



Bay County Conservancy, Inc.

The Land Conservancy of Northwest Florida

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Fall 2018 Newsletter
www.baycountyconservancy.org

The Oltz Family Preserve

Reawakening An Old Southern Garden

The growl of our brushmower rumbling to life merges with the rising screech of cicadas on the Oltz Family Preserve. Our work days here involve clearing dead brush and palmetto fronds. We pull what seems like miles of smilax vine out of small trees and berry bushes and mow through the ever-encroaching wild grape vines to make room for a couple of cars to park.

Once the mowing ceases, the peace and quiet returns. And it is this quietude that is part of the 2 and 1/2 acre preserve's charm. Although only blocks away from Highway 390 in Lynn Haven, it is easy to forget the traffic and the tarmac here. Saw palmetto leaves rustle in the breeze, and the occasional anole scampers across the pathways we're creating. In one section, puffy, greenish-white clouds of deer moss carpet a sunny clearing. We plan to put a bench in this area eventually, to provide a place for visitors to sit and enjoy the greens and browns of the woods.

An old pine tree nearby has dropped some small limbs; we move them to one of the growing brushpiles behind the palmettos. The persimmon tree's branches (a tree probably planted by Eileen Oltz, the donor of the preserve) now droop low under the weight of the ripening fruit. Scarlet wild basil is blooming along the path, its tiny flowers waving like miniature flags.



A Cooper's Hawk sometimes perches in one of the pines above where we're working and we occasionally spot a box turtle making its way through the underbrush. Bird life abounds—at different times of year we've watched cardinals, towhees, yellow-bellied sapsuckers, warblers, flycatchers and even bluebirds out by the preserve entrance at the corner of Britton Rd. and East 9th Street.

We think we can successfully add more native plants to this preserve as time goes on. We have heard that a boy scout may be interested in focusing his Eagle Scout project here—and we hope to hear more about his plans very soon.

Eileen Oltz passed away in January 2016. The Bay County Conservancy will insure that her old Southern garden will continue to flourish for years to come, providing safe haven for the woodland critters that Eileen loved to watch - and a place for visitors to reflect on the simple beauty that nature offers.

-Teresa Nooney



**Please join us on Friday, Oct. 12th, 2018,
at 9:00 a.m., as we celebrate the Oltz
Family Preserve's official opening.**

**From 390, take Britton Rd. to the end.
Turn left onto E. 9th Street. The preserve
entrance is on the left.**

Birds, Bugs and Berries: The Bird and Native Plant Connection



On March 29, the Bay County Conservancy collaborated with four other local organizations to present a Symposium at Gulf Coast State College titled **Birds, Bugs and Berries: The Bird and Native Plant Connection**. The event's overall purpose was to encourage the use of native plants to help Panhandle bird populations. We thoroughly enjoyed partnering with: **Sweetbay Chapter – Florida Native Plant Society; Bay County Audubon Society; UF/IFAS Bay County Extension/Master Gardeners and Gulf Coast State College.**



For more information about native plants and gardening for birds, check out:

Florida Native Plant Society: fnps.org

IFAS EDIS: edis.ifas.ufl.edu

Audubon: audubon.org/plantsforbirds

Habitat Network: yardmap.org

Florida Association of Native Nurseries (FANN): floridanativenurseries.org

And to learn about invasive plants in our area, visit:

Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council (FLEPPC): fleppc.org



Air Potato Beetle Update



In January, BCC volunteers helped clear away a huge tangle of air potato vines from Audubon Nature Preserve behind the Orthopedic offices at the corner of State Ave. and 19th St. This location is usually where we hold our annual Air Potato Roundup; this year we were vine-clearing due to the lack of air potatoes on the site—which is a good thing! The lack of air spuds was partly due to the success of the air potato beetles we released there; they eat only air potato leaves and bulbils. This summer we've watched the air potato vine start to leaf out again, and we monitored regularly for signs that our beetle population made it through the winter. Finally in



July, we spotted beetles. To help them out, we released another batch of beetles – thanks to our local IFAS/Extension Office. This second batch is a slightly different color—more rusty brown than bright red. Whatever the color, we are hopeful that the beetles will chomp their way through the potato vine foliage again and help us keep this invasive vine from claiming any more of our native plant life. —**Teresa Nooney**

Take a Walk: Loop Trail at Juniper Headwaters Preserve



When the weather cools down, head north on Hwy. 231 to Juniper Headwaters and take a hike on the loop trail. It's not a long trek, but it's a good place to get away from the traffic and noise for an hour.

To get there: Take 231 North to Fountain. Turn left onto Silver Lake Road. Follow the curve to the right, then watch for the Juniper Headwaters Preserve sign at the T-junction. The loop trail is signed—just a short walk through the trees from the entry sign. The path will be muddy if there has been any rain, so bring your boots and keep an eye out for wildlife!



