



THE SALT LINE

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF
SOUTH ALABAMA LAND TRUST

Friends of Weeks Bay Reserve - Winter 2023



When you think of conserving something, you think about protecting it from being damaged or destroyed. In the case of land conservation, the goal is to safeguard land in its natural state and, in some cases, convert developed properties back into greenspaces. For different folks, this means different things as they view the landscape in coastal Alabama. It may look like wetlands, marshes, pine savannahs, agricultural land, or forested areas. To conservation organizations such as SALT, donating or selling land at a low cost or placing a conservation easement on property you own is fundamental to our mission.



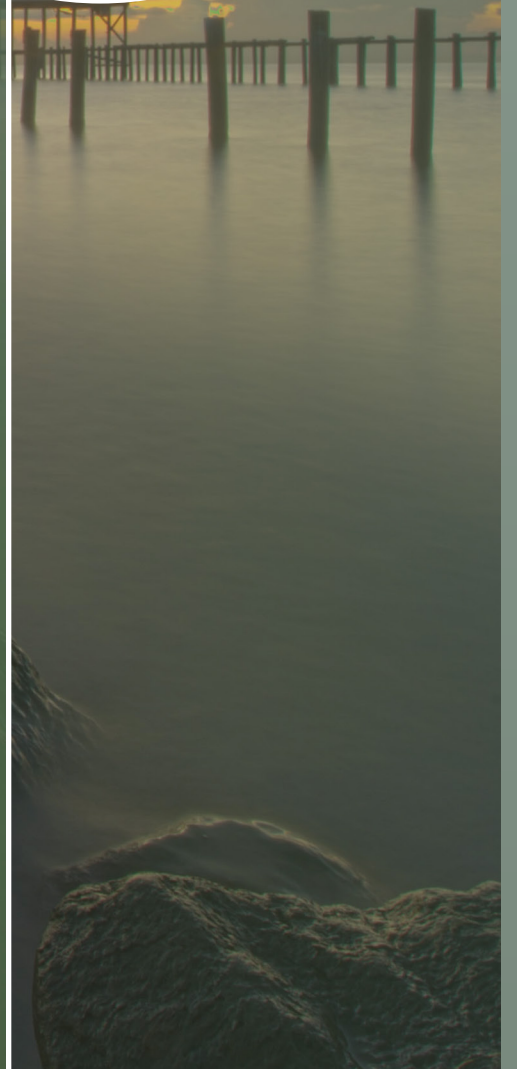
As the percentage of developed land increases, the amount of space available to enjoy recreation, grow edible crops and trees decreases. Protecting places that provide recreation, food sources, natural habitats and clean water are pretty good reasons to support conservation. Development impacts water contamination and overuse, as well as the delicate ecosystem balance—both issues that land conservation can help alleviate.

It's not just the outdoorsy folks who benefit from conservation. If you like to eat, drink, and breathe, conservation should be important to you.

The good news is that everyone can be part of the land conservation solution. If land donation isn't possible, SALT offers a wide variety of opportunities that have a huge impact on its mission. Donations of money, knowledge, and skills are always welcome. If you own property worth conserving, or know of property worth conserving, contact SALT to discuss options. The truth is that SALT couldn't survive without people who volunteer financial resources, time, skills, and knowledge.

Connie Whitaker

Connie Whitaker



FROM THE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



**SOUTH ALABAMA
LAND TRUST**

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Front
(L) Duane Miller
(R) Katherine Kuhn
(B) Jeff Davies
Back
Rodney Kilgore

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The mission of the South Alabama Land Trust is to protect land and promote environmental education so current and future residents can enjoy clean water and the marine life, wildlife, and outdoor recreation that define our area.

CONNECTING WITH CATERPILLARS

For many years, I have been adding to my yard, plants that attract hummingbirds, especially Western hummingbirds that migrate to the Gulf Coast for the winter. Three years ago, I had a total of 6 different hummingbirds in my yard between November and February. I have planted mostly fall blooming plants such as salvias, fire spike, abutilon, etc., but I have also noticed hummingbirds feeding on azaleas and occasionally on camellias.

After reading Doug Tallamy's book *Bringing Nature Home*, I became more interested in learning what native plants I have in my yard and which species of Lepidoptera caterpillars (butterflies and moths) they support. Tallamy stresses the importance of planting native plants on your property in order to support the production of caterpillars which are the main food source for wildlife, especially birds. No native plants, no caterpillars, no birds. Consider that one clutch of Chickadees will consume between 6,000 and 9,000 caterpillars before fledging and you can see the importance of understanding this connection.

