

# THE PELICAN POST

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Best of Show  
by Mark Watts

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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

## *From the Executive Director . . .*

In coastal Alabama, we are blessed with ridiculously short and mild winters! Already, the warm days of spring are almost upon us. Early flowers have started peeking out from the dead leaves. Fresh green buds are bursting from young branches. The days are lengthening again and our favorite birds are coming back to nest.

This is a beautiful time to come by Weeks Bay and visit the Weeks Bay Pitcher Plant Bog or the boardwalks behind the Reserve's Otilie Halstead Visitor Center. It is a great place to shoot some photos for the next **Weeks Bay Photo Contest**. While you're here you can also take a look at the new **Marine Debris** exhibit at the visitor center and learn more about the ongoing research that is being done on **Living Shorelines**.

This spring, we are growing right along with the plants! We have added a new position at the Foundation, bringing our staff up to three. **Diana Brewer** joins the team as our new Development and Communications Coordinator. We are very happy to have her and know that she will bring great experience and contacts to our organization. Make sure to mark your calendars for the **2017 Bald Eagle Bash**, where you will get a chance to meet her in person.

With all the sunshine and new life, it is time to throw open the windows, take an afternoon stroll, put the boat in the water, and bask in the beauty of our coast.

Thank you for being part of the Weeks Bay Family!




Kathy Hicks



## For Diana Brewer, This Feels Like “Coming Home”

A little more than 30 years ago, two college friends and I loaded up a pick-up truck and took off from Mobile, Alabama, to Orono, Maine, where one of us (not me) was about to begin grad school. We camped our way through the Great Smoky Mountains, the Blue Ridge Mountains, the Shenandoah National Park, and other state and national parks along the way. It was the adventure of a lifetime!



We took our time. We hiked, we built campfires, we quietly watched a momma bear as she shepherded her cubs through a lush green forest. And we learned so much, not the least of which was to keep all food locked up in the truck to avoid attracting bears while we slept in our tent. It’s hard to accurately describe such a trip, except to say I came away thinking everyone should experience nature in this way.

Growing up in coastal Alabama, our family vacations always involved camping. In fact, I don’t think I stayed in a hotel room until college. Even a trip to Disney World meant camping in one of Disney’s fine campgrounds. Summers involved Mobile Bay. From swimming in the Bay, to sailing, to crabbing off the end of a pier, to floundering with a gig and flounder light at the mouth of Weeks Bay, we made some great memories. Occasionally, we’d rent a beach house at Gulf Shores when the heat was just too oppressive for a family with six children to consider tent camping.

Fast forward to having children of my own, when our area waterways, the Bay, the beaches became permanent fixtures in our family’s collective memory. Our boys learned to kneeboard, wakeboard, ski, fish, and drive a boat on Fish River. We spent hours swimming in the “cold hole” in Magnolia Springs and Sunday afternoons picnicking, diving off piers, kayaking, and enjoying hundreds of spectacular sunsets. I don’t believe there is a better place on earth to raise a family.

Joining the team of the Weeks Bay Foundation feels as natural to me as picking crabs at a picnic table covered in newspaper on a warm July evening. The notion that I get to help protect what is ours is a privilege. The idea that my children’s children would not get to create their own incredible memories such as those I have shared is unacceptable to me. I have had several jobs since that trip to Orono, Maine, in a pickup truck with two other idealistic girls, and each had an important mission and cause. But none has been as personal as this one.

I am grateful and happy to take on the challenge of sharing the Weeks Bay Foundation story, because it’s part of my story, and probably yours. Part of my role will be to raise the funds to protect what is ours to cherish—our waterways, our woods, and our wetlands. Together, we can ensure that our story is also the story of future generations.



Sailing on the bay as a youngster



Time at the creek

## Distinguished Weeks Bay Volunteers: Nancy and Jim Gaines

*by Maureen Nation, Reserve Volunteer Coordinator*

As they prepared to depart the Gulf Coast and relocate to Huntsville, **Nancy and Jim Gaines** were recognized during the Weeks Bay Volunteers' annual membership meeting on January 17 for their distinguished service to the Weeks Bay Volunteers and the Weeks Bay Foundation. They were presented with a plaque that read, "In recognition and appreciation of Jim & Nancy Gaines; Dedicated, hard-working members of the Weeks Bay Reserve Volunteers and Foundation; For their years of service to the environment." Nancy and Jim have been integral members of the Weeks Bay Volunteers from the beginning. They drafted the by-laws and the constitution and in 1996, they registered the organization as an unincorporated non-profit association with the State of Alabama.

Jim served as Treasurer for the last seven years and Nancy ably guided the Volunteers, both as a board member and as its president. Her position on the board permitted her to act as an effective liaison with the Baldwin County Master Gardeners. Without Nancy and Jim, our plant sales will not be the same!

