

THE PELICAN POST

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Squeaky Sneakers Art

From the Executive Director	2
Beyond the Classroom	3
ExxonMobil Interns	3-4
Spring Storm	4
Coastal Cleanup	5
BirdFest	5
Pelican Paddle	6-7
Squeaky Sneakers	8
Science Collaborative	9
Volunteer Spotlight	9
Donors	10
Calendar	11
Kids Fishing Day	12
Photo Contest	12

From the Executive Director . . .



A few weeks ago I found myself up close and personal with a timber rattler, five feet long and about as big around as my calf.

It was sunning itself on a dirt road a little way out of town, its body glistening against the red clay. I got down on hands and knees a few feet from the snake to take some pictures. Perhaps I got too close. Or maybe the chatter of my companions riled the serpent. Either way, he suddenly turned his head toward me, reared back and rattled. The buzz coming from his tail was much louder than I'd imagined it would be. The message was unmistakable. And scary.

But it was also exhilarating, an instant reminder that we are lucky enough to live in a place that is still wild, where danger lurks and adventure awaits. Simply put, we get to live where the wild things are.

That's the only kind of place I want to live. I've spent time in big cities, where the only wildlife you could hope to encounter were pigeons or stray cats. Where the closest thing to finding adventure is hunting for a parking spot. Then I think of this place where we live.

My house is inside the city limits of Fairhope and yet I've encountered bobcats in my yard. I see so many alligators in the course of a summer there's no way I could hope to count them all. I can drive ten miles in any direction from the heart of downtown Mobile and show you a forest full of meat-eating plants. While you walk around that forest, you just might encounter a bear. Remember back in the beginning of June when they closed the beaches because there were so many sharks swimming in the surf?

How many people in the United States can boast that they live in a place where they could venture out of their house any given day and possibly be bitten by a poisonous snake, eaten by an alligator, mauled by a bear, or chomped by a shark? This place is incredible. And true wilderness, as in get lost and not be found for weeks or longer, is right on our doorstep in the Delta. The wilderness flies right through our very yards every year, as millions upon millions of fantastically colorful birds migrate through our area. Nature in all its glory simply surrounds us.

The challenge we have now is protecting what we have as our area grows. Development is coming, and fast. For a hint at what might happen, just visit nearby Florida, or drive through the endless suburbs surrounding New Orleans. We have a chance to make sure coastal Alabama grows in a better way, a way that leaves room for the magnificent landscape that surrounds us.

That's what the Weeks Bay Foundation is all about. We protect the edges, the places between the wilderness and our towns and cities. We protect coastal marshes and rich forests. We protect streams and pitcher plant bogs. We protect any place that will help nature keep its hold in our lives. We'd love to have your help in our mission. Join the Foundation. Make a donation. We'd love to count you as part of our team.

See you on the water,



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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.

Layout & Design by
Kathy Hicks

Science and Conservation beyond the Classroom

by Ali Berry, ExxonMobil Community Summer Jobs Program Intern

I grew up with a nursery and bait shop as my backyard. I made my secret forts in greenhouses and knew how to maintain a flowerbed before I was big enough to carry a watering can. I loved the world and all of its organisms and from a young age knew it was beautiful how it all somehow worked together. But somewhere along the way, between elementary school and middle school, I became completely and totally indifferent to any and all things science. I slept through every biology and chemistry class I ever took and the thought of a Bunsen burner or Erlenmeyer flask made me cringe. For years, after day in and day out of sitting in class, doing homework, and maybe every once in a while watching a nature documentary, I wondered why I could not interest myself in such a beautiful field of study.

Working as an ExxonMobil Community Summer Jobs Program intern at Weeks Bay Foundation this summer has opened my eyes to what the problem may have been all of those years. Science is so fascinating because it is everything that is happening around you at this moment. Anything you enjoy doing has science behind it. When you go out for a hike, rev up your engine for a joy ride, or push your kid on a swing it has science behind it. Science is a living thing you experience. So when you set a little red headed girl who loves dirt and bugs in a concrete room in front of a white board for 12 years and try to explain to her why science is so wonderful, it has an opposite effect. Why not take that child and set her in a field and explain to her the photosynthesis of the plant she is making daisy rings out of or the life cycle of the cricket she has cupped in her hands?

