

THE Pelican Post

A quarterly publication - Weeks Bay Foundation



Fall 2008
Vol. 23, No. 3



"Each moment of the year
has its own beauty."

- Ralph Waldo Emerson

Narrow-leaved Sundew
(*Dorsera intermedia*)

From the Executive Director	2
Jack Edwards Event	2
Foundation Accomplishments	3
Public Comment	3
Make a Difference	4
Conservation Award	4
Research Notes	4
Volunteer Spotlight	5
Coastal Discovery	5
Law Benefits Conservation	6
Trainer of the Year	6
Building Dedication	7
Photography Contest	8-9
BirdFest	10
Coastal Training Program	10
Christmas Ornament	11
Global Warming	11
Weeks Bay Explorer	11
Birds and People	12
Art Without Limits	13
River Cleanup	13
Did You Know?	14
Plant Sale	14
Calendar	14-15
Donors	16

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The Weeks Bay Foundation is a non-profit organization whose members work to protect the natural resources of coastal Alabama and to provide assistance and support for the Weeks Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve's goals and programs.

Cover Photo:
 Photography Contest
 Best of Show
 by Richard Dowling
 Prattville

Taken at the Foundation's
 Juniper Preserve.

From the Executive Director...



The Foundation has just completed one of the most successful photography contests in its nine-year history. The Best of Show photograph is featured on the cover of this issue. Enjoy some of the other entries on pages eight and nine.

Also, we have been working diligently towards land trust accreditation. We have submitted our pre-application and our full application to the Land Trust Accreditation Commission. This effort could not have been accomplished without the help of our Accreditation Committee Chair **Dr. Rick Wallace**, our very helpful Administrative Assistant **Marcia Miller**, and the Foundation Board of Directors. **Dr. Robert Keller**, Executive Director of the Mountain Conservation Trust of Georgia, was instrumental in assisting the Foundation by providing technical assistance in submitting our applications. Many such friendships are developed while working for land conservation, and we appreciate Dr. Keller's assistance.

The Foundation congratulates the Reserve on the dedication of the new **Arthur C. "Skipper" Tonsmeire III Weeks Bay Resource Center** and on the arrival of their new educational vessel, the *Weeks Bay Explorer*. **David Morine**, Coastal Land Trust Board member and former Vice President for Land Acquisition for The Nature Conservancy noted, "The completion of this building demonstrates that Weeks Bay has matured and is in its second generation. The Reserve has proven to be one of the best examples of partnerships and successes within the National Estuarine Research Reserve System. What was once a dream is now a reality."

The Foundation looks forward to participating in the 5th Annual **John L. Borom Alabama Coastal BirdFest**, October 16th -19th. This four-day event promotes conservation, education, and stimulates the economy all at the same time. Please go to the Foundation's website, www.weeksbay.org, click on BirdFest, and register today.

Great things are happening at the Reserve and the Foundation. While we thank you for your past support, your continued support is critical.

Enjoy reading the Fall 2008 issue of *The Pelican Post*.

Working for Conservation,

Walter

Gala Evening Honoring Jack Edwards



The Foundation is hosting an event to honor outgoing Board Chairman, **Jack Edwards**. From the inception of the Foundation, Jack has been a dedicated supporter of our work in conservation. Join us on December 4 for an evening of food, drink, music and dancing at the beautiful, newly-rebuilt **Fairhope Yacht Club** overlooking Mobile Bay and the Fairhope Marina. Music will be provided by **The Wayfarers**. Ticket price will be \$50. For more details, or to purchase tickets, go to our website, www.weeksbay.org, or contact the Foundation office at (251) 990-5004.

Foundation Accomplishments

by John Borom

In 1986, Weeks Bay was officially designated as a National Estuarine Research Reserve (Reserve). The Weeks Bay Foundation (Foundation) was incorporated in 1990 to promote public awareness and further fund-raising efforts to benefit the Reserve. It has played a key role in land acquisition efforts, as well as developing educational facilities and activities at the Reserve and throughout Baldwin County. In addition, the Foundation has sponsored research and water quality activities.

The Foundation and its directors were instrumental in the designation of the Reserve and in the acquisition of much of the Reserve lands. Of the 6,525 acres which the Reserve encompasses, 3,380 acres were acquired by the Foundation or were acquired prior to the formation of the Foundation with the technical assistance of its founding directors. In addition, a 684 acre tract on Bayou Sara in Mobile County which had been donated to the Foundation was sold to the Forever Wild Land Trust. This important tract has been designated as a preserve for black bears. The Foundation currently holds title to approximately 60 acres in the Weeks Bay watershed and coastal Alabama. These lands may be transferred to the state in the future to be incorporated into the Reserve. In the meantime, these properties are being preserved for future generations. On one site, a carnivorous plant bog has been restored due to the stewardship efforts of the Foundation. The Foundation was assisted in this effort by a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. As opportunities arise, the Foundation will continue to pursue the acquisition of ecologically-sensitive lands in the Weeks Bay watershed and coastal Alabama.

