



THE PELICAN POST

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2015 Weeks Bay Photo Contest
First Place, People in Nature
by Stephanie Pluscht

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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
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Thank You for Your Annual Fund Contribution!

This year is going to be a great year and it's all thanks to you! The Weeks Bay Foundation's **Annual Fund** drive was a tremendous success and we are starting the year off the best way we know how: by preserving more wetland habitat.

Between Christmas and New Year's Eve, we closed on two properties that will now be protected forever. One has the headwaters of an important stream and will be protected under a conservation easement. The owner is actively pursuing longleaf pine, bobwhite quail, and gopher tortoise habitat restoration. The other property forms a large peninsula in Fish River and connects to three other Foundation-owned properties. In addition, we are already working to preserve several other properties in 2016.



Gena Todia

Your Annual Fund contribution has made these acquisitions possible. There are many costs associated with land protection besides the cost of the property. Your contribution ensures that all our documentation is in order and that these transactions will stand the test of time. We make these acquisitions with the confidence that the properties will be protected in perpetuity.

We invite you to come out for any - or all! - of our events this year. Aside from protecting land, we have some really fun activities throughout the year. Our **Bald Eagle Bash** (April 23) is a rocking local seafood shindig. The **Pelican Paddle Canoe and Kayak Race** (July 23) is a great way to explore the bay and possibly win bragging rights as the fastest boat around. **Kids Fishing Day** (September 24) gives the youngsters in your life a chance to cast a line in a safe environment and bring home a fresh catfish dinner. So, come on out and join us, as we explore, enjoy, and protect this amazing place we call home!

New Research Dorm Construction



Over the past few years, the Reserve's dorms have played a vital role in supporting research at Weeks Bay by providing individuals with lodging until their studies are complete. The Reserve has housed numerous researchers from as far away as Russia and as close as our own Alabama. AmeriCorps NCCC members have also relied on the dorms for months at a time while they assisted with invasive species control, boardwalk construction, and other stewardship activities. Currently the Reserve can host 11 visitors, which has sometimes not been enough.

In response to this growing need, the Reserve began construction of new research dorm with the help of a Coastal Impact Assistance Program (CIAP) grant. Due to be completed in the spring of this year, the dorm can house over 20 researchers, enabling larger groups to be accommodated. The new dormitories are located at the old Safe Harbor property, now known as the Weeks Bay Research Center, and will provide easy access to creeks leading to the bay. When the new building is completed, the old dorm rooms will be converted into additional office space for Weeks Bay Reserve staff.



Join the Weeks Bay Foundation Legacy Society

Make a Planned Gift to the Weeks Bay Foundation, Part II

by Leslie Weeks, Foundation Board Member

In Part I of this article, you were introduced to the concept of planned giving and invited to join the Weeks Bay Foundation Legacy Society by making a planned gift to the Foundation. A planned gift of securities was the focus of Part I. But given that planned giving is traditionally defined as a gift that an individual creates during his or her lifetime that will take effect at or after their passing, a planned gift is most frequently structured as a testamentary devise.

Testamentary Devises

Naming the Weeks Bay Foundation as a beneficiary under your will or living trust allows you to support the conservation goals of the Foundation without altering your current lifestyle in any way because the transfer will not take effect until after your death. And, because the Foundation is a 501(c)(3) organization, the gift is deductible for estate tax purposes. Consult with your attorney to understand the specific benefits available to you.



The two most common types of devises - *specific and residual* - are described below. A specific devise is an outright gift of money, stocks or bonds, land, or other assets. The suggested wording for a specific devise is:

I give and devise to the Weeks Bay Foundation, the sum of \$ (or description of any real or personal property) for its unrestricted use and purpose.

For a residuary devise, the donor simply leaves all or part of the balance of his or her estate to the Weeks Bay Foundation. The suggested wording for a residuary devise is:

I give and devise to the Weeks Bay Foundation, all (or __%) of the rest, residue, and remainder of my estate, to be used for its unrestricted use and purpose.

If you are considering a testamentary devise to the Foundation, consult your attorney and ask specifically about doing a codicil to your will or an amendment to your living trust to name the Weeks Bay Foundation as a beneficiary - *a total re-do of your estate planning documents should not be necessary.*

In the next issue of *The Pelican Post*, learn about the tax benefits of leaving all or a portion of the balance of your retirement account to the Weeks Bay Foundation.

