



Charter 2016

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PRESIDENT'S NOTE

Fall with cooler weather is finally here! Time to get back outdoors. The 2024 Calendar is full of events to get you out of the house.

Last week, I asked myself, "Why am I a Master Naturalists?" I think each of us needs to ask ourselves this question. Only with participation from members can we continue to make a difference in our community. How would you like to improve your world?

1. I need to be outdoors, and I really do not like to hike alone. Master Naturalists (SLAMN) gives me a group of friends with similar interests. I take every opportunity to join them at outdoor activities.
2. I enjoy sharing my love of nature with children and adults. Many of the people that attend Nature in Focus or Garden Expo events view the world in a new way after hearing our presentations. I hope they will become more aware of their impact on the natural world and simple ways they can help improve their own yards.
3. I learn so much from others who come on the field trips or lead the workshops. I retired in 2017 but plan on living many more years. I continue to study and learn in an area that really interests me, the outdoors. You too can attend the General Meetings and volunteer to assist at workshops.

4. I like to stay busy. Watching television is not for me. SLAMN is going to start nature activity events. The first event is the Long Leaf Pine Basket making workshop on October 21. Lori, the planner, is looking at edible and medicinal weeds, pottery, painting, building bird houses, ... These events may have a small fee. If you have something to share or a suggestion, please let us know.

We need you to participate and get involved with activities. I guarantee you will have fun and learn something along the way. If you are not a member, we are now enrolling for 2024 workshops. Come make new friends.

Hope to see you out there,

Barbara Morris

If you have any ideas, questions, or comments, I would love to hear from you. 337-302-0168, barbara080158@gmail.com

October Events

General Meeting

Wednesday October 4, 5:30 – 8pm

Location: LSU AG Center, 7101 Gulf Hwy, Lake Charles 70607

Robby Maxwell will be our speaker

Catherine Montie will give a demonstration of hot to make a healing salve

6:00 – 8:00 Speaker and meeting

Native Plant Highlight: American Beauty Berry (*Callicarpa americana*)

October Field Trip

Saturday October 7

Location: Chicot State Park

Louisiana State Arboretum and Caroline Dorman Lodge

7:00 Leave Lake Charles

9:00am Tour Caroline Dorman Lodge 4213 Chicot Park Rd, Ville Platte, LA 70586

Followed by Arboretum Visitor Center and hiking trails.

Carpooling will be available, or you can meet us there. Family and Friends are invited.



THE AMERICAN ELM

by Jon Paul Zimmermann

It was in the years after Hurricane Rita that the plant began to grow behind our garage. Mom called it the “weed that got away.” I was in my late teens at the time, but by my late twenties it had grown from a “weed” into a legitimate hardwood tree. My brother soon identified it as an American Elm. Now in my thirties, after Hurricane Laura has sadly levelled the oak-and-pine canopy of my childhood home in Lake Charles, the lone American Elm stands 50 ft. tall as a beacon of resilience and determination from my youth.



Figure 1: 15-Year-Old American Elm of My Youth

The American Elm (*Ulmus americana*) is a native hardwood of eastern North America. Historically known as a particularly stately tree, it was subject to great respect among Native Americans and early European settlers. One such American Elm, the Liberty Tree, became a rallying point in 1760s Boston for resistance against Britain and, likewise, staged the first act of American defiance against the British government. The American Elm was also a choice favorite for urban landscaping and lined many streets of 18th and 19th century America.

Since the 1930s, the American Elm has unfortunately been ravaged by the Dutch Elm Disease. This disease is estimated to have killed some 70 million mature trees. Introduced by a shipment of logs from Europe intended for use as veneer, the disease was spread by both the European and North American Elm Bark Beetle. Indeed, the dense urban populations of ornamental elms helped to spread the disease. While the effects of the disease have been devastating, the species itself has not been subject to the risk of extinction. Survival of species can be attributed to natural dispersion and isolation of the species, efforts to control and mitigate the Elm Bark Beetle, and most importantly, the fast rate of maturity and reproduction of the American Elm.