In 1995, the Foundation funded a live animal display room at the Interpretive Center, developed new exhibits and increased the specimen collection. The following year, the 3,200 foot Boardwalk behind the Interpretive Center was completed as a result of a grant to the Foundation. In 1997, construction of the Kurt G. Wintermeyer Boardwalk over the Weeks Bay carnivorous plant bog was started as a result of both a major gift to the Foundation and a grant. In 1998, the 2,000 foot Kurt G. Wintermeyer Boardwalk was extended to Fish River as a result of a major gift to the Foundation.

In 2006, the Foundation established the Gaynor McCown Environmental Education Fellowship. This program currently provides a teaching assistant to work with school groups visiting the Reserve. Each year, the Foundation hosts a number of events to raise awareness of the Reserve and provide educational experiences for the community. In May, the Kids Fishing Day is held at the Safe Harbor Pond. The pond is stocked with catfish, and local children are invited to spend the day fish-

ing. The Foundation also conducts the Weeks Bay Photography Contest. This event encourages photographers to get out and see the beautiful wildlife and scenery of coastal Alabama. The Foundation also serves as the administrative agent of the John L. Borom Alabama Coastal BirdFest.

Thanks to a generous donation by a Foundation member, numerous water quality activities are done at the Reserve. In addition to funding water quality testing, the Foundation is a sponsor of the annual Baldwin County Water Festival. This event teaches fourth grade students about the pollution contained in storm water runoff, the behavior of pollutants in water and the ecological degradation caused by pollution. The curriculum is designed to instill a general environmental awareness and stewardship ethic in the students.

The renovations of the Foundation office, across from the Reserve, were recently completed. Previous concrete was used for the sidewalks and driveway of the building. The yard will be landscaped with native plants. The Foundation hopes to serve as an example with these environmentally friendly measures.

The mission of the Foundation is to help conserve natural ecosystems, focusing on wildlife and their habitats for the benefit of humanity and coastal biological diversity. By providing opportunities for families, students, teachers and others to enjoy and learn about the natural world, the Foundation and the Reserve are promoting stewardship and developing the next generation of conservation leaders. Thank you for your continued support.

Public Comment

The Land Trust Accreditation Program recognizes land conservation organizations that meet national quality standards for protecting important natural places and working lands forever. The Weeks Bay Foundation is pleased to announce it is applying for accreditation.

The Land Trust Accreditation Commission, an independent program of the Land Trust Alliance, conducts an extensive review of each applicant's policies and programs. Accreditation will allow the Weeks Bay Foundation to achieve a national standard of excellence in the area of land conservation.

The Commission invites public input and accepts signed, written comments on pending applications. Comments must relate to how the Weeks Bay Foundation complies with national quality standards. These standards address the ethical and technical operation of a land trust. For the full list of standards see www.landtrustaccreditation.org/getting-accredited/2008-indicator-practices.

Make a Difference

Your contributions to the Foundation will help the Foundation continue promoting stewardship and developing the next generation of conservation leaders. Please consider making a donation designated to one of the following funds:

Land Acquisition Fund: This is designed to assist in the costs associated with land acquisition activities.

Stewardship Fund: This is designed to assist with the costs associated with long-term stewardship of properties.

Gaynor McCown Environmental Education Fellowship Fund: This was established to assist with the educational outreach activities of the Reserve and Foundation. (This currently funds Education Assistant, **Casey Stephenson**, at the Reserve.)

Scott Ireland Water Quality Fund: This is designed to assist with water quality monitoring and testing activities.

Office Renovation/Landscaping Fund: This is designated to help with the renovation and landscaping of the Foundation office.

Operating Fund: This is utilized to help with the day-to-day activities of the Foundation.

As a 501(c)3, the Foundation can accept gifts of real estate, stocks, and life insurance in addition to donations of cash. If you have questions regarding any of these funds, or other ways to support the Foundation, please contact **Walter Ernest** at (251) 990-5004.

Conservation Award



Margaret Sedlecky has been selected by the Alabama Wildlife Federation as the Conservation Educator of the Year for 2008. The purpose of the Governor's Conservation Achievement Awards program is to promote leadership by example and in turn increase conservation of the natural resources of the State of Alabama. The program is designed to bring about a greater knowledge and awareness of conservation practices and projects, and to give proper recognition to those persons and organizations that make outstanding contributions to the natural resource welfare

of the community and the state.

Margaret has been a science teacher employed by Baldwin County Board of Education for 23 years and has served as the Education Coordinator at the Reserve for the past 13 years.

