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PRESIDENT’S NOTE

Happy Fall Ya’ll!



How I have been looking forward to saying that! As the butterflies, birds, and plants prepare for winter, we are preparing for the 2025 Workshops. Participants this year will be making birdhouses for Tuten Park, learning about freshwater marshes, and exploring the surrounding ecosystems. Help us to get the word out by inviting families and friends and sharing media posts. (www.swlamasternaturalists.org) As a Certified Master Naturalist, you are encouraged to attend the workshops. You can learn something new, enjoy the fellowship, share what you know, and help with the workshop as needed. Sign up on Track it Forward. This is how we keep an accounting of your volunteer hours.

On October 26, Robby Maxwell has invited us to Soggy Prairie Stalks and Seeds to view the fall colors. His prairie is an example of how you can transform a small cut grass field into a pollinator friendly habitat. You can collect seeds, and he will have a few plants for purchase. Every little thing we do at our homes is a drop in the bucket. Eventually it will spill over as

more people try to make a difference. It can be frustrating. But sneak native plants into your landscaping, grow musky mint and beebalm in a pot. You will be rewarded with bumble bees and caterpillars.

As we move into winter, Leave the leaves, leave the seed heads for the birds, and leave a small brush pile for the bees. Everything you do is important.

I will see you out there,

Barbara Morris

SLAMN President

COMMUNICATION CORNER

Lori Marinovich

Did you know our organization has a Facebook group for members only?

This is one of the main ways we get information about upcoming events and volunteer activities out for the membership.

Please send a request to Lori Marinovich and we will add you to the group - send an invite.

The name of the Facebook group is

Southwest Louisiana Master Naturalists- Member Group

COASTAL PRAIRIE CONSERVANCY NEWS

Houston, TX – September 25, 2024 – Today, the Coastal Prairie Conservancy, dedicated to ensuring a resilient future for Texas by preserving coastal prairies, wetlands, farms, and ranches for the benefit of both people and wildlife, now and forever, announces it has been invited to participate in the Halliburton Charity Golf Tournament (HCGT), the central fundraising event of the Halliburton Charitable Foundation.

"We are incredibly grateful to Halliburton and the participants and sponsors of the Charity Golf Tournament for their substantial generosity," said Mary Anne Piacentini, President and CEO of the Coastal Prairie Conservancy. "With this donation, the Coastal Prairie Conservancy plans to expand the protection and restoration of coastal prairie lands across the Greater Houston area. As growth threatens thousands of acres, CPC's restoration efforts are more urgent than ever. By conserving natural lands, CPC helps address flooding, preserve biodiversity, and provide homes for wildlife, all while fostering a resilient community. Through public access, educational programming, and collaborative efforts, CPC connects people with nature, ensuring a lasting impact on both the environment and local communities.

On Oct. 2, the Halliburton Charitable Foundation will hold its 31st tournament in Houston, Texas. The tournament will bring golfers, sponsors, and philanthropic leaders together to raise funds to support various charitable organizations from across the U.S., including the Coastal Prairie Conservancy.

“The Halliburton Charity Golf Tournament exemplifies our commitment to giving back to the communities where we live and operate. The impactful work from charities like the Coastal Prairie Conservancy significantly enhance the well-being of the communities we serve,” said Jeff Miller, Halliburton chairman, president, and CEO.

Proceeds from the event benefit a select group of charities with plans to make a significant impact through a major capital expenditure or a special community program. Selected nonprofits must serve a specific audience and demonstrate the reach and impact of the proposed capital expenditure or community program.

Last year’s event raised more than \$3.8 million – setting a record for the most raised in a single year at the tournament. This year, HCGT is seeking to break records again, raising and donating funds to benefit more than 100 charities nationwide in 2024.

For more information about the Halliburton Charity Golf Tournament and how you can support it, please visit halliburtoncharitygolf.org.



The Coastal Prairie Conservancy at last year’s Halliburton Charity Golf Tournament.

THE AMAZING POSSUM

Marcy Herringshaw

You probably know that the Virginia possum is the only marsupial species native to North America, but did you know South America has over 130 species of possums? Possums live unusually short lives, only one to two years in the wild, but are immune to the venom of rattlesnakes, cotton mouths, copperheads and scorpions. Also they are almost entirely immune to rabies, Lyme and other diseases due to their low body temperature. Possums eat disease carrying ticks and are themselves very clean animals.

Possoms seldom dig their own burrows and will occasionally co-inhabit in dens with Armadillos. They eat almost anything and possess the most teeth, 50, of any land animal. They also have an exceptional sense of smell surpassed only by a few animals. Their hind feet have four digits and an opposable thumb like the human hand which makes them excellent climbers.