Jim and Nancy were also active Weeks Bay Foundation members. Jim sat on the Foundation's Board of Directors and also represented the Foundation on the Dauphin Island Bird Sanctuaries, Inc. (DIBS) board. The Foundation holds easements on DIBS properties, and Jim was effective in acquiring new properties for DIBS. He also prepared DIBS's tax returns. Nancy's abilities and enthusiasm benefited the Foundation in numerous ways. She helped design many of the Foundation's Christmas ornaments and participated actively in their sales. She also applied these skills in fundraising with the sale of Bald Eagle Bash tickets and by manning the Foundation's retail booth at the Bash and the Alabama Coastal BirdFest Bird & Conservation Expo.

Jim and Nancy's enthusiasm, dedication to the environment, and combined wealth of wonderful ideas, suggestions, and insights have made the Reserve a better place. They will be greatly missed. We wish them well and know that our loss will most certainly be Huntsville's great gain.



Maureen Nation, Reserve Volunteer Coordinator, (center) presents a plaque of appreciation to Jim and Nancy Gaines

## Marine Debris Exhibit Addresses Weeks Bay Problem

*by Angela Underwood, Reserve Education Coordinator*

Marine debris, also known as marine litter, is anything solid and manmade that ends up in the marine environment and is not supposed to be there. It can be microscopic or very large, and is one of the biggest pollution problems facing the world's oceans, bays, and rivers today. Increasing public awareness of this threat remains a focus of education efforts at Weeks Bay Reserve. The Reserve staff is very involved in planning and coordinating the annual Alabama Coastal Cleanup, and this year will mark the 30th anniversary of that event in the state. We have also recently completed the design and installation of a new marine debris educational kiosk in the Reserve's Otilie Halstead Visitors Center. This display, funded by a grant from NOAA's Marine Debris Program, highlights common sources of marine debris and the impact of that debris on wildlife and habitats. The display also provides suggestions on how to reduce the impact of marine debris to sensitive coastal species and ecosystems.



The recent discovery of a dead dolphin tangled in fishing line on the shores of Weeks Bay provided a stark reminder of the urgent need to continue and enhance these educational efforts. **Jimmy Lenaghan**, a resident on Weeks Bay, discovered the dolphin. He expressed dismay and disappointment over the loss of this treasured resource, saying "We need



to do a better job as stewards of God’s creatures.” Entanglement and ingestion of marine debris are two of the most notable types of impact on wildlife, and yet they are two of the most preventable. You can do your part to prevent future debris-related tragedy by properly disposing of trash, including plastic bags, used fishing line, nets, and other tackle, and also by participating in local and regional cleanup events.

## Living Shorelines: Adaptive Strategies for Changing Tides

by Nigel A. Temple, Dr. Eric Sparks, Sara Martin, Daniel Firth, Jamie Amato, & Dr. Just Cebrian

In Lower Alabama and across the United States, new, environmentally-friendly erosion control techniques are being used to stabilize shorelines. These techniques, known collectively as “Living Shorelines,” vary in design and costs from the planting of a few marsh grasses to extensive planting in conjunction with hardened



Breakwaters on Mobile Bay protect the shoreline from erosive wave energy. Photo courtesy of The Nature Conservancy

tidal structures such as oyster reefs or breakwaters. In contrast to bulkheads, living shorelines have many natural benefits in addition to erosion control. This includes the maintenance of intertidal marsh grasses that remove pollutants and providing habitat for many important coastal fisheries. Like most commercial and residential construction projects, selecting the appropriate living shoreline design depends on various site characteristics. While considerable progress has been made by researchers to maximize the benefits and minimize the costs of living shoreline designs,

questions remain on how several site characteristics affect project outcomes and costs. In response, a team of graduate and PhD students, led by Mississippi State University, is currently investigating these characteristics at the Weeks Bay Reserve.

The ongoing project, located on the eastern shore of Mobile Bay, seeks to further improve the efficiency of living shoreline designs. A major focus of this project is the ability of breakwaters to reduce wave energy and erosion, leading to increased shoreline plant growth, and the enhancement of natural benefits. These additional “natural benefits” include carbon storage, pollution removal, and habitat creation. To evaluate the effects of breakwater construction in conjunction with marsh grass planting on these factors, experimental plots were established onshore with and without breakwaters. Plots consist of one of three planting types: naturally occurring vegetation, planted marsh grasses, and barren plots with no vegetation.

These were chosen to provide coastal managers with information on how the planting of marsh grasses behind breakwaters affects natural benefits and costs. For example, does the addition of nursery grown plants behind breakwaters accelerate shoreline recovery? Will areas with no plants erode?



