



# Bay County Conservancy, Inc.

## Saving Land in Northwest Florida

P.O. Box 1122 Panama City, FL 32402  
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November 2015 Newsletter  
[www.baycountyconservancy.org](http://www.baycountyconservancy.org)

### Breakfast Under the Palms

Autumn sunshine was plentiful at the Palm Preserve on the morning of October 9<sup>th</sup> – as were the pots of fresh hot coffee, and the assorted bagels, pastries, fruit selections and donuts. The BCC Board of Directors met for breakfast under the palms and was joined by a number of preserve neighbors, volunteers and local government representatives.

In October 2002, Mary Ola Miller donated to the BCC the four lots next to her Gallery of Art on Beach Drive. This Palm Preserve, so-named for its abundance of cabbage palm trees (*Sabal Palmetto* – the Florida State Tree) continues to provide an oasis of green in an otherwise urbanized area. A bench and a picnic table are available to anyone looking for an enjoyable green spot amidst the concrete and asphalt.

BCC volunteers, along with help from the local Sweetbay Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society, maintain this small preserve year-round. A native wildflower garden occupies one section, while the lower, marshy end serves a practical function as a wetland by filtering stormwater runoff during rainy spells.

Parks and preserves, both large and small, enrich our lives and remind us to slow down and take a moment to simply enjoy what nature has to offer in our own backyard. Thank you to all who stopped by. We hope you'll continue to make use of the Mary Ola Reynolds Miller Palm Preserve -our downtown pocket park.

-Teresa Nooney



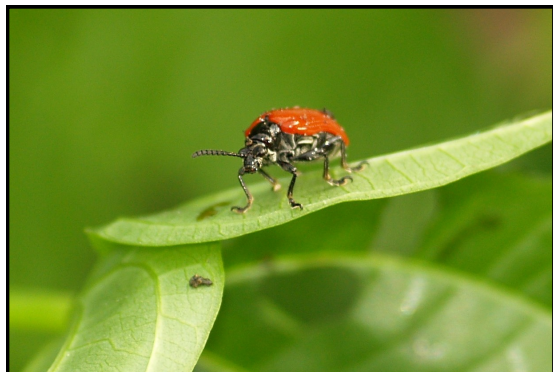
### Come Meet With Us!

Bay County Conservancy is not a “monthly program” kind of organization, though we do need and welcome members to support the work that we all believe in. There are occasional activities, and one given is the **Annual Meeting**, held to elect the Board of Directors, watch the “Year in Review” Power Point, meet other members, nibble on refreshments, and sometimes be entertained. In 2015, the **Ukulele Orchestra of St. Andrews** livened up our morning! In 2016, we invite all members and visitors to attend the meeting. Please watch the mail for your invitation or see the website for updates on time and place.

- Candis Harbison, President



## Air Potato Leaf Beetles: Biological Control Agents



The Bay County Conservancy expects to receive a supply of air potato beetles in the near future and plans to release them on an air potato-infested section of the Audubon Nature Preserve. The bright red air potato leaf beetle, *Lilioceris cheni*, is a biological control agent that was introduced in 2012 from China to combat the air potato, an exotic vine that out-competes native vegetation and disrupts natural processes. After extensive testing these beetles were found to only feed on air potato. They feed almost entirely on the leaves of the vine, and sometimes on the bulbils. The insect will not complete its life cycle on any other host plant. Extensive damage

is usually noticed on a stand of air potato vines within three months of release of the beetles. While BCC volunteers have manually knocked back areas of potato vine at annual “Air Potato Round-ups,” heavily vegetated areas are difficult to access. It is hoped that the beetles will provide much-needed biological control. The beetles are hardy and are able to survive the winter months without food when the air potato dies back. The adult beetles will go into a hibernation of sorts and hide out under leaf litter or mulch. In the spring, the overwintering adults will emerge, and the females will start laying eggs. The young beetles will keep eating the air potato vines.

**Amy Wetzel (at right, with Ron Houser)** has first-hand experience with air potato leaf beetles. Amy spent part of her summer serving as Education Coordinator at the Science and Discovery Center. Her summer camp kids participated in experiments with the beetles—and learned that the tiny creatures have a voracious appetite for air potato leaves.

That’s good news for the Conservancy. After the experiments concluded, the beetles were released onto the Audubon Nature Preserve. Although this was a small batch of only 64 beetles (BCC will eventually get a much larger supply) - the critters seemed to take an immediate liking to their new home and were observed crawling about on the leaves.

Amy will also be helping BCC with the removal of other exotic vegetation such as Chinese Tallow (popcorn tree) and Japanese climbing fern. We look forward to having Amy on board!