I did not take a genuine interest in science until I was actually in the field everyday this summer. I finally saw how all the things I was reading under bright fluorescent lighting for all those years actually applied to life. Learning has no purpose unless you apply it and Weeks Bay Foundation is a vital part of that. Without conservation groups working to keep our resources safe, all we would have left is our concrete room, plastic chairs, and five pound text books with pretty pictures of a plant or animal that once was. I would like to thank Weeks Bay Foundation for preserving the real classrooms and teaching us with a curriculum that instills a fascination and not just a 100 on a quiz. I would also like to thank them for the personal experience I have had which goes far beyond anything I could write no matter how many hours I spent in English class. You aren't going to be able to get rid of me easily after my eight weeks because I believe what you do here is crucial to education and I want to be a part of it.



ExxonMobil Community Summer Jobs Program Interns

by Ryan Wedell, Foundation AmeriCorps VISTA

With all the activities going on at the Weeks Bay Foundation lately, some extra help has been much appreciated. Thanks to a Community Summer Jobs Program grant from the ExxonMobil Foundation, **Ali Berry** and **Zach Nikolakis** were able to come in and help out as summer interns this year. Ali, a Mississippi native, wrote a little about herself in an article in this issue of *The Pelican Post*. Zach is a native of the area but has spent much of his time since graduating from Spanish Fort High School as an infantryman in the United States Marine Corps. He said that being in the Marines really changed his perception of the world, and while he is happy with what he accomplished, he is glad to be back in the U.S. and taking classes at Auburn. Zach is working to receive a degree in conservation biology and has about a year before he graduates and must make the tough decision many of us have to make during that last year – attend graduate school or get a job.

Zach's work at the Foundation this summer should have provided a little perspective on that choice. He and Ali were able to do a little of everything, from research to grass roots organizing. They helped us organize and



put on this year's Pelican Paddle Canoe and Kayak Race held in August. Everything went great thanks in large part to our interns, who helped spread the word and sign people up, as well as doing a lot of the heavy lifting on race day.

Speaking of heavy lifting, cutting out fire lanes was no easy task, especially in the summer heat. While neither Zach nor Ali were fans of the chainsaw, they were pros with the machete. They also helped conduct water-quality monitoring in Fish River. This entailed driving all over Baldwin County to take water samples that would later be tested for *E. coli* in the lab. While all that was good experience, Zach's favorite part of the internship was the field work. Measuring nutrient loading through soil, water, and biological surveys with some of the research scientists and grad students gave Zach a good idea of what life might look like if he were to pursue that master's degree. "All in all, it's been good to get a better view of the variety of opportunities the environmental field has to offer," Zach said.



We at the Foundation are pleased our interns were able to take advantage of the opportunities available here on Weeks Bay. The help Zach and Ali provided this summer was invaluable. We would like to thank them for helping to make all our endeavors successful this summer, and we wish them good luck as they pursue their studies this year.

Spring Storm Leads to Debris Removal in Weeks Bay Watershed

by L.G. Adams, Reserve Manager

In late April, local residents experienced a historic flood as a slow moving storm dumped record amounts of rain in the Weeks Bay watershed. The tremendous amount of rain caused flash floods and inundated many waterfront structures on the Fish and Magnolia Rivers. In addition to damages to personal property, trees and other structural materials along the river banks washed away, moving down river and in many cases lodging in areas where they presented a danger to boaters.



The Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (ADCNR) is coordinating with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) on debris removal from the waterways around Weeks Bay and other areas of coastal Alabama. The debris is a potential hazard to navigation and public safety. Cleanup of this debris is expected to begin by the time this newsletter is distributed.



Weeks Bay Reserve assisted the Coastal Section, Lands Division of ADCNR by hosting a meeting of agencies with FEMA and coordinating damage surveys. The flooding damaged docks and piers, and swept away boats, furniture, appliances, and construction materials. FEMA officials used Reserve facilities as a staging area to survey the surrounding areas by land, sea, and air. Alabama State Troopers provided air transportation to quickly survey damaged properties and debris along the waterways. The Alabama Marine Police provided support for several water tours as did the Reserve in the *Weeks Bay Explorer* pontoon boat to survey damaged areas and to locate debris that has become a hazard to public safety.