Research team setting up test sites. Photo courtesy of Eric Sparks

The natural benefits listed above will be evaluated to determine the effectiveness of each living shoreline design. Results from this project will help to increase the cost-effectiveness of future projects currently being planned with oil spill money from the *Deepwater Horizon* settlement.

In addition to the research projects at the Weeks Bay Reserve, our team is working to promote the use of living shoreline designs as an alternative to hardened structures (most notably, bulkheads). At events across Florida, Alabama, and Mississippi, we provide practical information on the benefits, costs, and permitting of living shorelines compared to hardened structures for coastal property owners. If you are interested in learning more about living shorelines and their possible benefits for your property, stop by our booth at the 2017 Bald Eagle Bash or consider attending one of our upcoming living shorelines workshops (email [eric.sparks@msstate.edu](mailto:eric.sparks@msstate.edu) for more information).



# 2016 Weeks Bay Photo Contest

If you are fortunate enough to have visited coastal Alabama, or live here full time, there is no denying this is a beautiful place. Sometimes that beauty is seen in the battered bark of 100 year-old cypress trees. Other times it is the ephemeral glow of a summer sunset. Sometimes, capturing those moments can be challenging; the light isn't right, the colors don't show up, or you forget your camera in the car!

The Foundation turns to the photographers in our area to help us preserve these breathtaking scenes for everyone to enjoy. The Weeks Bay Photo Contest showcases the amazing sights in our area through pictures. With Adult and Junior divisions and categories such as Flora, Fauna, Habitat, and People in Nature, the contest allows photographers to focus in on their favorite subject matter. For some people, this is their grandchildren playing at the beach. For others, it is close-ups of the colorful butterflies that frequent our native plants.

We had 160 entries in the 2016 contest, including numerous Junior division competitors. Our judges, **Rodney Kilgore**, **Georgia Sims**, and **Debbie Godard**, had the difficult task of picking the winners in each category and an overall Best in Show. The winners can also be viewed online at [weeksbay.org](http://weeksbay.org).

We appreciate everyone who participated in the 2016 Weeks Bay Photo Contest. If you did not get a chance to enter this past year, get to shooting now and consider signing up in October 2017. Entry details and deadline will be posted on our website, Facebook page, and e-newsletter, as well as in the Summer issue of *The Pelican Post*.

## Open Habitat



1st Place: Mark Watts



2nd Place: Wins



3rd Place: Tonda Dickerson



2nd Place: Ton



Hon. Mention: Beth Ta

## Open Fauna



1st Place: Mark Watts



2nd Place: Sophia Haines



Hon. Mention: Beth Tattersall



3rd Place: Karen Chiasson

## Open Flora



1st Place: Winston McQuitery



1st Place: T



2nd Place: Tonda Dickerson



3rd Place: Karen Chiasson



Hon. Step

## Junior Flora



1st Place: Aidan Hood



2nd Place: Jessie Guy



3rd Place: Manning Meador



Hon. Mention: Sloan Bryant

## Junior Habitat



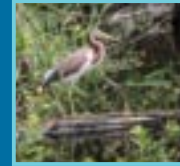
1st Place: Isaac Martin



2nd Place: Manning Meador



3rd Place: Manning Meador



Hon. Mention: Isaac Martin



Best of Show, Mark Watts

## Junior Fauna



1st Place: Jessie Guy



2nd Place: Isaac Martin



3rd Place: Aidan Hood



Hon. Mention: Cannon Bethea

## Open People in Nature



1st Place: Tonda Dickerson



2nd Place: Karen Chiasson



Hon. Mention: Sophia Haines



3rd Place: Laurie Schaerer

## Junior People in Nature



1st Place: Isaac Martin



2nd Place: Cannon Bethea



3rd Place: Cannon Bethea



Hon. Mention: Aidan Hood



## Mike Shelton Receives National Award from NOAA

*by L.G. Adams, Reserve Manager*

Reserve staff member, **Mike Shelton**, was recently recognized for his exceptional contributions to the National Coastal Training Program. Although he works locally, Mike's positive impact on the national system of reserves has been felt Gulf-wide and beyond. As coordinator of the Coastal Training Program (CTP), he led the effort to establish a regional coordinator that was first housed at the Reserve and funded by a grant to the Weeks Bay Foundation. Mike routinely leads training programs that benefit Alabama's coastal community on topics such as storm water compliance issues, sea level rise decision support tools, sediment and erosion control compliance for contractors, climate adaptation for coastal communities, and marine debris response.

**Pete Wiley** of the NOAA Office for Coastal Management recently said, "[Mike's] contribution to national work groups and his willingness to lend his experience and expertise to how we think about CTP nationally make him well deserving of this recognition. Mike exhibits generosity to new CTP coordinators as a mentor, through collaborations and through his willingness to provide advice and guidance informally. The reason the Gulf CTPs are so strong is due in no small part to Mike's influence."



