



Contents

President’s Note..... 1

Rendezvous 2023 – Coastal Immergence by Lori Marinovich 2

Garden Bugs by Keith Greenlee..... 4

Kayak Fishing by Beth Rist 5

The Bird Corner by David Booth..... 6

Gulf Fritillary in Photos by Pam Langley 7

Hit Me with Your Best Shot by Dan Plummer..... 8

Native Fish in the Home Aquarium by Robby Maxwell 9

Let’s Share Our Nature Travels! by Lori Marinovich 13

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED! 14

Upcoming SLAMN Events..... 14

SLAMN CALENDAR 14

President’s Note

Fall is finally here, and everyone will be heading outdoors to enjoy the cooler weather.

This is the SWLA Master Naturalists Mission Statement

...to promote awareness, understanding, and respect of Louisiana’s natural resources

...provide education, outreach, and services dedicated to the conservation and management of our ecosystems.

What does a Naturalist do?

- Identifies flora and fauna
- Observes interactions between flora, fauna, and humans

- Observes seasonal changes within nature
- Has a will to educate others through enthusiasm, wonderment, and understanding of the natural world
- Is conscientious of conserving natural resources
- Promotes native plant gardening
- Preserves our natural environment

How can you promote awareness and understanding of the environment? Share what knowledge you have with others at event tables and invited events. We have some good events happening in October and November.

Sam Houston Jones State Park and Calcasieu Parish Libraries have reached out to SLAMN.

The Calcasieu Parish Libraries are planning to develop Pollinator Gardens and Native Plant Seed packet giveaways. They are looking for volunteers to conduct workshops related to Native Plants and Wildlife Friendly Habitats. Please let me know if you are available and interested in leading or helping with a presentation. Times, dates, and topics are flexible.

Sam Houston Jones State Park is looking for groups to lead Nature Walks as well as just to help with trail maintenance. I will be leading a walk on October 1 at 9:00am. Let me know if you are interested in assisting or leading a hike. It can be on a specific topic, such as plants, or just a general walk into the forest.

There are many more groups needing volunteers for Beach Cleanup, bird counts, Native Seed Collection.... Please post events to the Facebook Page

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/719618878149673>

You can make a difference in the world by just sharing your love of nature with one other person. A steady drip will soon overflow a bucket.

I 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

Rendezvous 2023 – Coastal Immergence

by Lori Marinovich

Coastal Immergence LMNA Rendezvous April 21-23,2023

All hands on deck! Mark your calendars and plan to immerge yourself in the 2023 Rendezvous.

Our chapter will host the state conference in 2023. The conference will be headquartered at the Mainstay Suites in Hackberry. The planning committee presented the Coastal Immergence concept to the LMNA

board at the September meeting. Our event format will be a tour concept, docents and leaders will be stationed along the points of the Creole Nature Trail and participants will travel to each area for each immersion workshop.

The immersion trail will include stops on Saturday at Peveto Woods, Little Florida beach, Sabine Wetland Walkway, Blue Goose walking trail, Sabine National Wildlife Refuge. Leaders will need local docents to assist. Sunday the participants

will choose to either caravan south thru Cameron and allow stops along Pintail loop or travel North directly to the final stop at Maxwell Micro Prairie home of Soggy Prairie Stalks and Seeds near Lacassine. <https://www.facebook.com/SoggyPrairieStalksandSeeds> Friday evening opening and welcome with an activity is still in planning stage. We are exploring night sky observations and possible off site activities.



Our chapter members will be needed to chair portions of the operations of the event. We have several opportunities for volunteers. Each "Task" will need a POC chair and volunteers to assist. General conference support will be needed such as coordinators for food -get food quotes for all meals and coordinate catering, etc.; silent auction and raffle- solicit and procure items and manage the space at the conference; transportation/vans and drivers; venue coordination, etc.

What's in it for YOU?!