Research Notes

Hypoxia is a global problem and understanding the sources, effects, and processes are timely and relevant. Hypoxia, or low oxygen levels, has become an evermore present and disturbing problem which has been studied world-wide including in the Gulf Coast region. In Weeks Bay, recent algal blooms and summer hypoxia have been observed, yet little research to

date on the extent, duration, and impact of the sediments on the hypoxic conditions has been conducted. A careful biogeochemical analysis of surface and bottom waters and bay sediments will provide more substantive evi-



dence for pinpointing the spatial and temporal variability of hypoxia in the bay. A research project implemented by Mississippi State University (MSU) Professor of Geosciences, **Dr. Karen McNeal**, and graduate student, **John Eric Ezell**, aims to determine the state and spatial extent of bottom water hypoxic conditions in Weeks Bay and the associated sedimentary biogeochemical characteristics that potentially influence these conditions. The MSU scientists will employ a wide range of analytical techniques and field sampling methods to measure constituents in the water column and in the sediment at twelve locations in the bay. They will sample transects in four quadrants of the bay and focus their efforts in areas that have had recent algal growth in the surface waters, in order to determine the effects of benthic pelagic-coupling on hypoxia. The broader impacts of their results include the ability to determine the potential onset, the severity, and the spatial extent of potential and existing hypoxic events in Weeks Bay, as well as the future need for further work to measure the impact to the endemic organisms.

Volunteer Spotlight



We have a pleasant new face at the front desk. **Wendell Smith** is a native of Mississippi. He was born in Ripley, grew up in Winona and graduated from Mississippi State in Business. Soon after graduating, Wendell joined the Army and was stationed at the Induction Center in Dallas, Texas. He said that it was fortunate that he was able to live off-base, because he met **Mae Dean**, his future wife, in his apartment complex. They have two daughters, three grandchildren and one great grandchild. Wendell and Mae Dean will be celebrating their 50th anniversary on December 31!

After leaving the Army, Wendell began working for General Electric, and after a stint “in the frozen north,” in Bloomington, Illinois, he was transferred back to the sunnier climes of Dallas and then to Memphis. Wendell eventually left GE but continued to work with electrical equipment, as a manufacturers’ representative in the states of Tennessee, Mississippi, and Arkansas, and later started his own industrial electrical equipment business.

Wendell describes himself as easily bored, so after retiring, he has held down a number of interesting part-time jobs. He and Mae Dean have volunteered at some of our national parks, including our country’s first national Monument at Devil’s Tower in Wyoming. They both love traveling around in their RV, and learning about these wonderful natural treasures by volunteering in the visitor centers.

When asked how they decided on Baldwin County as their home base, Wendell explained that while living in Jackson, Mississippi they traveled once a year to Orange Beach, and really liked the area. When they found the perfect lot in “Country Place,” on Highway 9, they decided to buy it. Three months after moving in, Wendell came into the Reserve to sign up as a volunteer. He said that he thought the Reserve was a neat place and that he really loves to talk to people. Wendell is ideally suited to greet and welcome our visitors at the reception desk, where he can be found on Tuesday mornings. We are delighted that he chose to live in Baldwin County, and we are very fortunate to have Wendell as one of our treasured volunteers.

Coastal Discovery by Audrey Preston

This summer, for the first time ever, the Reserve teamed up with the Coastal Wonders Environmental Education Program to offer a week-long day camp for local nature-loving 5th and 6th graders. Reserve and Coastal Wonders staff members hope that this camp will serve as an experiment for future collaborative summer programs. Eleven “explorers” attended the Coastal Discovery Day Camp July 7th – 11th and spent part of their day at the Reserve and the other part with Coastal Wonders staff at Beckwith Camp and Conference Center. With (mostly) cooperative weather and access to the beautiful natural resources and well-trained staff of both facilities, the Day



Canoe outing on Weeks Bay tidal creek.

Camp was a great success! The science activities, craft projects, and games for each day of the Day Camp were planned around central ecological themes such as “Watershed Wonders” and



Fiddler crab experience at Camp Beckwith's “Marsh Pit.”

“Fabulous Fauna.” Between scavenger hunts on the nature trail, examining tadpoles under dissecting microscopes, canoeing up a tidal creek on Weeks Bay, making their own paper, and splashing around in the Beckwith bayside swimming pool, the explorers’ days were filled with fun and learning. Look for information on summer 2009 programs in the spring edition of *The Pelican Post*, on the Coastal Wonders website, www.coastalwonders.org and in your local newspapers. Next year, the staff plans to expand the Coastal Discovery Day Camp to include multiple sessions catering to a wider range of ages. We hope to welcome your children next year!

Law Benefits Conservation

Generous landowners who donate voluntary conservation agreements, also known as conservation easements, to the Weeks Bay Foundation are inspired by many things: they love coastal Alabama, they feel connected to their land, and they wish to leave a legacy for future generations. This inspiration is at the heart of our work to permanently protect valuable natural resources. But for almost all of our donors, donating a conservation easement is a major financial decision, and the federal income tax deduction that comes with a donation helps make easements possible for landowners in our community.

Congress recently passed a law extending for two years the tax benefits of protecting private land for many landowners (which had expired at the end of 2007). The legislation improves the tax incentive for conservation easements by allowing conservation easement donors to:

- Deduct up to 50% of their adjusted gross income in any year (up from 30%);
- Deduct up to 100% of their adjusted gross income if the majority of that income came from farming, ranching or forestry; and
- Continue to take deductions for as long as 16 years (up from 6 years).

Congress also passed tighter appraisal standards for such gifts, and stronger penalties for appraisers who violate the standards.