Mike's efforts provide a model for the CTP community and are a shining example of commitment to programs of excellence for the local community and regional audiences. Through regional partnerships with other Gulf Coast Reserves, Weeks Bay Reserve CTP training events assist in meeting the needs of audiences in northwest Florida, coastal Mississippi, and have even reached audiences in Louisiana. Congratulations to Mike Shelton for receiving this NOAA Award, and thank you for all of the excellent work you do at the Weeks Bay Reserve.

## Lisa Weatherwax, Reserve Administrative Assistant

*by Maureen Nation, Reserve Volunteer Coordinator*



**Lisa Weatherwax** joined the Reserve staff as the Administrative Assistant in February 2016. She brought with her a many-faceted background and an array of skills.

Along with her accounting and business background, she has extensive experience in the human health field. Lisa traveled throughout Baldwin and Mobile counties for the health department, conducting wellness screenings in area schools and State offices. She also met with the public administering the H1M1 influenza vaccine, and gathering the necessary documentation. She worked at Thomas Hospital in the same-day surgery and skilled nursing units.





Lisa worked for Madison County in the Tax Assessor's office, taking aerial photos and plotting boundary lines. Before coming to the Reserve, she worked at the Baldwin County Health Department in Robertsdale. Her experience with the public makes her uniquely qualified for her position at the Weeks Bay Reserve, where she is often called upon to interact with visitors. She also helps train new volunteers with "meet and greet" techniques at the front desk, and she makes our volunteers feel welcome and appreciated.

As the Administrative Assistant, Lisa coordinates all purchases for the Reserve. She prepares Reserve documents, reports, and grants. Lisa attends quarterly Advisory Committee meetings where she records the minutes. She is also an accomplished photographer who grabs her camera at a moment's notice to document many events at the Reserve! We are glad that Lisa, with her many "hats," has become a valued member of the staff at the Weeks Bay Reserve.

## SPRING 2017 CALENDAR

### March

- 8 Weeks Bay Advisory Committee Meeting.** Tonsmeire Weeks Bay Resource Center, 2:00 p.m.
- 11 Volunteer Day at the Swift Tract Restoration and Research Project.** Volunteers will assist with the planting of marsh grass along the Weeks Bay Reserve's Swift Tract. Meet at Big Mouth/Pelican Point, 9:00 a.m. For more information, contact **Eric Brunden** at (251) 928-9792, or **Yael Girard** at (251) 990-5004.
- 14 Guest Lecture Series "Update on the Alabama Coastal Bird Stewardship Program"** presented by **Chris Oberholster**, Partnership Policy Director, Birmingham Audubon Society. 5 Rivers Delta Resource Center, 7:00 p.m. Bring a friend.
- 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.

### April

- 7-9 Baldwin County Master Gardener 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.
- 8 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](http://www.disl.org).
- 11 Guest Lecture Series "Nature Photography"** presented by **Spence Harrison**. 5 Rivers Delta Resource Center, 7:00 p.m. Bring a friend.

### April (continued)

- 22 Earth Day Mobile Bay 2017.** 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](http://www.earthdaymobilebay.org).
- 22 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](http://www.BaldEagleBash.com).
- 24 Confederate Memorial Day.\***
- 29 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](http://www.deltawoodsandwatersexpo.com).

### May

- 9 Guest Lecture Series "Saint Augustine and Central Florida"** presented by **Kathy Hicks**. 5 Rivers Delta Resource Center, 7:00 p.m. Bring a friend.
- 29 Memorial Day.\***

### June

- 5 Jefferson Davis' Birthday.\***

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



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*In honor of Ellis Allen*  
 Lila Dexter

*In honor of Rick Wallace and  
 John Borom. Thank you for  
 all your great work.*  
 Walter Ernest

*In memory of Dr. Earnest Markell*  
 Curtis, Jr.  
 GHS Forum Group

*In honor of GiGi Lott*  
 Nick Gill

*In memory of Earnest Markell*  
 Curtis, Jr., M.D.  
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*In honor of Ron Perry*  
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*In honor of Marla & Dan Lumpkin -  
 "Thanks for the lift"*  
 Jim & Gail Laughner

*In honor of Lesley Pacey*  
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*In honor of The Jay and  
 Amy Thompson Family*  
 Lin Moore

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 the Foundation's newest member*  
 Dave & Ruth Morine

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 Bobby & Sharon Sharp

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 Mr. & Mrs. James T. Snoddy

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 The Staff of Walcott Adams  
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*In memory of Earnest Markell*  
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Great Egret  
*Ardea alba*

Photo by John Borom

"Nature always wears the colors of the spirit." - Ralph Waldo Emerson

8th Annual



Presented by the Weeks Bay Foundation

**Saturday, April 22**

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**  
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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.*