Connecting with like-minded naturalists is a very rewarding endeavor. Introducing them to our little spot of paradise, our culture, show off those great spots where we immerse ourselves in nature. The whys, challenges and continued partnerships towards conservation of the fragile coastal areas is something some only glimpse in an article. Let's show them a bit of our normal. Dip a toe in the Gulf, spot a life-lister in your scope, sling a cast net and ID what you catch, marvel that sedges have edges... see the sky and breathe. ♦



Garden Bugs

Contributed by Keith Greenlee

Garden Bugs: Some Can't Live with Them, But We All Can't Live Without Them

While some insects are in fact invasive and destructive to plants, it may surprise some that in actuality over 97% of the 1.5 million species in existence are beneficial to gardens and plant life. So, while it may be one's first instinct to destroy or rid your garden of all insects you come across, it is important to remember that less than three percent of insects are truly destructive.

Some people may question what could be beneficial about bugs in your garden, well with over 75% of flowering plants and crops relying on animals for pollen distribution, it is primarily the insects that perform this function. While most people are aware that bees pollinate plants, many are unaware that butterflies, moths, beetles and even flies also contribute to pollination.

Furthermore, insects play an important role in aerating soil by way of breaking down dead materials and composting them back into the ground, also serving as a food source for wildlife. Other bugs contribute to plant life and nature by consuming and killing other harmful insects and playing an important role in maintaining a balanced ecosystem, such bugs include Green Lacewings and Ladybird Beetles.

Perhaps one of the most beneficial insects to gardens is the Assassin bug (shown below), a predatory insect of which is proficient in capturing and eating a significant amount of prey with a swift stab of the bug's elongated mouthparts. Following being immobilized by the toxin of the Assassin bug, the bees, flies, caterpillars, and other bugs are paralyzed, and their bodily fluids are drawn out through the Assassin bug's straw-like mouth. While most of these bugs are grey and black, some are bright colored, one common species is the *Zelus longipes* also known as the milkweed assassin bug. These are often found in the gardens of SW Louisiana and SE Texas.



Merchant, M. (2016, January 14). Wheel bugs and other assassin bugs. Insects in the City. Retrieved June 15, 2022, from <https://citybugs.tamu.edu/factsheets/landscape/others/ent-1003/>

Bawden-Davis, J. (2016, January 14). How to identify good and bad bugs in your garden. Garden Tech. Retrieved June 15, 2022, from <https://www.gardentech.com/blog/pest-id-and-prevention/identifying-good-and-bad-bugs-in-your-garden-infographic> ◇