Meet BCC Board Members John Bente and Brian Dusseault



John Bente

I came to this area in 1970 and have maintained a Bay County residence since then. I initially worked as a biologist in Marine Aquaculture. In 1994, I began working with the Florida Park Service as a District 1 (Panhandle Parks) Biologist. I retired from that in 2014 and began working for Atlanta Botanical Garden on

a partner project at Deer Lake State Park in Walton County restoring degraded seepage slope and wet prairie communities in the park. I am currently still working on that project.

- **John Bente**

I recently retired from the practice of law, and am interested in devoting time to environmental concerns. Born in Washington, DC, I was raised in Panama City, attended Bay High School, and graduated from Florida State University. I am an Eagle Scout, and have always appreciated the outdoors, more broadly “Nature”. My wife Beverly and I were blessed with three children and seven grandchildren. Bev and I

love hiking in the mountains and breathing fresh air. I admire the Conservancy and its commitment to preserving land (often habitat) as a long-term strategy for saving and thus preserving Earth’s life for generations. I hope I can contribute locally to this goal. - **Brian Dusseault**



Brian and Beverly Dusseault

What’s in a Name?

Does a name matter? Don’t we all want a good name? The Bay County Conservancy’s preserves are often named after memorable people or places. Mary Ola Reynolds Miller, for example, was a moving force in the art community in Panama City. She was equally committed to conservation and donated the downtown Palm Preserve to the Conservancy in 2002. Mary Ola died in 2011.

The 12 1/2 acre Doreen Miley Holder Preserve was a gift of family lands made by Mrs. Holder’s husband and sister. The Hazel and Herselle Wilderness Preserve in Calhoun County was donated so future generations of children could romp in the woods as the donors’ family had. Tully Park in Franklin County tells a similar story. James Calvin Tully loved Florida and St. George Island and this park was donated in his honor.

A dedicated supporter of the Conservancy and the mother of President Candis Harbison, Margaret Meek was alive and well when the 15 acres on Callaway Creek was named to recognize her longtime support of the Conservancy. Margaret Meek was born in 1923 and died in 2015. It now honors her memory. A parcel in Sandy Creek was named the McNaughton Preserve after the man whose unrealized dream was to build on it some day, and the Louis Stürke Preserve in northern Bay County has become a wildlife haven in honor of its former owner. The Oltz Preserve is mentioned on the first page of this newsletter.

Marjorie’s Magical Marsh—Symone’s Sanctimonious Swamp is named after a grandmother and granddaughter. Marjorie had passed on when the family named the preserve, but Symone (who will soon be a teenager), still joins field trips to this preserve.

If you would like to support any of these preserves, please let us know. Volunteers are always needed to maintain the properties, benches are often needed, and financial contributions help to both maintain and enlarge preserves. And, there are unnamed conservation lands including an L-shaped parcel with a view of Mexico Beach and a parcel in Lynn Haven.

In recognition of the fact that we now own preserves in five counties, Bay County Conservancy has added “The Land Conservancy of Northwest Florida” to its title.

If you would like to honor or remember someone, please consider donating a parcel of family land. If you have any fond memories of those with a preserve named after them, please let us know!

- **Jackie Kolk**

Mission Statement

The Bay County Conservancy is a land trust dedicated to the preservation of environmentally sensitive lands in Northwest Florida.

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Out and About: Field Trip to Tumble Creek Preserve



On February 8, several BCC Board members and staff traveled up to Tumble Creek Preserve in Washington County. We were met there by **Robert Wheeler**—a preserve neighbor who keeps an eye on the property for the Conservancy. Many thanks, Robert!

We planted a persimmon tree by the preserve sign and hiked down to the creek, passing by several Florida anise trees and titi on the way. Later, we explored the upland portions of the preserve - enjoying the long leaf pines, wiregrass and turkey oak typical of the habitat in the area. We hope to visit again soon and repaint the trail markers.

Bay County Conservancy -

The Land Conservancy of Northwest Florida—

is a 501(c) (3) non-profit corporation.

Your donations and membership contributions help local people...

...save local lands!



**Gulf Coast Hospital
erected this new sign that
points people to Audubon
Nature Preserve, Doctors'
Pond area.**

**They recognize the
healing aspect of Nature.**



BCC Membership Form

**Yes! I want to help the Bay County Conservancy -
-The Land Conservancy of Northwest Florida -
save open space, wetlands and wildlife habitat.**

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone/Email: _____

Level: (circle one):

\$25-\$49 Contributor

\$200-\$999 Benefactor

\$50-\$199 Supporter

\$1,000+ Lifetime

Please mail this form to: Bay County Conservancy, P.O. Box 1122 Panama City, FL 32402