Widespread across eastern North America, the American Elm favors bottomlands, but it is often found in moist uplands and pasturelands as well. While it is seldom dominant even in bottomlands and never found in pure stands, some of its densest populations are observed in the Atchafalaya Basin and Mississippi alluvial parishes of Louisiana. Still, it is no stranger to Southwest Louisiana and can be found from the neighborhoods of Lake Charles to the woods of Moss Bluff.

The relative scarcity coupled with the remarkable form of the American Elm make it particularly exciting to come across, much like an uncommon bird or a reclusive reptile. While the weathered story of this symbolic tree could serve as the archetype for America's natural history, I personally find this tree inspiring to behold in its natural setting. When out in the field, look for the characteristic vase-shaped canopy, the spongy/crisscross ridges of bark (like a cross between pecan and bald cypress), and most distinguishing, the leaves – oval, pointed, and double-serrated with an asymmetrical base.



Figure 2: The Leaves of an American Elm

LOUISIANA COASTAL WETLANDS

By Diana LaRussa

Louisiana Coastal Wetlands: A Resource at Risk

USGS Fact Sheet



Atchafalaya delta,
Louisiana

"The swamps and marshes of coastal Louisiana are among the Nation's most fragile and valuable wetlands, vital not only to recreational and agricultural interests but also the State's more than \$1 billion per year seafood industry. The staggering annual losses of wetlands in Louisiana are caused by human activity as well as natural processes. U.S. Geological Survey scientists are conducting important studies that are helping planners to understand the life cycle of wetlands by detailing the geologic processes that shape them and the coast, and by providing geologic input to models for mitigation strategies."

Jeffress Williams, U.S. Geological Survey

The wetlands of Louisiana are water-saturated coastal and swamp regions of southern Louisiana, that under normal circumstances support a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions (e.g., swamps, bogs, marshes, and estuaries). Wetlands provide vital ecological services including flood control, fisheries production, carbon storage, water filtration.

Although these areas make up a very small percentage of the total land found in the United States, southern Louisiana contains 40 to 45 percent of the wetlands found in the lower states. This is because Louisiana is the drainage gateway to the Gulf of Mexico for the lower Mississippi regional waterway.

Human activities during the past century have drastically affected the wetlands. Digging of canals throughout the wetlands, has enabled salt water from the Gulf of Mexico to intrude brackish and freshwater wetlands. Moreover, forced drainage of the wetlands to accommodate development

and agriculture also contribute to wetlands deterioration and loss. More than 75% of Louisiana's coastal wetlands are privately owned, yet the majority of restoration funding provided through federal and state initiatives is directed toward large-scale, public restoration projects.

Louisiana's 3 million acres of wetlands are lost at the rate of about 75 square kilometers annually, but reducing these losses is proving to be difficult and costly. The Louisiana Legislature unanimously passed the 2023 Coastal Master Plan and the Fiscal Year 2024 Annual Plan. "The 77 projects identified in the 2023 Coastal Master Plan will restore and maintain over 300 square miles of Louisiana's coastal wetlands and reduce expected annual damage by up to



\$15 billion.

The Supreme court decision in June 2023, *Sackett v. Environmental Protection Agency*, said that wetlands are covered by law only if they have a "continuous surface connection" to a major waterway. "We hold that the 1972 Clean Water Act extends to only those waterways as a practical matter indistinguishable from water of the United States," said Justice Samuel Alito. The 1972 Clean Water Act (CWA) definition describes wetlands as hydrologically connected to larger bodies of water, even if for only part of the year, or if the connection is underground or cannot be seen.

This ruling will change the definition of a wetland. Will private land owners move to develop wetland areas that were previously protected by the CWA? Is the biodiversity of Louisiana now at risk? Education of these private landowners is now vital. The potential use of wetlands for quick economic gain may supersede the importance of environmental value for the future generations.