Soon, contractors will begin removing debris in several zones in and around the areas of Weeks Bay. The Reserve area near the mouth of Fish River under the U. S. Highway 98 bridge will be used as a staging area for the debris before it is hauled to the dump.



Alabama Coastal Cleanup

by Angela Underwood, Reserve Education Specialist

The 2014 Alabama Coastal Cleanup is scheduled for Saturday, September 20, from 8:00 a.m. until noon. This is the 27th year of the state's largest annual volunteer event. Citizens, school groups, businesses, and clubs walk or boat in 28 different zones throughout Mobile and Baldwin counties. Volunteers pick up what they find and record the data, which is then submitted to The Ocean Conservancy to track what is getting into our oceans. The information is used for education on the sources of the debris and its effect on the environment. During the past 26 years, more than 72,000 volunteers have participated in the removal of over 700 tons of marine debris from Alabama's shorelines. Join us this year as we continue to make Alabama the Beautiful!

On the day of the event, come prepared with sunscreen, a hat, gloves, shoes, and lots of water. It gets HOT!

If you'd like to be involved with the 27th Annual Alabama Coastal Cleanup, please visit www.AlabamaCoastalCleanup.com for the zone nearest you or call (251) 928-9792.



Record-setting Early Registration for Alabama Coastal BirdFest

by D. Fran Morley, BirdFest "Nestkeeper"

People wanting to attend this year's Alabama Coastal BirdFest (October 2-4) must have been waiting at their computers, ready to sign up when registration opened at 10:00 a.m. on August 6.

"Within the first two hours that registration was open this year, we had more than 50 registrations with people from nine different states," said BirdFest Chairman **John Borom**. "Then, within just a few days, we were up to more than 100 from more than dozen states, from as far away as Oregon, Arizona, and Maryland.

Apparently, the word is getting out that we have a pretty good birding festival here."



John L. Borom and this year's featured photographer, Spence Harrison

This year's festival includes a few new trips and several "online only" bonus trips. "We strongly encourage people to register online," Borom said. "It's easy to see the advantage to that by the number of people who registered in those first days and had no problem signing up for the trips and events they want with no worry about them being sold out. Even now at this later date, online registration is preferred because you get immediate confirmation. You don't have to wait for your order to arrive in the mail."

New this year are the Weeks Bay Sunset Cruise and a Northbound Delta Adventure Cruise in the Mobile Delta. One returning trip is the Bottle Creek Mound Island Adventure. "These mounds, built by 13th Century Mississippian Tribes, are a real treasure that are accessible only by boat and then only if you know where you're going," Borom said.

BirdFest's bonus "online only" trips include kayak/canoe paddles and additional boat trips into the Delta. "The nice thing about offering these online is that we can easily add a trip if something else fills," said **Hank Burch**, manager of 5 Rivers Delta Resource Center and BirdFest registrar. "If you want to do a trip that is already full, check back regularly for the online bonus trips."



Preening Great Egret photo by Spence Harrison

For more information and to register, visit www.AlabamaCoastalBirdFest.com, or look for Alabama Coastal BirdFest on Facebook.

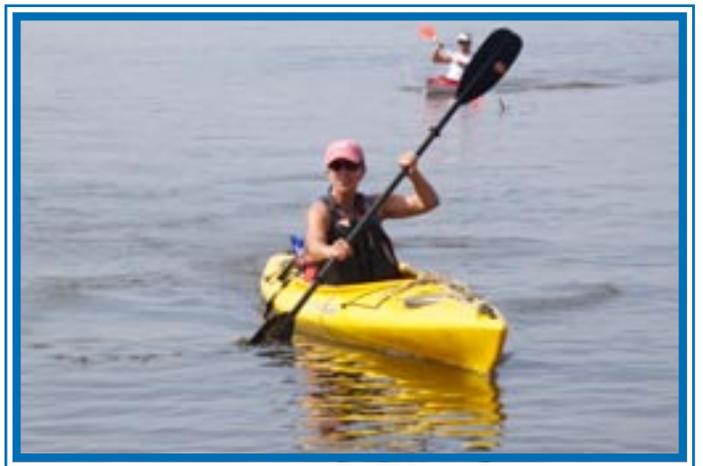




2014 Pelican Paddle Canoe and Kayak Race
by Ali Berry, ExxonMobil Community Summer Jobs Program Intern

The Weeks Bay Foundation's second annual Pelican Paddle Canoe and Kayak Race was a rip-roaring success. With clear skies and calm waters perfect for paddling, more than 100 racers participated Saturday, August 2, in the 3.5-mile and 7-mile races and new eco-tour event. It was a sunny, beautiful day of paddling, hot dogs, and excitement!