The Land Trust Alliance led a coalition of more than 50 groups in urging Congress to approve this new law. The Alliance is a national organization that sets national standards for conservation organizations like ours, provides training and networking opportunities, and represents the land trust community in Washington, DC. The Foundation has been a member of the Alliance for five years.

Each day we are touched by the generous and inspired landowners who work with us. The new law

will make it easier for others in South Alabama to build on their love of our coastal resources and permanently protect coastal Alabama.

To learn more about these new developments, visit www.weeksbay.org or www.LandTrustAlliance.org.

Trainer of the Year

Efforts to get citizens involved in water quality and get them in the field continues at the Reserve. In most cases, local residents get involved through Weeks Bay Water Watch, the area chapter of Alabama Water Watch. Also, in most cases, **Michael Shelton**, Reserve Watershed/Coastal Training Program Coordinator, is the trainer who teaches volunteers how to use the testing kit and educates them on the principles behind each method. For his hard work, Mike was recognized by Alabama Water Watch as the “2007 Trainer of the Year” for hosting the most training workshops. Mike is one of over thirty-five certified monitor trainers spread throughout



the state. Before Water Watch allows a volunteer to begin testing the water chemistry, bacteria or biological assessment, the citizen must attend a training workshop. The workshop is led by a trainer who has also been trained and certified. The certification of both trainers and volunteer monitors is part of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency-approved quality assurance plan held by the Alabama Water Watch program. The quality assurance plan is in place to assure that the data collected by citizens is collected properly and is accurate. Training workshops are standardized so that volunteers on the Fish, Fowl, Black Warrior or Tallapoosa rivers get the same expert instruction. Mike has been offering training sessions since 2001 and schedules training workshops for groups of 10 or more at Weeks Bay or in the surrounding area. For more information about Alabama Water Watch, go to www.alabamawaterwatch.org. Water quality information on streams in each of the thirteen major basins in Alabama is available free at the click of a mouse. Contact Mike at the Reserve at (251) 928-9792 for the dates and times for the water chemistry, bacteria or biological assessment certification workshops.

Building Dedication

by David Rainer

Now that the new facilities at the head of Weeks Bay are complete, the Reserve will begin incorporating the new buildings into valuable educational space for Weeks Bay Reserve programs. The facilities will also carry a new name.

In a ceremony at the recent Forever Wild Board meeting, the facility, which replaces structures damaged by Hurricane Ivan, was officially named the **Arthur C. “Skipper” Tonsmeire III Weeks Bay Resource Center** by proclamation of Alabama **Governor Bob Riley**. These buildings will support conservation programs largely for education, stewardship and outreach - in particular the Coastal Training Program.

Dr. John Borom, avid conservationist and president of the Mobile Bay Audubon Society, cited the tireless efforts of Fairhope’s Tonsmeire in the creation and ongoing support of programs like the Forever Wild Land Trust, Coastal Land Trust, Weeks Bay Foundation, Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge and Weeks Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve. “There are many other significant and good



accomplishments I could have mentioned that have made life better for us all,” Borom said

of Tonsmeire. “However, the one thing in all these endeavors is that a key person worked hard behind the scenes to set things in motion. This person understands the Native American proverb, ‘We did not inherit the Earth from our forefathers. We hold it in trust for future generations.’ He has helped forge partnerships with local firms, public agencies and conservation organizations to protect thousands of acres of Gulf Coast wetlands that safeguard wildlife habitat, increase outdoor recreation opportunities and safeguard seafood productivity.”

The new facility includes sister buildings that will complement activities in each, according to **L.G. Adams**, Manager of Weeks Bay Reserve. The Education Building will provide a classroom that will be used for a variety of activities. These will be directed toward many different audiences that include K-12 to grad-

uate students and researchers, continuing education groups, environmental organizations and enthusiasts, conservation partners, non-profit organizations, and the local community and public at large. Activities will include K-12 local and regional school class visits, formal workshops and conservation class and course work, internet-based learning opportunities, field-based experiential learning activities, summer estuary camps, local and regional conferences, research symposia, and public and community meetings.

“The Coastal Training Program at the Reserve will utilize the site for programs that transfer technical information to coastal managers for the purpose of making best management decisions that will better conserve and protect natural resources in coastal Alabama,” Adams said. “The educational classroom will provide an opportunity to highlight natural resources of the Weeks Bay estuary and raise public awareness of conservation in coastal Alabama.”



The Multi-Purpose Building will be used to support activities in the

Commissioner Barnett Lawley (Left) recognizes Skipper Tonsmeire (right) in dedication of the Weeks Bay Resource Center by Governor Proclamation with (Center L to R) Dr. John Borom and James H. Griggs, Lands Director.

Education Building, as well as provide space for research, stewardship and outreach activities at Weeks Bay Reserve.

Visit www.outdooralabama.com/public-lands/stateLands/WeeksBay/ for more information on the facilities and programs at Weeks Bay Reserve.

The Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources promotes wise stewardship, management and enjoyment of Alabama’s natural resources through five divisions: Marine Police, Marine Resources, State Lands, State Parks, and Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries. To learn more about ADCNR, visit www.outdooralabama.com.