References:

<https://coastal.la.gov/>
www.usgs.gov
www.wikipedia.org
www.bloomberg.com

ACTIVITIES & OUTREACH

SLAMN members are encouraged to volunteer to make presentations to different nonprofit groups that are interested in various SLAMN topics. Let us know when you are doing a presentation. We may have posters to help and we want to acknowledge the activity in Nature Notes.

CALENDAR

2023	
Oct 4	General Meeting (Election of Board Members and Committee Assignments)
Oct 7	Field Trip
Dec 6	Board Meeting
2024	
January 10	General Meeting - Mc Neese Fresch Hall, Meeting 6:00 Social 5:30
January 13	Nature in Focus, Tuten Park Trees
January 18	Guided Nature Walk at Sam Houston Park 9-11am
January 20	Introduction/Applied Natural Science
January 27	Beginners Bird Walk at Sam Houston Park 8 am
February 3	Biology/ Ecology
February 10	Nature in Focus, Tuten Park
February 15	Guided Nature Walk at Sam Houston Park 9-11am
February 17	Bird Study
February 24	Beginners Bird Walk at Sam Houston Park 8am
March 2	Backyard Habitat
March 6	Board Meeting WLF offices
March 5 & 8	(Booker Fowler Fish Hatchery Event Possibly)
March 16	Astronomy
March 16	Safe Solar Eclipse Viewing Workshop, Sulphur Library, 1:00 pm, Public Invited
March 23	Beginners Bird Walk at Sam Houston Park 8am
March 22-24	SWLA Garden Expo booth – Volunteers Needed
April 6	Fungi

April 8	Solar Eclipse
April 10	General Meeting, LSU AG Center, Social 5:30, Meeting 6:00
April 12-14	Rendezvous Hosted by NELA Master Naturalists Monroe LA
April 18	Guided Nature Walk at Sam Houston Park 9-11
April 20	Reptiles and Amphibians
April 27	Beginners Bird Walk at Sam Houston Park 8am
April 27-May 1	City Nature Challenge
April 27	Field trip for City Nature Challenge
May 4	Native plants, Bats, Mammals, moths (possible sleep over at Allen Acres)
May 16	Guided Nature Walk at Sam Houston Park 9-11am
May 18	Cajun Prairie (Cajun Prairie Habitat Preservation Society Meeting)
May 25	Nature in Focus, Tuten Park, Birda 10 am - noon
May 26-28	Allen Acres Annual BBB (bogs, birds, butterflies, baygalls)
June 1	Longleaf Pine Savannah and Pollinators
June 5	Board Meeting (WLF offices)
June 15	Riverine Ecology and Fish
June 22	Beginners Bird Walk at Sam Houston Park 8am
June 22	Outreach/Graduation
July 10	General Meeting, LSU AG Center, Social 5:30 Meeting 6:00
July 13	Field Trip Family Fun Day
September 4	Board Meeting (WLF offices) Nominations for Board and Committee positions
September 19	Guided Nature Walk at Sam Houston Jones State Park 9-11
September 21	Beach Sweep, Litter Pickup
September 28	Beginners Bird Walk at Sam Houston Jones State Park 8am
October 2	General Meeting, LSU AG center, Election of Board Members and Committee assignments
October 5	Field Trip (alternate Family Fun Day)
October 17	Guided Nature Walk at Sam Houston Park 9-11
October 26	Beginners Bird Walk at Sam Houston Park 8am
November 11	Walk and Wag Event in Sulphur
November 21	Guided Nature Walk at Sam Houston Park 9-11
November 23	Beginners Bird Walk at Sam Houston Park 8am
December 4	Board meeting (WLF offices)
December 19	Guided Nature Walk at Sam Houston Park 9-11
December 28	Beginners Bird Walk at Sam Houston Park 8am
Every Thursday 6:00pm on 210 Beach north - Guided Kayaking by PELICAN PADDLERS OF SWLA	