



Bay County Conservancy, Inc.

The Land Conservancy of Northwest Florida

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Summer 2016 Newsletter
www.baycountyconservancy.org



Environmental Demonstration Day



The A. Crawford Mosley High School parking lot was transformed into an outdoor classroom on May 19th, giving hundreds of students an opportunity to learn about local efforts to preserve habitat and protect wildlife. After reaching out to Mosley Science Department Chair **Lorene Lindsay**, Bay County Conservancy Board Member **Phil Mount** wasted no time getting the full-day event coordinated.

BCC partnered with experts from the **Bay County Audubon Society**, the **US Fish and Wildlife Service**, **Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission** and the **Florida Forest Service**. Students were able to meet with biologists, ecologists and forestry specialists for hands-on learning at several exhibition tables set up on the school grounds.

BCC's **Candis Harbison** and **Teresa Nooney** provided information on "Aliens vs Natives" - emphasizing the negative effects on biodiversity when exotic plants like Chinese tallow, Cogon grass, Japanese climbing fern, etc. are allowed to grow unchecked.



FWC's exhibit included turtle shells and skulls and a 3-D view of the inside of a sea turtle nest.



Candis Harbison explains how invasive alien plants can destroy habitat and crowd out native vegetation.



At the Audubon tent, **Ron Houser** showed students how to view birds with binoculars and a birding scope. FWS Biologist **Patty Kelly** and Ecologist **Harold Mitchell** had local species of crayfish and snakes on hand, and described how habitat loss may threaten their survival.

Other highlights included a bear trap, a beach mouse burrow exhibit, sea turtle shells and nesting info, tree and leaf identification displays, information about the benefits of prescribed burning, and various animal tracking and tagging devices.

BCC would like to thank all our environmental partners and the staff and students at Mosley High School for participating and helping make

our first Environmental Demonstration Day a success!

-Teresa Nooney



Student Conservation Association Intern: Ms. Love Wootton

Early in 2016, BCC's Board of Directors was faced with a terrific opportunity. Grant funding from the **Jelks Family Foundation** to the **Student Conservation Association** offered the means for BCC to procure an intern for 3 months to help with conservation projects. BCC accepted this opportunity and welcomed Florida State University senior, **Ms. Love Wootton!**



The partnership turned out to be a good fit, providing Love with the chance to combine her interests in Recreation, Tourism, Events and Visual Arts with hands-on experience protecting natural resource lands. Equipped with a hand-held GPS, Love familiarized herself with the conservation values and management of each BCC property and helped us update property records and maps. She helped out at our Annual Meeting and Earth Day events and created lasting "How To" manuals for those of us in need of a little extra technical expertise. And she willingly joined us out in the field in rubber boots and work gloves as we continued our work taking care of our preserves.

Thank you, Love Wootton—we wish you well in all your future endeavors!

New Trail at Audubon Nature Preserve: "The High Road"



The Audubon Nature Preserve walking trail leading from the gazebo to the north end of the property has some low points. Specifically, some portions of the path become too muddy during wet weather to trek through without rubber boots. **Jackie Kolk** asked **Duke Energy** for help with funding, and in spring BCC put some welcome grant money to good use. A new trail portion, dubbed "The High Road," has been constructed to take walkers around the wet areas.

SCA intern **Love Wootton** created an educational narrative for the trail—and in April she led groups of children and their moms on nature walks through the preserve. The kids learned about the different wetland creatures that inhabit the Doctors Pond area—and had fun exploring the trails and making nature bracelets.

At right: Love Wootton and members of The Moms Club of Tyndall Air Force Base explore Audubon Nature Preserve.



The BCC Geocache Trail



Also thanks to **Love Wootton**, BCC now has its own **Geocache Trail**. Geocaching is the anytime, anywhere adventure where players use a geocaching app or a GPS to find hidden containers around the world. Visit **Geocaching.com** or download the free Official Geocaching app to begin geocaching!

www.geocaching.com

From BCC's website, **www.baycountyconservancy.org**, click on the "BCC Geocache Trail" tab for more information.

Eileen Oltz Donates Property

Eileen and Russell Oltz loved their three acres of woods in College Point and the cottage that sat on one corner of it. Over the years, they added rooms to the cottage as they transitioned from part-time to full-time residence there for themselves and their two daughters. After Russell died, Eileen continued enjoying feeding peanut butter to the squirrels and walking her dogs on the paths they had made through the woods.

As Conservationists, the Oltzes were active in getting the state of Florida to declare and maintain a setback line for construction on the beach, to preserve the first dune line and leave room for turtles and birds to nest and for people to walk on the beach. Similarly, Eileen wanted to make sure that her woods were kept intact for the birds and squirrels and neighbors to enjoy. Thus, she made provision for the property to pass to the Bay County Conservancy/The Land Conservancy of NW Florida upon her death. Her remaining daughter, **Terri Oltz Minor**, has been very cooperative in making this happen after Eileen's death in January 2016.

BCC/TLC wanted to use the house as an office and nature center, but it was simply too much in need of expensive repair for that to be feasible. The house is being sold to someone who can fix it up for a nice residence, and the remaining 2 and ½ acres will be maintained as natural green space, just as Eileen wanted. A walking path will eventually be open to the public, and a sign dedicating the sanctuary as the "Oltz Family Preserve" will be erected.

-Candis Harbison, President



A great blue heron wades through the pond at Talkington Nature Preserve.

BCC welcomes Sandy Walker

Bay County Conservancy has hired a part-time Land Steward to help manage and protect its preserves. **Sandy Walker** is already busy at Audubon Nature Preserve, tasked with helping us remove a stubborn population of popcorn trees and keeping up with trail maintenance.

Originally from Ireland, where he instructed students in antique furniture restoration and furniture making, Sandy currently serves as a Volunteer Fire Fighter at Station 9 in Bay County. Prior to making the U.S. his home with his wife Caroline, he spent many years in the Bahamas, managing a hotel and fishing lodge. Sandy is an experienced fly fisherman and instructor, an avid gardener, and an energetic and enthusiastic machete-wielder out in the woods around Doctors' Pond. Welcome, Sandy, and thank you for your hard work. Good things are happening!

-Teresa Nooney



10 acres added to Tumble Creek Preserve

BCC's largest protected property, the Tumble Creek Preserve, now stands at nearly 92 acres with the addition of 10 acres late last year. The land itself is in Washington County, about 38 miles north of Lynn Haven (west of Highway 231), but is also in the Econfinia Creek Watershed. As rapid development continues in Florida, the need for such preserves as Tumble Creek becomes critical. Not only does it provide habitat for plants and animals, it helps to provide a secure water supply and maintain the purity of the St. Andrew Bay watershed. **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!

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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www.baycountyconservancy.org

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Out and About



Ron Houser and Student Conservation Association intern Love Wootton traveled to the 10-acre Louis Stürke Memorial Preserve in North Bay County to put a sign on the property. The land was donated to BCC by Joanne "Jody" Bourland of Pleasant Hill, California, who wishes it to be maintained in its natural state as a refuge for wildlife.

VOLUNTEERS: Please mark your calendars:

Saturday, January 28, 2017

Air Potato Roundup and Trash Bash

9 a.m. - noon

Behind Panama City Orthopedics offices at 408 West
19th St. (near round-a-bout at State Ave. & 19th St.)

Watch website for more details to come.



BCC Membership Form

**Yes! I want to help the Bay County Conservancy
save open space, wetlands and wildlife habitat.**

Name: _____

Level: (circle one):

Address: _____

\$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