I first began an inventory of all native plants I could identify in my yard – a total of 24 native species so far. I say began an inventory, because I am confident that additional native plants will become evident as Spring and Summer roll around. Also, my yard inventory will increase as I add additional native plants as I learn more about which specific plants serve as hosts for specific caterpillars.

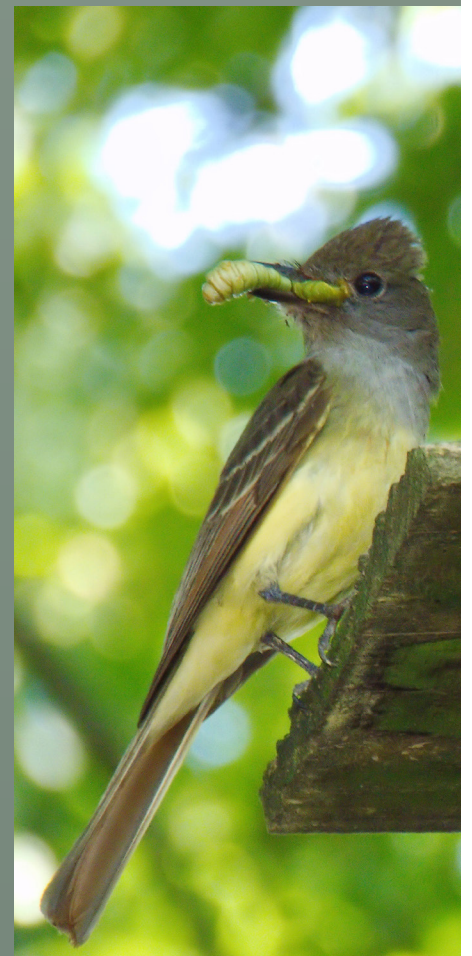
I entered all of my native plants into a spreadsheet by common name, scientific name, a link to the Alabama Plant Atlas, and which plant serves as a host plant for which caterpillar. I searched online for sources of information that lists host plants.

Here are a few online resources that list host plants for Lepidoptera (butterflies and moths) larvae:

1. The Butterfly Website (<https://www.butterfliesandmoths.org/>) provides a database of butterfly and moth species, including information on their preferred host plants.
2. The Xerces Society (<https://xerces.org/>) offers a searchable database of plants that support endangered and at-risk butterfly and moth species.



Long-tailed Skipper Butterfly, Larval



Great Crested Flycatcher by Duane



Larval Stage by Duane Miller



ane Miller

3. The Lepidoptera Hostplants Database (<https://www.nhm.ac.uk/our-science/data/hostplants/>) is a resource maintained by the Natural History Museum in London that lists host plants for over 2,000 species of butterflies and moths.

4. The BugGuide (<https://bugguide.net/>) is a website that provides information about insects including Lepidoptera, you can find more information about host plants for specific species.

5. Top "10" Lists of Wildlife Plants (http://www.pwconserve.org/plants/alonso_top10.pdf). Although prepared for the Chesapeake watershed, many of the host plants identified are applicable to South Alabama as well.

If you have room for only one plant to support caterpillars, you can't go wrong with Oak or Black Cherry trees. Oak trees host more Lepidopteran species (approximately 543) than any other North American plant studied so far. Black Cherry trees serve as the host plant for an amazing array of butterflies and moths – more than 450 species.

So, in closing, I would encourage any of you that are interested in doing your small part to conserve the environment to get out and survey your yard for native plants and understand what benefit they are providing. Then, do a little research and decide which additional native plants you want to add.

--Duane Miller, biologist

Common Name	Scientific Name	Larval Host For
Beautyberry	<i>Callicarpa americana</i>	Spring azure butterflies and snowberry clearwing moths
Black Cherry Tree	<i>Prunus serotina</i>	More than 450 species
Elderberry	<i>Sambucus canadensis</i>	42 species of Lepidoptera



Rhododendron austrinum



Rhododendron canescens

Three Azalea species, in the genus *Rhododendron*, are native to our two Alabama coastal counties.

The most frequent and the first to bloom is the glorious-scented Pink Honeysuckle, *Rhododendron canescens*, with flower colors ranging from intense pink to white.

White flowered Swamp Azalea, *Rhododendron viscosum*, is a late bloomer, with most flowers showing in May to July.

The rare and beautiful Florida Flame Azalea, *Rhododendron austrinum*, shows yellow flowers, usually with red centers, in mid- April. This species is listed as threatened by the Alabama Department of Conservation & Natural Resources.

Native Azaleas are often seen in landscapes, where they do well in part shade and sandy, acidic soil. Several things to avoid in Native Azalea plantings are boggy, saturated soils; lime, which can reduce soil acidity below healthy levels; and salt water. Several bee and butterfly species can usually be

seen at work on the flowers as they collect pollen and nectar from all three of our beautiful Native Azalea species.