*Credit: Andy Reago and Chrissy McLaren.
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The name opossum was coined by Captain John Smith of Jamestown fame from a Powhatan Indian word. Both possum and opossum correctly refer to the Virginia opossum. In common use, possum is the usual term. In technical contexts opossum is preferred. Opossum can be pronounced with its first syllable either voiced or silent. Possoms were widely hunted and usually consumed with a side of sweet potatoes. Both President Jimmy Carter and Mark Twain are two notable persons who hunted and ate possum.



*Credit: Frank Lukasseck/Corbis, backyardzoologist.wordpress.com.
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/us/>*

Possoms have prehensile tails that allow them to grasp. They use their tail as a fifth limb when climbing or occasionally as a grip to carry bunches of leaves or bedding materials. Juveniles can dangle by their tails, but adults are too heavy. A mother will often carry her young upon her back, where they will cling even

when she is climbing or running. Many assume possums are a vestige of ancient times, but actually they evolved relatively recently. Possoms have small brains, but they are attuned to food finding and outperform rats in a maze.

When threatened, they will "play possum," mimicking the appearance and smell of a dead animal. This physiological response is involuntary, and the animal will typically regain

consciousness after a few minutes to four hours. When playing possum, the animal's lips are drawn back, the teeth are bared, saliva foams around the mouth, the eyes close, and foul-smelling fluid is secreted from anal glands. The stiff, curled form can be prodded, turned over, and even carried away without reaction. However when cornered, possums will fight back, delivering nasty bits to dogs or humans.

References

Ally Burguieres, 2022, Possums Are Not Cute, 128pp.

Isis Gaillard, 2024, Opossums Photos & Facts for Everyone, pp 5-19.

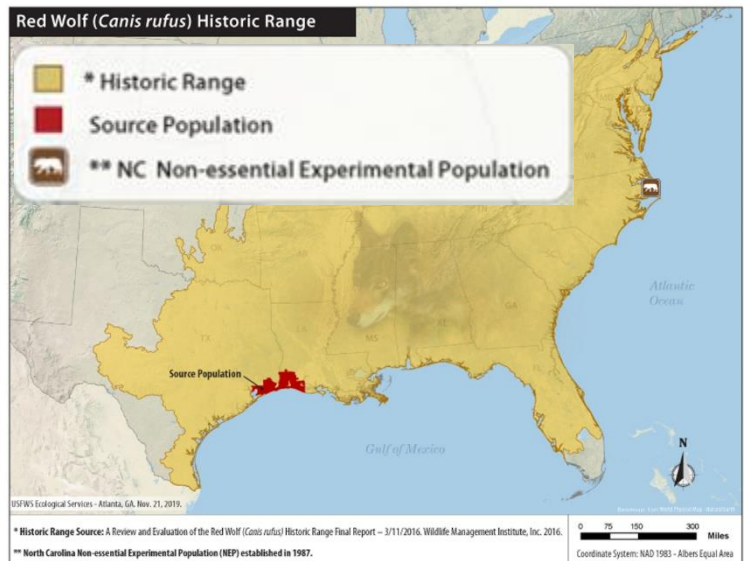
Wikipedia, Opossum, 2024.

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THE RED WOLF

Tanner Broussard

Most people are familiar with the gray wolf (*Canis lupus*), but did you know that we had another wolf species, the red wolf (*Canis rufus*), right here in Louisiana? Red wolves are smaller than gray wolves (*Canis lupus*), weighing between 45 to 90 pounds with a length of 4 to 5.5 feet, including the tail. Red wolves exist in familial packs structures similar to that of gray wolves, though red wolf packs tend to be smaller units of 2 to 8 individuals. Because of their smaller stature and pack sizes,

