

Feeding Time at the Wild Bird Center

Story and photos by Rachel Peine

As I pulled into the driveway of the Wild Bird Center, worried that I'd be late for feeding time, Connie slid open the glass door of the gift shop and pointed down toward the beach, calling "Hurry up; Laura's taking the last buckets down!" I scrambled down the boardwalk past the peregrine falcon and red-tailed hawk, almost bumping into a few pelicans, who looked down their noses at me and didn't budge.

The beach was a babel of birds, with all eyes on Laura Quinn, as she flung herring and capelin to the eager crowd. Several visitors were taking pictures and watching egrets, gulls, pelicans and ibises scarf down their catch. Feeding time is 3:30 daily, so bring your camera, because you never know who you'll spot looking for a handout. I didn't expect to see so many pelicans at this time of year, and I was really happy to see their silly faces. I miss them when they fly North for the summer.

Laura and her furry four-legged assistants accompanied her back to the office, where she showed me the large refrigerator holding supplies for future feedings. Laura told me that much of the fish is donated by the Keys dolphin facilities, because dolphins are very finicky about their food. They won't touch a fish unless it's in perfect condition. That trait has proven fortunate for the

injured birds that Laura rehabilitates. The Bird Center relies on donations, and those donations aren't keeping up with expenses. That's why special thanks are due to the Pirates on the Water, who have a committee dedicated to planning events to benefit the Center.

The Pirates held a sunset snorkel cruise on the Reef Roamer on Sunday August 5th, with all proceeds going to the Center. We saw the Pirates returning to the Holiday Inn dock in Key Largo, and everyone said they had a great time. We thank Reef Roamer for their concern for the birds, too.

Check out other events planned by the Pirates, and stop into the Wild Bird Center when you're passing by. The beach on the bay is a wonderful place to see the sunset. You can walk down the boardwalk to the bay anytime from dawn to dusk, even when nobody's in the office. The birds will be happy to see you, and you can't find a better place to observe them in flight, feeding, or just being happy in this comfortable and sustaining habitat. Don't forget to drop something into the donation box by the gift shop on your way out, and stop by often.

The Florida Keys Wild Bird Center is at MM 93.6 on the Bay Side in Tavernier, 93600 Overseas Highway - (305) 852-4486 - fkwbc@terranova.net.

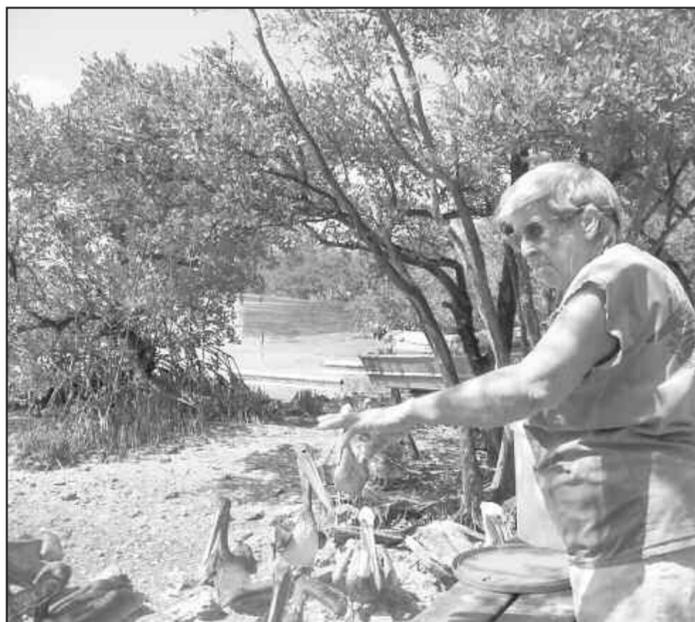


ABOVE: This way to the Wild Birds.



LEFT: This pelican says, "I'm still hungry."

BELOW: Laura Quinn flings fish for her friends



Artist of the Month Lisa Wetzel "Part Stylist - Part Therapist"



The Coconut Telegraph has chosen Lisa Wetzel of Shear Paradise as Artist of the Month because she has been making people beautiful here in the Keys for years. When you enter the busy Salon at MM 99 that Lisa and her partner, Buff Midling, opened 1 year ago, you begin to relax as you sink into one of the comfortable chairs and listen to the friendly chatter of men and women alike. It is impossible to go there and not run into someone you know. A sign on the wall says it all, "What happens at Shear Paradise, stays at Shear Paradise".

Lisa graduated Cosmetology School in Myrtle Beach and has been a Stylist for 24 years. She managed a Salon in North Carolina and then moved to the Keys to be with her Dad, Bill Wilson in 1988. Lisa and Buff have been working together for 18 years so it was only natural that they open their own shop,

which was voted "Best New Business" in the Best of the Upper Keys Clear Channel Peoples Choice Awards for 2006.

The Stylists at Shear Paradise are always perfecting their skills; they attend continued education classes each year. Lisa went to Naples, Florida last year for a class and felt very fortunate to study with artists from New York. Most recently Redken sponsored a class last week at the Holiday Inn that they all attended. Lisa is very active in the Keys Players as a talented actress and singer. It is always a treat to hear her when she pops in somewhere for karaoke.

What does Lisa love about her career? "Every day is different, you never do the same thing. It's wonderful to be able to change someone's outlook on himself or herself. It's like being part stylist and part therapist", says Lisa.

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Honoring Service Men & Women Boot Key Bivouac

The "Boot Key Bivouac" will be held at the Marathon Community Park Amphitheatre on October 7th from 10 am to 10 pm, with the support of the City of Marathon, Marathon Chamber of Commerce, Middle Keys Marine Association, the Rotary, Jaycees, American Legion, V.F.W., D.A.V., Marathon High School, Publix, Winn Dixie, Sysco, Dade Paper, Coca-Cola, Pepsi and many other local organizations.

Our mission is to honor our service men and women from all branches and all conflicts. Anyone who has an interest in participating or contributing to the event, whether in goods, services, or cash is invited to join us in this show of support.

Local bands are signing up to play and we are up to six acts at this time! For more info, please contact me -- I am proud of our efforts and am happy to answer any and all questions. Thank you -- I look forward to hearing from you!

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