--Fred Nation, botanist and writer



Rhododendron viscosum

NATURE'S CORNER

WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBERS

David Ellis grew up swinging from vines in the swamps of Stapleton and generally hanging out on Soldier Creek, Lillian, Alabama. Otherwise, he pulled weeds at Ellis Nursery in Mobile, Alabama. He graduated in Natural Resources from the University of the South, Sewanee, Tennessee, and has spent the last 42 years in various forms of Horticulture and Forestry. Ellis currently owns and operates Coastal Woodland, a small design-build landscape company emphasizing the opportunity of preservation and endemic installations.

Elizabeth Tonsmeire was born and raised in Baldwin County and has been a member and donor to SALT since 2010. She was a board member from 2014-2017 and has a deep understanding of SALT and its mission. Elizabeth loves all water activities and sports, and enjoys eating local fresh seafood.

Jeffrey (Jeff) Davies grew up in Birmingham, Alabama, and has been in Fairhope since 1998. He received his Bachelor of Science in Fisheries Biology from Auburn University and worked as a field biologist with the Alabama Department of Environmental Management. Although Jeff is now a retired biologist, his interests continue to stay strong in longleaf pine ecosystem and pitcher plant bog restoration and management, and gopher tortoise conservation. You may have met Jeff before, helping SALT with anything from creating trails to leading prescribed burns.



Fred Garth has been a professional writer and editor for many decades. He has worked with respected media giants such as *National Geographic*, *CNN* and the *New York Times*. A lifelong resident of the Perdido Bay area, Garth and his brother Thornton helped to found the Perdido Bay Environmental Association in 1988. The nonprofit organization grew out of the need to protect the bay from the paper mill effluent that was (and still is) being dumped into the northern bay. Garth's passion for outdoor adventure includes sailing, windsurfing, fishing, scuba diving, snow skiing, mountain biking, dirt biking and just about anything that delivers a heavy shot of adrenaline. He and his artist wife, Blair, live part time on Perdido Bay, Alabama, and in Crested Butte, Colorado. They have two daughters, Teal and Adia, and Boomer, their rat-murdering cat.



Rodney Kilgore served six years on the Board of Directors for the Weeks Bay Foundation (WBF) and was a member of the Board during the transition to the South Alabama Land Trust (SALT). He has co-chaired the Bald Eagle Bash Committee and currently chairs the Alabama Coastal Birdfest Committee. During his previous term on the Board, he served as one of the judges for the annual photo contest and sits on the Steering Committee for the Eastern Shore Camera Club. Kilgore is a Senior Geologist and Project Manager for PPM consultants and lives in Fairhope, Alabama, with his family. He is an award-winning nature photographer.



Kerry Joseph O'Connor, Sr., is a native and lifelong resident of South Alabama. O'Connor is a graduate of the University of South Alabama and has had a career in banking for forty years, the last ten at Cadence Bank (formerly BancorpSouth). He and his wife of 32 years, Laura Mostellar O'Connor, are proud parents of Kerry Jr. (CPA) and Matthew (MD). O'Connor is an active community member in numerous civic, community, and conservation organizations.



WEEKS BAY RESERVE

Construction's afoot at the Reserve and it has certainly been a busy winter. Guests of our nature trail, which winds through a fire-maintained pine savannah, may have noticed that the overlook at the end of the trail was destroyed by Hurricane Sally. We are pleased to announce that thanks to the hard work from staff and dedicated volunteer, Josephine Bosworth-Canner, the overlook repairs have been completed. Once again it is a spot to relax and enjoy a nice vista of Weeks Bay. Any reason is a good excuse to enjoy a walk-through nature, so consider using this as a chance to take some time and check it out.

Keen eyes may have spotted the heavy machinery parked by our educational pontoon boat while driving over the bridge past the Weeks Bay Resource Center. This machinery marks the culmination of a project that has been in the making for several years. Accomplished through public access funding from the Alabama Coastal Area Management Program and donations to SALT, a highly anticipated, accessible kayak launch has been installed. This will allow for increased use and ease of access to Weeks Bay. A ribbon cutting is in the works to celebrate the launch's opening. Our continued efforts will also provide trail improvements, including construction of a new pitcher plant bog boardwalk starting this spring!

