, (251) 928-9792.
- 8 **Columbus Day Holiday.** The Interpretive Center will be closed. All trails and boardwalks will remain open for your walking and sightseeing pleasure.
- 9 **Guest Lecture Series.** "Shallow Water Shark Research in Coastal Alabama" presented by **Dr. John Dindo**, Dauphin Island Sea Lab. Five Rivers – Alabama's Delta Resource Center, 7:30 p.m. Bring a friend.
- 12-14 **Weeks Bay Native Plant Sale.** Safe Harbor, across U.S. Highway 98 from the Reserve Interpretive Center, 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

- 15 **Coastal Clean Up Weeks Bay Zone.** Meet at the Fish River Marina. For more information, contact **Eric Brunden** at the Reserve, (251) 928-9792.

- 18-21 **Alabama Coastal BirdFest.** For more information, go to [www.alabamacoastalbirdfest.com](http://www.alabamacoastalbirdfest.com).

## November

- 1 **Gulf States Land Trust Meeting.** Weeks Bay Reserve, 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. For more information, contact **Walter Ernest**, (251) 990-5004.
- 2 **Land Conservation and Financial Strategies for Professionals and Landowners: Advanced Seminar on Conservation Easements & Land Stewardship** with **Stephen Small**, The Grand Hotel, Point Clear, 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. For more information, contact **Mike Shelton** at the Reserve, (251) 928-9792.
- 12 **Veterans Day Holiday.** The Interpretive Center will be closed. All trails and boardwalks will remain open for your walking and sightseeing pleasure.
- 13 **Guest Lecture Series.** "The Cerulean Warbler in Alabama" presented by **Eric Soehren**, Terrestrial Zoologist, ADCNR Lands Division. Five Rivers – Alabama's Delta Resource Center, 7:30 p.m. Bring a friend.
- 22 **Thanksgiving Holiday.** The Interpretive Center will be closed. All trails and boardwalks will remain open for your walking and sightseeing pleasure.

## Academy of Arts & Sciences



Students from the Academy of Arts & Sciences in Foley toured the Reserve with their science instructor, **Laurel Aikin**. She led the class on an adventure of discovery as they walked the boardwalks and explored the specimen collection in the Interpretive Center. The students spent much time looking at all of the exhibits, habitat models, and diorama. Their excitement was indicative of their interest and, like most classes, the students had a great time viewing the live aquaria room.

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Photo by John Borom

American alligator  
(*Alligator mississippiensis*)

*"Never a day passes but that I do myself the honor to commune with some of nature's varied forms."  
George Washington Carver*