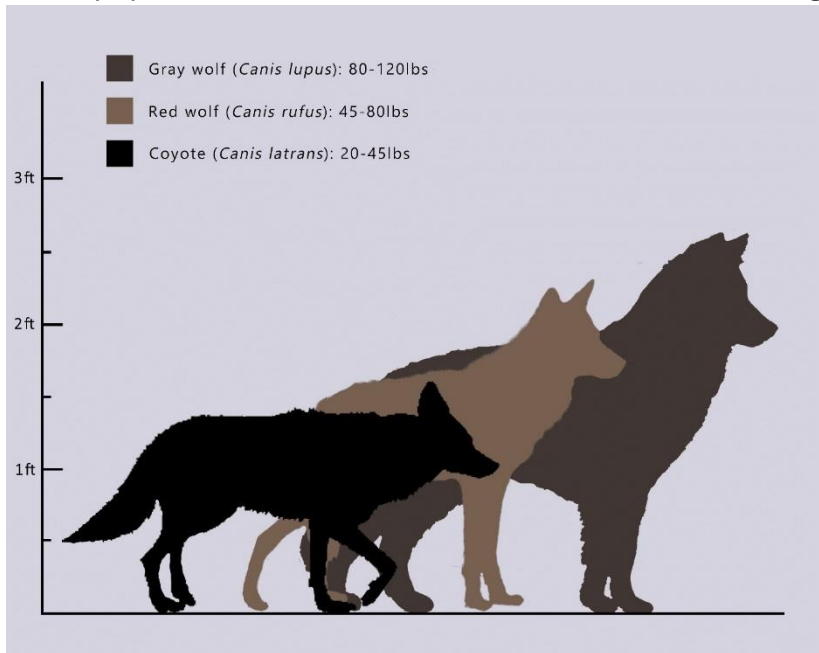


Comparison of the red wolf (left) and western coyote (right).

red wolves predominately hunt small mammals such as mice, rabbits, and nutria.

Prior to the European colonization of North America, the American red wolf roamed the eastern forests of southern Canada to Florida and west to the Great Plains and Coastal Texas. By the 1970's the species had been driven to its last stronghold of Gulf-coastal Louisiana and Texas due to factors such as human

persecution and habitat loss. As population size continued to dwindle, remaining individuals increasingly interbred with coyotes (*Canis latrans*), leading to a decline in pure red wolf genetics. As a result, the red wolf population was deemed unsustainable without human intervention, and the last-known red wolves were taken captive for propagation and reintroduction. Today, the red wolf exists as ~260 descendants of 12 founders and are distributed across over 50 captive breeding facilities, and one reintroduced population of less than 30 individuals in coastal North Carolina.



Comparison of size difference between gray wolves, red wolves, and coyotes.

Despite declaring the red wolf extinct in the wild during 1980, it was assumed that the US Fish and Wildlife Service did not capture all existing red wolves along coastal Louisiana and Texas, and a USFWS-led survey for red wolves in Cameron Parish during 1990 could not rule out that red wolves were not present. During 2021, four decades following the red wolf's presumed extirpation from the wild, genetic analysis of coyotes discovered that substantial amounts of red wolf ancestry have been sequestered and sustained in small populations along the Gulf Coast, with the highest frequency of red wolf genes found in coyotes from



Canid captured in Calcasieu Parish, Louisiana (2024).

sites in southwestern Louisiana and southeastern Texas where the last-known wild red wolves occurred. Given the significant reduction in genetic diversity in extant red wolf populations, this coyote-sequestered reservoir of red wolf genes could prove an important resource for red wolf conservation. Additionally, these Gulf Coast canids represent a one-of-a-kind population that may behave and respond to environmental

change differently than other canid species. Current studies by researchers at McNeese State University in collaboration with the Wolf Conservation Center and Gulf Coast Canine Project are underway to better understand the genetic ancestry and ecology of these unique wild canines.

UPCOMING EVENTS

General meeting Wednesday, **Oct 2, 2024** at the LSU AgCenter, 7101 Gulf Hwy. Social at 5:30, meeting at 6:00. Speaker will be Robby Maxwell on fish kills following hurricane Francine.

Soggy Prairie Tour, Saturday, **Oct 26, 2024**, 9am at Robby Maxwell's house, 20333 Bourque Rd., Iowa, La 70647

October 25, Night walk at Drew Park

October 26, Night walk at Sam Houston Jones State Park

November 2, Lighthouse Tour at Sabine Pass Lighthouse

RENDEZVOUS 2025

The next Louisiana Master Naturalist statewide meeting will be held in Baton Rouge at the River Center. The dates are April 11 – 13 and activities slated are Butterfly tagging and a Paddle-In movie on the University Lakes.

SPREAD THE WORD

Registration for the 2025 SLAMN courses is now open. Please encourage your friends to get involved. They can register at <https://www.swlamasternaturalists.org/apply.html>. The tentative workshop schedule is listed on the right.

Current members are encouraged to attend any or all of these workshops to continue your education and to help as facilitators.

January 11	Intro/Applied Natural Science
January 18	Biological/Ecological Concepts
February 1	Deciduous Forest Ecosystem
February 15	Fish Workshop
March 8	Bird Workshop
March 22	Fresh Water Marsh Ecosystems
April 5	Cajun Prairie Ecosystems
April 26	Coastal Ecosystems
May 3	Reptiles and Amphibians
May 17-18	Overnight at Hodges Gardens
June 7	Aquatic Invertebrates
June 14	The Land Ethic, Graduation