David Rainer is the Outdoor Writer for the Information & Education Section of the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

2008 Winners

The 9th Annual Weeks Bay Photography Contest had over 100 entries. The sponsors were the Foundation, the Reserve, and Eastern Shore Art Center. The contest often involves family members enjoying natural resources together while taking photographs. **Robin Fitzhugh**, Director of the Eastern Shore Art Center, noted, "This contest has done an outstanding job of promoting art and raising awareness of Coastal Alabama's flora, fauna and habitats." The winning photos were displayed during the month of July at the Eastern Shore Art Center, and are also featured on Foundation's website www.weeksbay.org.



Weeks Bay Photography Contest

1st - Dorie Parsons
Orange Beach



2nd - Kathy Hicks
Gulf Shores



3rd - Kathy Hicks
Gulf Shores



Open Fauna

1st - Robert Hicks
Fairhope



2nd - Sherry
Stimpson Frost
Fairhope



3rd - Lisa Comer
Silver Hill



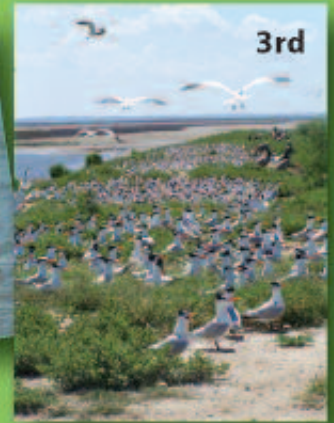
Open Flora

1st - Sarah Diard
Fairhope

2nd - Sarah Diard
Fairhope

3rd - Jamie Rasinen
Gulf Shores

Junior Fauna



1st - Chase Diard
Fairhope

2nd - Jamie Rasinen
Gulf Shores

3rd - Bess Diard
Fairhope

Junior Flora



1st - Chase Diard
Fairhope

2nd - Sarah Diard
Fairhope

3rd - Jamie Rasinen
Gulf Shores

Junior Habitat



1st - Randall Prewitt
Mobile

2nd - Sherry
Stimpson Frost
Fairhope

3rd - Karen Diard
Fairhope

Open Habitat



BirdFest

by D. Fran Morley

Now in its fifth year, the Alabama Coastal BirdFest continues to offer great opportunities for locals and visitors to enjoy our great outdoors.

“The focus of BirdFest is birding, of course,” said **John Borom**, president of Mobile Bay Audubon Society and BirdFest chairman, “but we realize that for a lot of our guests, it’s also about just getting out to see the natural beauty of the Mobile-Tensaw Delta, Weeks Bay, Bon Secour, Fort Morgan, and the other places that we take our guided tours.”

Since the first BirdFest in 2004, registered visitors from more than 17 states and Canada have taken part in the tours and evening events. “We know that for some of our guests, BirdFest will be their first visit to Alabama, or even the Gulf Coast, so we’re happy to open their eyes to everything we have here,” noted **Jim Griggs**, director of Alabama State Lands, one of BirdFest’s major partners.

New this year are two trips to Weeks Bay that include birding on the forest boardwalk and at the Pitcher Plant Bog and a cruise on the new *Weeks Bay Explorer*, a 40-passenger pontoon boat. “We’re happy to offer the extended guided tours to Weeks Bay this year. I’m sure these will be popular, so I encourage people to register early,” said **Fran Morley**, BirdFest ‘nestkeeper.’

BirdFest includes additional boat trips into the Mobile-Tensaw Delta onboard *The Pelican*, leaving from Five Rivers Delta Resource Center, and on the *Delta Explorer*, which docks at Blakeley State Historic Park, and the *A.E. Verrill* excursions on Mobile Bay from Dauphin Island Sea Lab.

This year, the Alabama Coastal BirdFest takes on a new name. At the suggestion of **Barnett Lawley**, commissioner of the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, and by proclamation of Alabama **Governor Bob Riley**, the event’s official name is the **John L. Borom Alabama Coastal BirdFest**. “John has done so much over the years to further the cause of conservation, including, of course,

work leading to the establishment of the Weeks Bay National Estuarine Reserve and Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge. This is a fitting honor,” noted Jim Griggs.

For more information about this year’s BirdFest or to register online, visit www.AlabamaCoastalBirdFest.com. Mail-in registration is also accepted and brochures are available at many public locations. Call (251) 621-1902 to request a brochure by mail.

Coastal Training Program

The Coastal Training Program (CTP) continues to upgrade its services, capabilities and partnerships. In order to achieve a better understanding of the profes-



Wade Hurt, University of Florida, identifies wetland soil characteristics for students at CTP Hydric Soils workshop

sional training landscape, Weeks Bay and Grand Bay (Mississippi) National Estuarine Reserves collaborated on a new market analysis. The two Reserves, being so close in proximity and sharing similar audiences, surveyed approximately 40 other groups and agencies which conduct professional training along the northern Gulf Coast. Results of the market analysis are being used to identify training target audiences and future partnerships to better meet coastal training needs. A survey of the needs of professionals and resource managers has been developed and the needs assessment was conducted in July and August. The information gleaned from both surveys helps CTP identify partners, resources, expertise and topics to meet the training needs of Gulf Coast decision makers. Better informed and educated resource managers make better decisions regarding conservation, protection and use of sensitive and ever-crowding coastal land and water.