Weeks Bay Reserve's 30th Anniversary



This year will mark the 30th anniversary of the Weeks Bay Reserve's designation in February 1986. In the late 70s, **David Morine** had a spark of an idea that he shared with **Skipper Tonsmeire** and **John Borom**. That spark, with the enduring support of **Congressman Jack Edwards**, became the Reserve we know today. It is through the hard work of many people and continued support from the Weeks Bay Foundation and our members that the Reserve continues to be a center of excellence where conservation, research, and education come together.

During the course of this year, activities are planned to celebrate 30 years of Reserve programs. Among the planned events are a ribbon cutting for the soon-to-be-finished research dormitory, a Weeks Bay Day Homecoming Celebration, and a Research Symposium highlighting projects over the last decade. Stay tuned to the Reserve website at www.weeksbayreserve.com and our social media for details, dates, and festivities of this landmark celebration.



Weeks Bay Foundation Membership

We have said it a hundred times: *We could not do the important work of protecting our coastal habitat without the support of our members.* Annual membership dues account for a large part of our budget each year and increased membership funds allow us to pursue more and larger wetland properties.

Unfortunately, we receive these funds sporadically throughout the calendar year. This means that each year we are trying to plan our projects and prioritize acquisitions around an unknown amount of money. Imagine buying a house without knowing how much money you will have in the bank at the time of the closing!

So, we are asking all our current members and potential future members to think about paying their membership dues at the beginning of the year. Besides helping the Foundation to plan our yearly operations budget, you will also be acting as an even better steward to the environment. **By paying your dues now, we will spend a little less staff time, one less stamp, one less sheet of paper, and one less envelope writing you a renewal letter later.** If every one of our current members switched to renewing early in the season, we would save hundreds of those renewal letters!

If you are already a member and would like to start renewing in the spring, simply send the enclosed envelope to the Weeks Bay Foundation with your membership dues. If you would like to know what membership level you paid most recently, call Marcia at the Foundation office at (251) 990-5004, or e-mail her at marcia@weeksbay.org. If you have been considering becoming a member, now is a great time to take the plunge. We would love to have you as part of our Weeks Bay Family and assist us in “protecting the edges.”

Flora of the Weeks Bay Reserve - Witch Hazel

by Fred Nation

American Witch Hazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*) is a large, irregular, deciduous shrub, to about 20 feet tall, that is frequently seen in moist wooded areas throughout Alabama. The overall range is very large, from Ontario south to central Florida, west to central Texas. The leaves are alternate, oval in general outline, to about 4 inches long, almost as wide as long. Leaf edges are wavy with shallow, rounded lobes. The fall foliage is brilliant yellow, which makes Witch Hazel attractive and conspicuous in wooded areas throughout the Weeks Bay watershed.



Photo by Fred Nation

Until the first decades of the twentieth century nearly all of our medical treatments were made from herbals, collected from local fields and forests. Today, Witch Hazel is one of the last of the old herbals that can still be purchased in drug stores. Leaves, stems, and bark are boiled to produce a decoction which is used externally as a liniment and to treat sores and bruises. One other historic use of Witch Hazel is interesting and unusual. Called “dowsing,” it begins with a forked branch that is cut and trimmed into a “Y.” While walking slowly, the dowser grasps the two forked ends, one in each hand, with the base pointing downward. When ground water is encountered, the dowsing rod dips, rises, or twitches, sometimes very strongly. Witch Hazel is the preferred wood, and the process is also called “water witching.”

Witch Hazel is one of only a few of our native plants that flower in winter, with small, bright yellow flowers developing from November through February. The seed transport mechanism is quite unusual. The seeds form in round woody capsules. When ripe in the fall, they pop open around the middle and forcibly project the seeds as far as 15 feet away from the parent plant.

Many fascinating natives, including Witch Hazel, can be seen in the Weeks Bay watershed and on the boardwalk at the Weeks Bay Reserve.



Third Annual Kingfisher Classic Inshore Fishing Tournament

by Yael Girard, Foundation Stewardship and Outreach Coordinator

Yael Girard



Showing off a Redfish

Clay Calhoun



Drawing for the raffle prizes

Yael Girard



Foundation Board Member
Rick Wallace measuring Redfish

Clay Calhoun



The Prize Table

As the sun rose on November 21, bait was purchased, lines were tied, and boat engines were primed. For a lot of these fisherman, they would have been out on the water anyway, but that day they had special incentive to get to their honey hole and catch a whopper. It was the Weeks Bay Foundation's Third Annual Kingfisher Classic Inshore Fishing Tournament.