--Sarah Johnston, Weeks Bay Reserve GIS Specialist

In January, Weeks Bay Reserve welcomed a new Coastal Training Program Coordinator, Johanna Gertsch. Johanna comes to us with knowledge that ranges from coast to coast. She received her Bachelor of Science in Marine Biology from Alaska Pacific University in Anchorage, AK. After earning her degree, she worked for the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. After jumping from the west coast to gulf coast she spent a few years as a kayak and pontoon eco-tour guide in lower Alabama. Most recently she worked at Gulf State Park where she delivered interpretive programming and assisted in habitat management. She is very excited to be part of the WBNERR team and have a greater impact on conservation!

--Angela Underwood, Weeks Bay Reserve Manager



OUR SUPPORTERS

SEPTEMBER 1, 2022 - NOVEMBER 30, 2022

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Steward

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Mike Healy and Marilyn Mannhard
J. Tunstall Inge
Gena and Jay Todia

Advocate

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Sage Bolt
Clay and Rebecca Bryant
Frank and Jane Feagin
Gary and Debbie Freedman
Bob and Lolly Holk
Fred and Nancy Holk
Chuck Huguley
Claire Klyce
Steve and Susan McClure
Duane and Betty Miller
George Nelson, Jr.
David and Caroline Pryor
Shirley D. Silverman
Nancye Wolfe
Andrew and Christy Chason
Brian and Charlotte Naylor

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Clive and Robyn Robinson
Suzanne Torbert
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Robert Wilters
Jennifer Wren and Jeremy
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Donald Stewart
Mark and Amanda Ward
Steve and Katie Warren
Michael O. Stodard, MD
Eric and Christine Brunner
Terry Delker
Nick and Kathie Gill
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Shirley Gilmore
Mary Haynes
Bob Houck
Betty Huff
Dean and Carolyn Koch
Charles Lilly
Karen Lyons
Larry Morehouse
Seth Peden

Phil and Carolyn Sankey
Ivan and Rosella Turner
Jo Ann Wettlaufer

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Connie Baggett
Karen Chiasson
Mike and Amy DePriest
John and Kim Estes
Sandy Geddes
Elizabeth Gilbreath
Mike and Carol Gordon
Steve Heath
Mike and Trish Howell
Cade Kistler
Laura Kramer
Houston and GiGi Lott
Paul W Marcinko
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Melissa Pershina
Nanette Peturis
Jeff and Donyale Rawson
Randy and Kay Roach
John Craig Shaw
Benjamin Snyder
Betty Suddeth
William Wallace
James and Kathleen Whitson
Lundy Wilder

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Chris and Karen Bailey
George Bailey
Paul Baroco, MD
Richard and Dianne Bass
Bob and Mary Bender
Dr. and Mrs. Randy Bentley
Lewis Beville

John Brown
 Allan and Nancy Chason
 Cleverdon Farms Inc.
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 Jerry Collins
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 Kyle and Suzanne Deloach
 Dennis Aluminum Products
 Mary and Van Finger
 Winston G. Foster
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 Duncan and Nancy Greenwood
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 Ickes Tree Service
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 James Johnson
 Brooke and Chuck Kelly
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 Houston and GiGi Lott
 Richard and Cindy Lowell
 Tadd and Anne McVay
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 Gena and Jay Todia
 Elizabeth Tonsmeire
 Dawn Trecartin
 Beth Turner
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 Ike and Stephanie Williams

TRIBUTE GIFTS

In Memory of Dorothy Crowell
 Lacie Maynard

In Memory of Arthur Frego
 Michael and Debbie Quinn

In Memory of Dr. James P. Hannahan
 Charles T. Staples

In Honor Of Virginia McPhearson
 Grace O'Grady

In Memory of Sydney R. Prince
 Ellen McWhorter

In Memory of Vester Jay Thompson III
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 Sage Bolt
 J. Patrick Courtney
 Randolph and Martin Cunningham
 Robert and Carolyn Israel
 Erin McHam
 Ellen and Hobart McWhorter
 Lin Moore
 Alexa Mosteller
 Norman Pitman
 Greer Radcliff

2022 ALABAMA COASTAL BIRDFEST

Alabama Gulf Coast Convention and
 Tourism Bureau
 Alabama Power Company
 Alabama Tourism Department
 Eastern Shore Developmental Clinic LLC
 Mobile Bay Audubon Society
 Mobile County Alabama
 The Lodge at Gulf State Park
 TIAA Bank



Bald Eagle Bash

Shrimp

Beer

Wine

Live Music

Local Restaurants

Good Times

April 29, 2023, 4-7pm





SOUTH ALABAMA
LAND TRUST

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WHAT'S HAPPENING

April 13-15

Baldwin County Master Gardeners
Spring Plant Sale across from Weeks Bay Reserve

April 22

Earth Day

April 29

Bald Eagle Bash at Tonsmeire Resource Center