Racers were awarded first, second, and third place medals in each of the seven divisions. **Stanley Stark**, 75 years old, won the Men's Solo Kayak, while **Maureen Fitzgerald** took the medal in the Women's Solo, and **Nic Cockrell** finished first in the Junior Division. Paddling pair **Steve and Vicki Nelson** were the winners in the canoe category. The Non-traditional Division, which included pedal and tandem kayaks, was won by **Mike Abeln**. **Jamie Ullock** took the gold in Stand Up Paddle Board, while the 7-mile Pro Solo Kayak Division was won by **Jeb Berry**.





New this year for more leisurely kayakers was the eco-tour led by **Anna Bryant** of 17 Turtles Outfitters, a new kayak and canoe rental business in Fairhope. Participants learned about the functions of the ecosystem they were touring and the many different species they saw along their route. The turning point was a bald eagle's nest and on the way back a pod of dolphins was sighted.

The success of this year's second annual Pelican Paddle would not have been possible without the help of the dedicated volunteers. Our stomachs also thank Daphne Utilities for the delicious lunch they provided. Prizes were donated by **Coldwell Banker Reehl Properties, Bay Mortgage Corporation, Vance and Sons Cabinets, Pinchin Tail Artist (Megan Dulion), Father Nature Landscape, Living Well, and Rusty & Ann Coker**. Thank you to everyone who came out to support the Foundation's work and we can't wait to see you next year on the "row" less traveled!



Men's Solo Kayak

- 1st Stanley Stark, 0:37:07
- 2nd Wayne Berry, 0:38:30
- 3rd Duly Chahain, 0:39:05

Women's Solo Kayak

- 1st Maureen Fitzgerald, 0:47:05
- 2nd Jennifer Davis, 0:47:50
- 3rd Terri Abeln, 0:47:56

Junior Solo Kayak

- 1st Nic Cockrell, 0:57:58
- 2nd Jeff Cockrell, 1:12:42
- 3rd Oscar Sandefur, 1:14:53

Canoe

- 1st Steve & Vicki Nelson, 0:53:20
- 2nd Tom, Mary, & Pierce Johnston, 0:58:52
- 3rd Jeri & Marianne Grundhoefer, 1:00:45

Stand Up Paddle Board

- 1st Jamie Ullock, 0:54:50
- 2nd Amanda Calhoun, 0:55:44
- 3rd Pate Calhoun, 0:57:21

Non-traditional

- 1st Mike Abeln, 0:42:00
- 2nd Sally Wall, 0:45:50
- 3rd Daniel Mulera, 0:48:42

Pro Solo Kayak (7 mile)

- 1st Jeb Berry, 1:04:06
- 2nd Muril Robertson, 1:13:22
- 3rd David Waters, 1:17:05



Squeaky Sneakers

by Nancy Raia, Eastern Shore Art Center and Angela Underwood, Reserve Education Specialist



Squeaky Sneakers dominated in the month of June! Over a three-week period, 205 students joined **Nancy Raia** and **Angela Underwood** at Weeks Bay Reserve to experience the estuary through scientific exploration united with art. From seining in the bay and cast netting to creating water color art and dancing the jellyfish dance, students learned of the importance of estuaries as nurseries for sea life, and of the students' role as stewards of these vital habitats.

In addition to the three weeks of camps held at Weeks Bay, Angela and Nancy carry the lessons they developed to other sites in Mobile and Baldwin counties throughout the year. In May, they ventured to the William F. Green Veterans Home in Bay Minette and received a great response. The veterans loved making fish prints and painting their own fish, reliving many of their stories of being on the water, as a soldier or fisherman. The Squeaky Sneakers program also visited the Fairhope Library as part of the library's summer science project. As **Julee Howard**, acting children's librarian said in her thank-you note, "Did parents and children have a good time? Yes! Did they learn something new? Yes! Did your program add value to the 25 children who attended? Yes! Did I learn something new? Yes!" She also added a thank-you to Angela and Nancy for adding such fun and learning to the science lab program.