The tournament has slots in five different categories: Bream, Flounder, Redfish, Speckled Trout, and Largemouth Bass. The first place winners in each category went home with a \$350 cash prize and second place received \$150. This year's cash prizes were provided by **Alabama Gulf Seafood, JADE Consulting LLC, Thompson Engineering, and Tonsmeire Properties. South Shore Insurance Agency** provided prizes for third place winners. Contestants and their families also got a chance to participate in a drawing for everything from fishing rods to YETI products. The Foundation provided a lunch of sausages and snacks while **Fairhope Brewing Company** donated two kegs of beer for the adult contestants. To top it all off, we had a television set up playing the college football game of the day.

Trenny Woodham brought in the biggest fish of the day: a 6.57 pound Speckled Trout. Our youngest winning angler of the day was **Collin Brantley**, who took second in the Largemouth Bass category. Collin told me that he had a good feeling going out on the water that morning and that when he caught his winning fish he just knew it was going to place.

2015 Kingfisher Classic Fishing Tournament:

| Category Sponsor | Category & Place (lbs) |
|---|--|
|  | Speckled Trout 1st: Trenny Woodham (6.57) 2nd: James Long (5.77) 3rd: Wilson McFarland (4.38) |
| | Redfish 1st: James Long (5.53) 2nd: Trenny Woodham (5.36) 3rd: Tim Gregorius (5.19) |
| |  |
|  | Bass 1st: Harold Zapp (2.0) 2nd: Collin Brantley (1.91) 3rd: Harold Zapp (1.85) |
|  | Flounder 1st: Kyle McDowell (.87) |
|  | Bream 1st: Tommy Nelson (.48) 2nd: Tommy Nelson (.39) 3rd: Robert Rohm, Jr. (.39) |

Margaret Sedlecky Retires after 30 Year Career



Just about the time that Reserve founders laid groundwork for designation back in the 80s, a young teacher entered the classroom to pass on her appreciation of the sciences. With a strong background in biology and marine science, **Margaret Holcomb Sedlecky**, a graduate of Auburn University who had completed course work at the Dauphin Island Sea Lab, started her long career as a classroom teacher with the Baldwin County Board of Education.

Margaret taught at several locations in Baldwin County and in 1995 was asked to be the Education Coordinator at the Weeks Bay Reserve. Since that time she has been the spark that exposed many students and teachers to the value of estuaries and coastal resources here in Alabama. As Education Coordinator, Margaret established an activity manual for all kindergarten through twelfth grade levels that visit the Reserve, as well as a Grasses in Classes program engaging high school students and teachers in restoration of coastal habitats, and led development of a national curriculum on estuaries that you can view at estuaries.noaa.gov that provides a wealth of information and activities available to all ages. Winner of many awards for her achievements, Margaret plans to retire from her tenure with Baldwin County after a long career in education.

Over the last twenty years Margaret has served the Reserve and students as a dynamic leader and supporter of estuaries. A big “Thank You” to Margaret for her years of service and “Best of Luck” in future endeavors as she charts new directions in retirement.

Resiliency and Accomplishments at the Weeks Bay Reserve on its 30th Anniversary



Weeks Bay Reserve has proven to be resilient over the 30 years of its existence. During this time it has endured several major natural and man-made disasters. The **Weeks Bay Arthur C. “Skipper” Tonsmeire Resource Center** was built on the heels of two major hurricanes, Ivan in 2004 and Katrina in 2005. Both made significant impacts on the Alabama Gulf coast. In 2010, the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill altered approaches to ecosystem management including techniques utilized by the Reserve.

Weeks Bay Reserve remains resilient. We continue to acquire lands for protection, implement exciting educational programs, and research issues of resource management. We also pursue partnerships that focus on conserving coastal Alabama resources. Collaboration and capacity building have been the strength of the Reserve. With strength and perseverance, the Reserve continues to meet challenges head on.