While all the surveying was going on, CTP hosted several workshops dealing with wetland topics and the use of GIS tools. In collaboration with the Alabama Coastal Foundation, a wetland regulation and compliance workshop was held in the Fowl River comm-

unity of Mobile County. The audience consisted of realtors, developers and consultants. Officials from the Alabama Department of Environmental Management and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers walked the audience through the myriad of state and federal regulations, how to remain in compliance with those regulations and how to reduce wetland impacts. With Grand Bay Reserve, CTP hosted a two and a half day wetland soil workshop with **Wade Hurt** of the University of Florida and author of the Hydric Soils Indicator manual.



Students listen to instructor, Wade Hurt (right center), as he explains characteristics of wetland soil cross section.

Twenty state and federal regulators and consultants attended. To wrap up a busy training schedule, two 2-day GIS application classes were held at the Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College in Gautier. Instructors from the NOAA Coastal Services Center in Charleston, South Carolina, demonstrated several new applications of geospatial computing tools. In the Coastal Inundation workshop, participants from both Alabama and Mississippi learned about the different types of coastal inundation, ways to map flood areas in the coastal environment, data and methodology limitations, and practical ways to apply this information to support state and local planning efforts. For more information on upcoming CTP events, contact **Mike Shelton**, CTP Coordinator, at (251) 928-9792.

10 Things You Can Do To Fight Global Warming!

Source: Environmental Defense Fund

1. Recycle and buy minimally packed goods as much as possible.
2. Wash clothes in cold or warm water, not hot.
3. Install low-flow shower heads to use less water.
4. Run dishwasher only when full and don't use heat to dry dishes.
5. Replace standard light bulbs with compact fluorescent bulbs.
6. Plug air leaks in windows & doors to increase energy efficiency.
7. Replace old appliances with energy-efficient models.
8. Walk, bike, carpool or use public transportation when possible.
9. Adjust your thermostat-lower in winter, higher in summer.
10. Share these simple steps with friends and family!

Weeks Bay Explorer

The *Weeks Bay Explorer* was delivered to the Reserve on July 15. This new pontoon boat is available for educational tours on Weeks Bay and the Fish and Magnolia Rivers. Group tours will be scheduled for schools, conservation organizations, and other environmental groups. This vessel is twelve feet wide and 45 feet long with a capacity of 30-40 passengers. The name was selected through nominations by Reserve volunteers. Many great names were submitted and through a selection process, volunteer **Harry Anderson's** won him a special cruise on the maiden voyage.

The vessel was purchased through a grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration supporting Baldwin Education Programs at the Reserve. This new boat will increase the capacity of educational tours at the Reserve. The Trident Pontoon boat was built by the Florida Trading Company, Inc. in Tavares, Florida and has been under construction since the beginning of the year.



Weeks Bay Explorer

Christmas Ornament



Look for the **2008 Weeks Bay Christmas ornament** on sale soon at the Reserve and the Foundation office.

Birds and People

Birds are sensitive indicators of how we are protecting our environment as a whole. Sadly, over one-fourth of the bird species found in the United States have been listed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as “Birds of Conservation Concern.”

In 2007, the National Audubon Society and the American Bird Conservancy teamed up to produce a comprehensive analysis of population size and trends, distribution, and threats for 700 species. The WatchList identified 178 species in the continental U.S. that are in immediate need of conservation due to declining or very low population numbers. For example, the Red-headed Woodpecker, historically common, has dropped 65% over the past 40 years. The Wood Thrush has similarly lost over 50% of its population in just 40 years. Rusty Blackbirds have declined by 99%. A new American Bird Conservancy report, *Saving Migratory Birds for Future Generations: The Success of the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act*, details that of our 341 species that are neotropical migrants - meaning birds that breed in the United States and Canada and winter in Latin America and the Caribbean - 127 are in decline. Sixty of those species, including 29 songbirds, are in severe decline having lost 45% or more of their population in the past 40 years.

The main reasons for these declines are well established. Major sources of bird mortality are due to habitat loss and habitat degradation through conversion to human uses. There are simply fewer large blocks of unbroken habitat for native birds. Food depletion is another cause of mortality, especially for migrant birds using coasts and shorelines.

The number of birds killed by collisions with windows every year in the United States is estimated to be between 97.5 and 975 million birds, based on an estimate of 1-10 birds killed per building. At night, migrants are disoriented and entrapped in light fields emanating from tall buildings and upward-shining lights. They are killed by collisions with each other or the structure, or collapse to the ground from exhaustion. During the day, many birds that survive night strikes along with other stopover migrants may be kill-

ed by reflective and transparent glass windows which they cannot recognize as barriers to be avoided.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service estimates that between five and 50 million birds are killed in the United States each year after being attracted by the lights on communication towers and then colliding with the tower's guy wires or structure during night migration. Most incidents happen in poor weather during the spring or fall. The solution to this may be as simple as changing from steady burning lights to flashing lights that allow for a moment of darkness so migrants can escape unharmed.