The Squeaky Sneakers program has become highly successful over the past six years, receiving a Gulf Guardian award in 2013 and numerous grants. This year it was funded through a grant from the Bedsole Foundation and a donation from the Weeks Bay Volunteers, along with support from Eastern Shore Art Center and Weeks Bay Reserve. In addition to financial support, Squeaky Sneakers would not be possible without assistance from interns and volunteers. This summer, **Caitlin Gilchrist**, a Fairhope High School student, and **Mikel Corporaal**, an AmeriCorps VISTA intern, jumped headfirst into helping facilitate the camps. And as always, **Eric Brunden**, Stewardship Coordinator and boat captain at Weeks Bay Reserve, obliged the students (and teachers) in entertaining boat rides on the bay. We would like to thank everyone for their continued support of this program and hope to have many successful years to come.



Science Collaborative Project Team Surveys Public on Conservation and Restoration Topics

by Mike Shelton, Reserve Coastal Training Coordinator

Researchers participating in the Science Collaborative project, "*Exploring the cost-effectiveness of restored marshes as filters of runoff pollution in a world of rising seas*" at the Weeks Bay Reserve launched a survey to gain insight about the public's understanding of marshland restoration and comprehension of conservation terminology. This part of the project investigated a possible communication gap between scientists and the public. **Alina Kaiser**, Northern Michigan University, spent several weeks this summer asking local residents and visitors to rate their attitudes and knowledge about conservation and restoration topics. She was housed in the research dormitory at the Reserve. Most of the time, Alina administered the survey in-person at public boat launches, fishing piers, area festivals, and the Reserve Visitor Center. The research team used email and social media to reach a broader audience. Results of the survey will give the Science Collaborative project team better insight in the knowledge and attitudes of a varied public audience. Increased understanding of the public's attitudes can improve communication with such a diverse audience and possibly foster additional support for conservation and restoration efforts on the Alabama coast.



Alina Kaiser, Northern Michigan University, happy to be surveying in coastal Alabama.

The Science Collaborative project is funded by a grant to the Weeks Bay Foundation from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Volunteer Spotlight – Tommi Lacy

by Maureen Nation, Reserve Volunteer Coordinator

Tommi Lacy was born and attended school in Dora, a small country town outside of Birmingham. She earned an undergraduate degree in English and history education from Jacksonville State. She then moved to Huntsville where she taught at Buckham High School in New Market, just outside of town, and then at Chapman Middle School in Huntsville. While in Huntsville, she earned her master's degree in counseling and in 1992 Tommi moved to Trussville, where she was a school counselor at Paine Primary School for 20 years. Tommi was always very dedicated to the children, and after working all day, she found the time to teach house-bound children in the evenings. She also formed an alliance between the local fire department and her school. Firemen tutored children in reading, and as they made progress with their reading skills, they were rewarded with a meal at the station and a ride in the fire engine!



Upon her retirement in 2012, Tommi moved to Baldwin County, where she had spent many of her holidays. She originally learned about the area from Weeks Bay Volunteer **Nancy Gaines**, whom she had met while in Huntsville. During last year's Weeks Bay Volunteer plant sale, Tommi bumped into Nancy who suggested that she might like to volunteer at the Reserve. Tommi now works at the front desk on Thursdays, where she answers the phone and greets Reserve visitors.

When asked what she likes best about volunteering at the Reserve, Tommi replied that she especially enjoys seeing and interacting with the children. She says that she likes that she learns something new every time she volunteers. Tommi likes to stay busy, and she has started a Bible study group in her home. Some of this busy lady's activities include *Newcomers*, Yoga classes, photography, and computer courses through ESILL, and she will be attending the *What's Wrong with Your Plant* series with **Bill Finch** this fall.

We are fortunate that Tommi has chosen to include volunteering at the Weeks Bay Reserve among her many interests, and is willing to share her enthusiasm with our visitors, especially the children who come to the Reserve.