30 Significant Accomplishments to Celebrate in this 30th Anniversary Year

1. Collected 20 years of continuous System-Wide Monitoring Program data (SWMP), accessible via the internet;
2. Housed the Watershed Project at the Reserve for the past 20 years;
3. Purchased a large-capacity, 45-foot pontoon boat for education and outreach in 2008;
4. Constructed the 5,000 square foot Resource Center overlooking the Weeks Bay estuary;
5. Built partnerships for acquisition that include the Alabama Forever Wild Land Trust, Baldwin County Commission, The Conservation Fund, NOAA, and Weeks Bay Foundation, with support from organizations that include the Alabama Coastal Foundation, Audubon Society, Dauphin Island Sea Lab, Mobile Bay NEP, The Nature Conservancy, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service;
6. Acquired the 685-acre Meadows Tract in 2010, the largest acquisition in the history of Reserve;
7. Acquired six additional tracts adding 248 acres of valuable estuarine habitat to the Reserve;
8. Maintained an active volunteer program for 20 years as a registered “Alabama Unincorporated Nonprofit Association” contributing over 80,000 volunteer hours to Reserve programs;
9. Conducted 22 native plant sales organized by the Weeks Bay Volunteers, placing over 40,000 native plants into local landscapes and educating hundreds of people on the value of native plants and awareness of exotic invasive species;
10. Established an arboretum on Reserve property with 95 species of native plants, continuing to maintain and add to the collection of Baldwin County native and established plants;
11. Planted and maintained 500 longleaf pine trees and 200 wiregrass plants in a longleaf pine restoration project on Reserve property;
12. Formed the Restoration Advisory Board to assist the Reserve in management decisions;
13. Completed the first phase of restoration efforts on the Safe Harbor Tract;
14. Conducted Restoration and Living Shoreline Projects, demonstrating Best Management Practices (BMPs);
15. Mapped aquatic invasive species within management boundaries of Weeks Bay Reserve;
16. Expanded appropriate prescribed fire regime within ecological communities of the Reserve;
17. Completed the *Weeks Bay Facility Master Plan Study and Design* in September 2011 that charts the course of future facilities;
18. Secured Coastal Impact Assistance Program (CIAP) funds to design and implement construction of a new research dormitory;
19. Repaired and replaced the bulkhead and boardwalk at the Fish River Marina boat basins with federal grant and state matching funds;
20. Established the Sentinel Site transect that monitors sea level rise, soon to become a fully functional NOAA site;
21. Hosted more than 20 institutions doing research at the Reserve over the last five years;
22. Conveyed science-based information to coastal managers on best management practices;
23. Received a National Wetlands Education Award and a regional Gulf Guardian Award for partnership;
24. Conducted a professional teacher development market analysis and needs assessment;
25. Conducted needs assessment for community education and outreach;
26. Served as lead for development of Estuaries 101, a national middle school curriculum;
27. Implemented K-12 Estuary Education Program (KEEP), training local and regional teachers how to use web-based curriculum and activities in the classroom;
28. Conducted two additional needs assessments to address natural and man-made disasters;
29. Developed and led a multi-faceted stormwater program that includes specialized Low Impact Development (LID) training sessions, low-impact guidebook, and locally branded stormwater initiative; and
30. Hosted more than 64 Coastal Training Program events reaching 1900 decision-makers, and developed the first Reserve Regional Coastal Training Program.



What's in a Name? Herons, Cranes, Ibises

by Yael Girard, Foundation Stewardship and Outreach Coordinator

Walking along the beach, driving through farmland in your area, or boating down Fish River you have probably seen numerous tall, slender birds wading in the water, soaring through the trees, or pecking at the ground. Some are greyish blue, some are white, some are mottled colors. But, what are they?



HERONS (family: Ardeidae)

- Within the Heron family are also egrets and bitterns. The confusion between herons and egrets is well founded since they live in the same habitat, can be similar colors, and have the same flight shape. Meanwhile, bitterns tend to be smaller and have shorter necks.
- The most common Heron in this area is the Great Blue Heron. These birds can be almost 4 feet tall and are a dusty greyish blue in color as adults. They have black or grey legs and a yellow beak.
- Egrets in our area: Cattle Egret, Great Egret, Snowy Egret, and Reddish Egret.
- Herons in our area: Great Blue Heron, Tri-colored Heron, Green Heron, Yellow-crowned Night Heron, Black-crowned Night Heron, and Little Blue Heron.



CRANES (family: Gruidae)

- Unlike herons and egrets, cranes have shorter necks which they keep held out straight when they fly.
- Sandhill cranes are mostly white with brown wing and tail feathers. They also have a distinctive red heart-shaped “mask” on their faces. Mature Whooping Cranes are white with black-tipped wings, black legs, and black and red facial accents.
- Although there are 15 species of cranes, only two can be seen in our area: the Sandhill Crane and, occasionally, the Whooping Crane which is listed as an endangered species.



IBISES (family: Threskiornithidae)

- The main distinguishing characteristic of the Ibis family is their noticeably down-curved bill. Their coloring can range from iridescent black, to scarlet, to white, with striking orange legs and bills.
- There are around 30 species of Ibis, ranging from the Dwarf Olive Ibis, which is only 2 inches tall to the Giant Ibis which can be over 3 feet tall.
- Ibises in our area: American White Ibis, White-faced Ibis, and Glossy Ibis.