Black-crowned Night Heron

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, of the five billion pounds of pesticides that are applied worldwide each year, 20% is used in the United States.

One estimate suggested that more than 670 million birds are directly exposed to pesticides each year on U.S. farms alone, and 10% or 67 million birds die as a result.

Conservation biologists generally recognize feral cats as responsible for documented extinctions of birds. There are more than 90 million pet cats in the United States, the majority of which roam outside at least part of the time. In addition, many tens of millions more feral cats roam cities and rural areas. Scientists estimate that free-roaming cats kill hundreds of millions of birds each year.

It is well known that birds are not only beautiful and interesting creatures, they are also an important natural resource shared among countries and their people. What is less well known is that birdwatching is also the fastest growing outdoor activity in America, with more than 30% of adults actively participating - far exceeding our designated national pastime, baseball. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, birdwatching contributes nearly \$85 billion to our economy every year including \$32 billion in retail sales, and \$13 billion in federal and state income taxes.

Birds help our farmers by pollinating many plants and consuming billions of harmful insect pests. These services have been valued at as much as \$5,000 per year per square mile, potentially translating into billions of dollars in environmental services.

Birds are excellent indicators for how we are

treating our environment, and right now, many species are declining. The National Audubon Society and the American Bird Conservancy believe that through the federal government's leadership in bird conservation, combined with the help of its citizens, we can restore America's birds and the habitats on which they depend. You can learn more about birds and you can help preserve critical habitat on the Alabama Gulf Coast by registering for the Alabama Coastal BirdFest. Please go to www.weeksbay.org and click on BirdFest.

Presented by George Wallace, PhD American Bird Conservancy U. S. Congress, Natural Resources Committee, July 10, 2007.

Art Without Limits

As mentioned in the last issue of *The Pelican Post*, staff of the Reserve worked with **Nancy Raia** from the Eastern Shore Art Center to host the Art Without Limits summer camp. The camp was a huge success. Participants included English as a Second Language students, Daphne Boys and Girls Club members, 4-H members, Weeks Bay Volunteers and disabled adults. Participants were introduced to habitats within the Reserve and incorporated their reactions in various art mediums. The participants' art work was displayed at the Eastern Shore Art Center alongside the winners of the Foundation's Photography Contest.



River Cleanup

An important milestone was reached in May highlighting the best of citizen involvement in protecting Weeks Bay. The Twelfth Annual Weeks Bay Area River Cleanup was held on Saturday, May 10 at the Fish River Marina. For a dozen years, volunteers have picked up debris by boat, canoe, kayak and vehicle from Weeks Bay, Fish and Magnolia Rivers and their tributaries. One hundred volunteers were present at the event. This year's event was attended by a record number of paddlers in canoes and kayaks getting to those hard to reach places along the shallow edges of the bay. **Sharon Wheeler** and **Boy Scout Troop 97** of Magnolia Springs brought 16 scouts and lead-

ers to clean up and took home the clear-bottom kayak generously donated by **Tom Schlinkert** of Elberta. It would not have been River Cleanup without the faithful participation of veterans **Alesha** and **Morgan Ray** and **Tommy** and **Sherry Nelson**. The **Bousson Family** of Fairhope divided up the genders for some healthy cleanup competition. The girls ended the day victorious collecting the most trash from the Bay Haven canals. All of the volunteers at the 2008 event were winners because they removed an estimated 4,000 lbs of trash and debris from local waterways and got a free lunch to boot.



Boy Scouts and leaders of Troop 97 are all smiles with their new Weeks Bay Area River Cleanup kayak



A near-full dumpster marks a fitting end for trash collected at the 2008 Weeks Bay Area River Cleanup

Weeks Bay Volunteers and Reserve staff did their part also. As they have for several years, **Harry Anderson**, **Joan** and **Randy Bentz**, **Joyce** and **Allan Rochford** and **Sarah Rankin** of the Weeks Bay Volunteers helped fill the dumpster, assisted with registration and prepared lunch for hungry cleanup participants. **Carey Bentley**, **Richard Coram** and **Bob Miller** of the Weeks Bay Watershed Project provided moral support and took pictures. For the second year, Weeks Bay Area River Cleanup was part of Alabama Power's *Renew Our Rivers* campaign. The bright yellow T-shirts given to cleanup participants were supplied by Alabama Power. 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, **Greer Radcliff**, Tom Schlinkert, Weeks Bay Foundation, Weeks Bay Reserve, ADCNR Lands Division Coastal Section and NOAA.



Paddlers unload bags of trash collected from the Fish River shoreline

Did You Know?

by John Borom

The family Elateridae contains about 7,000 known species of click beetles, including more than 800 species that live in North America. Click beetles are characterized by the unusual click mechanism they possess. A spine on the prosternum can be snapped into a corresponding notch on the mesosternum, producing a violent “click” which can bounce the beetle into the air. Clicking is mainly used to avoid predation, and it is also useful when the beetle needs to right itself.