Thanks to Our Donors May to July, 2014

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SPECIAL GIFTS

In memory of Ruth Underwood
Walter Ernest

In memory of Sara Ann Stewart
Clark
Lin Moore

In memory of David Learner
June Learner

In memory of Claude Woodson
ECHS Class of 1969

For good neighbors, Chuck Kelly
& *Tynes Stringfellow*
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Sustainer	\$1,000 - \$4,999
Steward	\$ 500 - \$999
Supporter	\$ 250 - \$499
Friend	\$ 100 - \$249
Member	\$ 35 - \$99

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envelope
or look for the link on
our home page at
www.weeksbay.org.

Donate to the Foundation through the
Combined Federal Campaign, Code 37621



FALL 2014 CALENDAR

September

- 1 Labor Day Holiday.*
- 9 Guest Lecture Series. "Birding Trip to Yucatan, Mexico" presented by **Gaye Lindsey**. 5 Rivers Delta Resource Center, 7:00 p.m. Bring a friend.
- 10 Weeks Bay Advisory Committee Meeting. Tonsmeire Weeks Bay Resource Center, 2:00 p.m.
- 20 27th Annual Alabama Coastal Cleanup. Fish River Marina, 8:00 a.m. to noon. For more information, contact the Reserve, (251) 928-9792.
- 20-27 National Estuaries Week. Learn more at estuaries.noaa.gov.
- 27 National Estuaries Day. Learn more at estuaries.noaa.gov.
- 27 Kids Fishing Day. A joint project of the Foundation, the Reserve, and ADCNR State Lands Division, Coastal Section and Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division. Safe Harbor pond, across U.S. Highway 98 from the Reserve Visitor Center, 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. For more information, contact the Foundation office at (251) 990-5004.



**The Visitor Center will be closed. All trails and boardwalks will remain open for your walking and sightseeing pleasure.*

October

- 2-4 11th Annual 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.
- 10-12 Weeks Bay Native Plant Sale. Safe Harbor at Weeks Bay, across U.S. Highway 98 from the Reserve Visitor Center, 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
- 13 Columbus Day Holiday.*
- 14 Guest Lecture Series. "Graham Creek Nature Preserve" presented by **Leslie Gahagan**. 5 Rivers Delta Resource Center, 7:00 p.m. Bring a friend.
- 18 Weeks Bay Photography Contest. Deadline to deliver entries to the Weeks Bay Reserve is 4:00 p.m. today. For more information, call (251) 990-5004.

November

- 11 Veteran's Day Holiday.*
- 11 Guest Lecture Series. "Learning to Love Ourselves: How to break our addiction to landscape pornography and appreciate Alabama's wild places," presented by **Ben Raines**, Weeks Bay Foundation Executive Director. 5 Rivers Delta Resource Center, 7:00 p.m. Bring a friend.
- 27 Thanksgiving Holiday.*

27TH ANNUAL ALABAMA COASTAL CLEANUP
Get the Trash Out of the Splash
SATURDAY 9-20-2014
8 am - 12 pm

The poster features a purple octopus holding a trash can and a beach ball, with a green background showing coastal plants and a blue sky.

22nd Annual WEEKS BAY NATIVE PLANT SALE
Friday, Saturday, & Sunday
October 10th-12th - 9am to 4pm

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

Safe Harbor at Weeks Bay
Across U.S. Hwy 98 from Weeks Bay Reserve

The poster features a large orange hibiscus flower, a green fern, and a hummingbird, with a white background and a red border.

Weeks Bay Foundation

11401 US Highway 98
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Photo by John Borom

Snowy Egret

"In every walk with nature one receives far more than he seeks." - John Muir

FREE! KIDS FISHING DAY



Sponsored by the Weeks Bay Foundation

Saturday, Sept. 27, 2014

8am to 1pm

Weeks Bay Reserve's Safe Harbor Pond
US 98, just west of the Fish River bridge

Join us for a day of **free fishing**
just for kids. The pond is stocked full!

For more information, call 990-5004 or
see us at www.weeksbay.org.



photo by Sherry Stimpson Frost

Oct. 18th



2013 Best of Show, Junior Division
by Sloan Bryant

15th Annual Weeks Bay Photo Contest

This year's entry deadline is
Saturday, Oct. 18, 2014 at 4:00 p.m.

All entries must be delivered to the Reserve by this
date. Entry forms and contest rules are available on
the Foundation website.

For more information, please call (251) 990-5004 or
visit www.weeksbay.org.