There are numerous other wading birds throughout coastal Alabama. Some live here year-round and some only stop through on their long migratory journeys. The undisturbed wetlands and forests that the Weeks Bay Foundation protects provide important nesting habitat for many of these birds.



Get to Know the Staff at
Weeks Bay Reserve –
Dr. Scott Phipps,
Research Coordinator



Meet **Scott Phipps**, the Research Coordinator at Weeks Bay Reserve. Scott oversees the System-Wide Monitoring Program (SWMP) and coordinates visiting researchers, ensuring that students do not duplicate the studies of others. He also collaborates on research projects and conducts his own inquiries. His main interest is the interactions between aquatic microbial communities and nutrients. Currently, he is working with a student on the changes in microbial assemblage structure due to variation in chemical and biological condition along a transect from the water's edge through the marsh and to the wetland forest. This investigation will lead to improved understanding of the complex processes found in the ecosystem of the Weeks Bay estuary.

Scott received a Bachelor of Science in Botany from Eastern Illinois University while working full time in a printing factory. After graduating, he worked part time for the Illinois EPA. Later, he went on to gain his Master of Science in Biological Science from Eastern Illinois University and his PhD from Mississippi State University. He has served on graduate student committees and continues to advise graduate students.

In his free time, Scott and his wife are both senior AKC judges, and train, compete in, and judge hunting dog field trials.

SPRING 2016 CALENDAR

March

- 8 Guest Lecture Series “Journey to the End of the World”** presented by **Dr. Bill Summerour**. 5 Rivers Delta Resource Center, 7:00 p.m. Bring a friend.

April

- 1-3 Baldwin County Master Gardener Plant Sale.** Safe Harbor at Weeks Bay, across U.S. Highway 98 from the Reserve Visitor Center, 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
- 9 Discovery Day at the Dauphin Island Sea Lab.** Free children's admission to the Estuarium, interactive exhibits at the research laboratories, kids' activities, ocean games, and fun crafts, 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. For more information, go to www.disl.org.
- 12 Guest Lecture Series “Birding Cuba”** presented by **Andrew Haffenden**. 5 Rivers Delta Resource Center, 7:00 p.m. Bring a friend.
- 13 Weeks Bay Advisory Committee Meeting.** Tonsmeire Weeks Bay Resource Center, 2:00 p.m.
- 23 Earth Day Mobile Bay 2016.** Environmental displays and activities, Science Project Fair, and interactive activities for children and adults. Fairhope Pier, 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Free admission. For more information, go to www.earthdaymobilebay.org.
- 23 Bald Eagle Bash.** Fundraiser for the Weeks Bay Foundation. Tonsmeire Weeks Bay Resource Center, 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. For more information, call the Foundation office at (251) 990-5004, or go to www.BaldEagleBash.com.
- 25 Confederate Memorial Day.***
- 30 Delta Woods and Waters Expo Family Day.** 5 Rivers Delta Resource Center, 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Free admission. For more information, go to www.deltawoodsandwatersexpo.com.

May

- 10 Guest Lecture Series “Nature Photography”** presented by **Georgia Sims**. 5 Rivers Delta Resource Center, 7:00 p.m. Bring a friend.
- 30 Memorial Day.***

June

- 20 Weeks Bay Foundation Annual Membership Meeting.** Open to the public. Tonsmeire Weeks Bay Resource Center, 4:30 p.m. For more information, call 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.*



Thanks to Our Donors Nov. 2015 to Jan. 2016

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*In honor and thanksgiving of the
 work of our doctor and friend
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*In honor of her grandparents,
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*In honor of Skipper &
 Elizabeth Tonsmeire*
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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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www.weeksbay.org.

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



Weeks Bay Foundation

11401 US Highway 98
Fairhope, Alabama 36532
(251) 990-5004
www.weeksbay.org

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Photo by John Borom

Laughing Gull
Leucophaeus atricilla

" Hold fast to dreams, for if dreams die, life is a broken-winged bird that cannot fly." - Langston Hughes

7th Annual



Saturday, April 23

4 PM until 7 PM at Weeks Bay Resource Center

Live Music by
The Mulligan Brothers

Your attendance will raise funds to protect the natural resources of coastal Alabama while supporting the Weeks Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve.



Featuring **FRESH GULF SHRIMP**
prepared by the area's finest restaurants.

www.BaldEagleBash.com
or call **(251) 990-5004**

Tickets \$40 in Advance / \$45 at the Gate
Kids 10 and Under FREE

Tickets may be purchased at Page & Palette, the Foundation office, the Weeks Bay Reserve, and the website
\$30 of the ticket price is a tax deductible contribution
No pets. Lawn chairs encouraged.