One of the most striking is the eyed click beetle, *Alaus oculatus*. It is 1 1/2 inches long, pepper and salt in color, and bears two large black and white, velvety eyespots on the prothorax. Its larva, called a wireworm, lives in decaying wood.

When I parked near the pitcher plant bog in July, this beautiful insect came out of the grass and was holding on to the side of my car. To view some of the other interesting creatures that share our world with us, go to www.weeksbay.org and click on photo album.



15th Annual
Native Plant Sale!
at Safe Harbor - Weeks Bay
Friday, Saturday & Sunday
October 10, 11 & 12
8 am - 4 pm

Shrubs • Perennials • Butterfly
Plants • Trees • Hummingbird
Plants • Wetland Plants
Dune Plants • More

Safe Harbor at Weeks Bay is
across US Highway 98 from
Weeks Bay Reserve.

Weeks Bay

September

- 1 **Labor 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.** “Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks, July 2007” presented by **John Borom**. Five Rivers Delta Resource Center, 7:30 p.m. Bring a friend.
- 10 **Weeks Bay Advisory Committee Meeting.** Weeks Bay Auditorium, 2:00 p.m.
- 20 **Coastal Clean Up Weeks Bay Zone.** Event to remove shoreline debris based at the Fish River Marina, Weeks Bay Resource Center, 8:00 a.m. to noon. For more information, contact **Eric Brunden**, (251) 928-9792.
- 27 **National Estuaries Day.** A day set aside every year to recognize the value of estuaries. Consider the benefits of the estuary at Weeks Bay and learn more at www.estuaries.gov.

October

- 1-2 **Wetland Rapid Assessment Procedures Workshop.** Weeks Bay Auditorium, 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. For more information, contact **Mike Shelton**, (251) 928-9792.
- 3-5 **Inland Bird Banding Association 2008 Annual Meeting.** Weeks Bay Resource Center & Auditorium. For more information, contact **Mike Shelton**, (251) 928-9792.

My Fall 2008 Calendar

7 **Submerged Aquatic Vegetation/Sea Grasses: Ecology, Regulation and Restoration Basics Workshop.** Training workshop to be held at the Five Rivers Delta Resource Center, 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. For more information, contact **Mike Shelton**, (251) 928-9792.

7 **Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting for the Weeks Bay Watershed Project.** Weeks Bay Resource Center, 6:00 p.m.

10-12 **Weeks Bay Native Plant Sale.** Safe Harbor at Weeks Bay, across U.S. Highway 98 from the Reserve Interpretive Center, 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

13 **Columbus Day Holiday.** The Interpretive Center will be closed. All trails and boardwalks will remain open for your walking and sightseeing pleasure.

14 **Making the Connection: Our Landscape, Our Stream, Our Watershed.** A volunteer water quality workshop for Master Gardeners. AU Experimental Station in Fairhope, 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. For more information, contact **Mike Shelton**, (251) 928-9792.

14 **Guest Lecture Series.** "Alabama Gulf Coast Birds" presented by **John Borom**. Five Rivers Delta Resource Center, 7:30 p.m. Bring a friend.

16 - 19 **John L. Borom Alabama Coastal BirdFest.** For more information about tours and events, go to www.weeksbay.org and click on Alabama Coastal BirdFest, or go to www.alabamacoastalbirdfest.com. Look for the tours #4 and #9, which feature Weeks Bay, the Reserve and a cruise on the *Weeks Bay Explorer*.

November

3-7 **NERRS/NERRA Annual Meeting.** Annual meeting for the Reserve System hosted by the Elkhorn Slough NERR in California.

11 **Veterans Day Holiday.** The Interpretive Center will be closed. All trails and boardwalks will remain open for your walking and sightseeing pleasure.

11 **Guest Lecture Series.** "With Beauty Before Us – A Brief Look at the Alabama Gulf Coast Flora and Fauna" presented by **John Borom**. Five Rivers Delta Resource Center, 7:30 p.m. Bring a friend.

13 **Urban Tree Workshop.** Coastal Training Program and Alabama Cooperative Extension Service partner to address trees and construction best management practices. 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., location to be determined. For more information, contact **Mike Shelton**, (251) 928-9792.

18-19 **Green Site Design.** A workshop sponsored jointly by the Center for Watershed Protection, Northern Gulf Institute and the Coastal Training Program on better landscape practices. Five Rivers Delta Resource Center, 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. For more information, contact **Mike Shelton**, (251) 928-9792.

27 **Thanksgiving Holiday.** The Interpretive Center will be closed. All trails and boardwalks will remain open for your walking and sightseeing pleasure.

December

4 **A Gala Evening in Honor of Jack Edwards.** The Foundation is hosting an event to honor outgoing Board Chairman, **Jack Edwards**. Music provided by **The Wayfarers**; ticket price, \$50. **Fairhope Yacht Club**, 6:00 p.m. For more information, go to www.weeksbay.org, or contact the Foundation office at (251) 990-5004.

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photo by John Borom

Southern toad
(*Bufo terrestris*)

“Ask a toad what is beauty; he will answer that it is the female with two great round eyes coming out of her little head, her flat mouth, her yellow belly, and brown back.” - Voltaire