-Teresa Nooney



**Amy Wetzel and Ron Houser get ready to remove an invasive Japanese climbing fern on the Audubon Nature Preserve.**

### About Japanese Climbing Fern

*Lygodium japonicum* is a highly invasive non-native plant introduced as an ornamental into the southern U.S. from Japan in the 1930s. It is a perennial fern with lacy leaves and orange-brown, wiry vines that climb rapidly over native shrubs and trees, shading out and killing them. Eradication is difficult because of the large rhizome root system and the rapid germination from spores which can be carried long distances by wind, vehicles, and even clothing and shoes. Young plants should be pulled by hand. Herbicides containing glyphosate offer the best choice for eradication of established infestations.



## ***Nature Notes:*** **Monarchs & Milkweeds**

Most of us know that Monarch butterflies depend on milkweeds as host plants for their eggs and larvae (caterpillars). A recent talk by butterfly expert **Scott Davis** at a local native plant meeting shed more light on this subject. First of all, there has been a 98% reduction in the number of Monarchs in the last 3 years, due to several factors, including habitat loss and illegal logging in Mexico, and widespread eradication of milkweeds



through herbicide use, and GMO "Roundup Ready" crops. But did you know that those milkweeds you sometimes buy at big box stores labeled "Asclepias tuberosa, butterfly milkweed," are actually tropical milkweed, a non-native

plant that infects Monarchs with a protozoan parasite, abbreviated OE. This parasite sickens the butterfly enough that it no longer is able to migrate. Be sure to buy the real butterfly milkweed from a knowledgeable dealer, like Mail Order Natives, who will ship the plants to you. If you determine that you do have tropical milkweed, it is best to pull it up and get rid of it. But the rest of the story is that Monarchs actually prefer other species of milkweeds over Asclepias tuberosa. This would include milkweeds like A. humistrata and A. tomentosa that have a milky sap.

- Ron Houser

## **Become a Volunteer!**

Bay County Conservancy preserves are looked after by volunteers—local people who understand the value natural places provide to citizens and wildlife.

If you'd like to be notified by email when BCC schedules a Clean Up Event please send your contact info to: [tnooney@knology.net](mailto:tnooney@knology.net). The work usually involves removing invasive plants, picking up litter, weeding and maintaining walking paths.

Is technology more your speed? We are also looking for a volunteer familiar with WordPress who could provide occasional assistance or advice with the BCC website.

## ***Restoration Update:*** **Marjorie's Magical Marsh-Symone's Sanctimonious Swamp**

Bay County Conservancy has been cooperating with **Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission** and **U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service** to manage the preserve for the endangered Panama City Crayfish.

The residual tree stumps and logs left from previous activities were cleared, and right-of-way down the east side of the preserve



was cleared to facilitate access. FWC recently conducted a survey of Panama City crayfish on the preserve, and the population has increased! FWC is taking this as a sign the restoration efforts are working. This preserve remains the centerpiece of their crayfish restoration efforts. I recommend you visit the Preserve to see the pitcher plants that have grown on the newly exposed wetlands.

- Phil Mount

### ***Where is this restoration work taking place?***

Take 231N from Panama City and then turn left onto County Hwy. 2321/FL-77A (just past Nehi Rd.) Turn right onto Hwy. 2311, then turn right onto E. Lakeland Dr. Preserve restoration area is on the right.



Members of the **Conservation Department of the Panama City Women's Club** toured the Palm Preserve, accompanied by club President **Gerry Wilson**. They learned about the mission of the BCC, the history of the Palm Preserve, and the care of native palm trees.

## Mission Statement

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

## Board of Directors

**President** Candis Harbison

**Vice President** Sandra Lynch

**Treasurer** Carolyn Parell

### Members at Large

Jacalyn Kolk, Esq.

Ron Houser

Joseph Parell, M.D.

Warren Middlemas III

Ted Wilson, M.D.

Phil Mount

John Bente

### Executive Assistant

Teresa Nooney

## BCC Out and About



Al Clare, Teresa Nooney, Candis Harbison and Jackie Kolk prepare for Earth Day at McKenzie Park on April 18th.

## Thank You!



Ron Houser's grandkids - 15-year-old triplets **Jordan, Parker and Hannah Dungey** - spent a summer morning earning community service hours for school at the Audubon Nature Preserve and the Palm Preserve. Together they collected over 50 pounds of trash!



## BCC Membership Form

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

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Level: (circle one): \$25-\$49 Contributor

\$50-\$199 Supporter

\$200-\$999 Benefactor

\$1,000+ Lifetime

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