Kayak Fishing

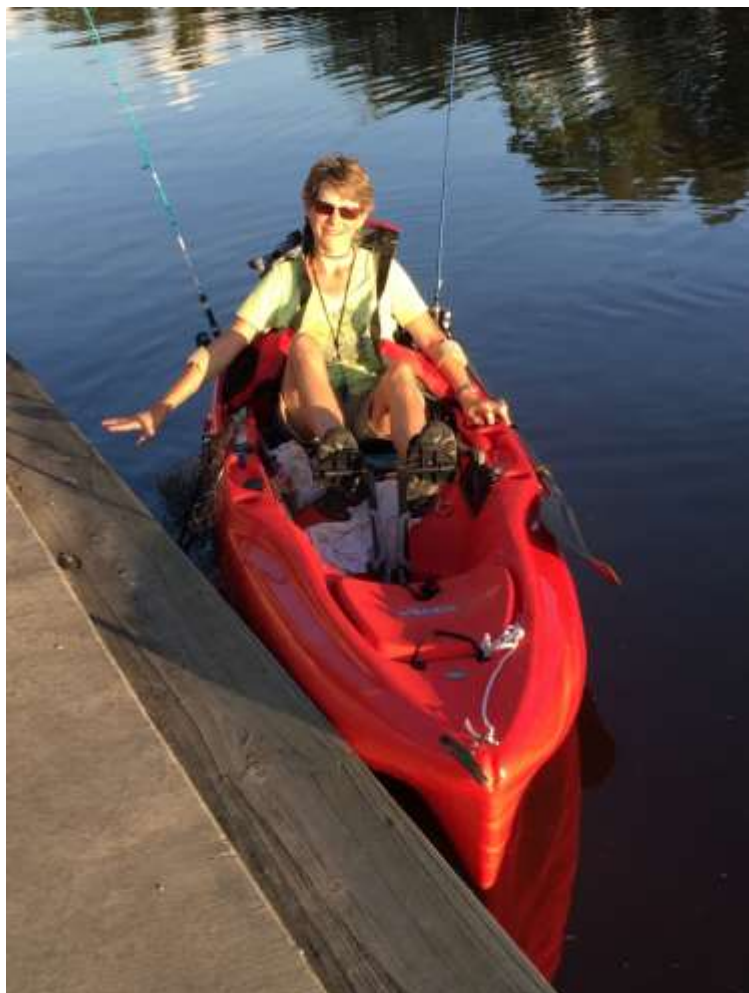
Contributed by Beth Rist

I'm not usually a procrastinator but when Barbara Morris told us we had to write a paper (at the beginning of the year) I almost had a panic attack. I have put it off and put it off because it is not something I have done in over 30 years (since my college days) so now, just a few days before it is due, I am attempting my best shot at it. Last month I ran into David Booth and was telling him about my anxiety over writing an article for the MN newsletter and he said, "well what's your passion". I had no hesitation and I said, "Kayak Fishing" so he said, "there you go".

I bet many of you didn't know in his former life he was a psychiatrist.(lol)

What drew me to the Master Naturalist group, like most of us, is simply my love for the outdoors. I am at one with nature when I take my kayak out and go to a marsh or a quiet area where I hear nothing else but the birds and a slight ripple of the waves. I wet a fishing line and just sit there in my kayak sometimes meditating, sometimes observing birds, or watching the shad ripple the water's surface or a mullet jump in the water. Then I wait, while my fishing hook is in the water with a live or dead shrimp on it. Minutes, hours, or days (lol) later something takes it and instantly it becomes my trolling motor for the kayak. Then an amazing surge of adrenaline flows through my body. It's hard to explain but I know if you're reading this you feel it too in your own way when outdoors. I know many of you don't fish but if you ever want to or take the kids or grandkids out, simply find a good tidal movement and throw a line out there. There are tricks to the trade just like any sport, but research and practice is the best way to hone your skills to find the big ones.

For me saltwater fishing is ten times more fun than freshwater fishing because on any given day you can catch the grand slam, and if you're lucky you can have two grand slams in any given day. Let me explain myself: catching four totally different fish gives you a grand slam therefore catching eight different fish gives you two grand slams. Once I was out in the marsh and I caught a redfish, a catfish, a drum, and a sheepshead. A little later that same day I also caught a croaker, a crab, a stingray and a trout. Yes, two grand slams! When I freshwater fish I'm either going to catch a catfish, a perch, a bass, and that's about it. I also love softball and baseball so I can really feed my passion with all these grand slams while Kayak fishing. ♦



The Bird Corner

By David Booth

Well, it is Fall now and what have the birds been up to? Most birds have spent the Summer raising a brood, or two or three. They spent a lot of energy doing that. Then, they put lots of energy going through molt, either a partial or full molt. Again, it takes lots of energy to replace those feathers and prepare for their next big energy budget item: migration. So put those feeders out.

Guess what? Fall migration begins in a) July b) August or c) September? The answer is yes! Different groups of birds will reliably travel to their wintering grounds in different time slots of the Fall. Shorebirds begin migrating south in July. Some will send out the females first, followed by the males and then they are followed weeks later by the fledglings. It is a wonder that the fledglings can find their way to where they need to be. In late August and through September we find that the different types of flycatchers are moving through our area as well as the hawks. Just last week we watched a group (a kettle) of Broad-winged Hawks soaring over Sulphur, La. They will typically wait until the sun warms up the ground to form thermals (rising heated air currents). They rise quickly on these thermals into the sky without having to flap a wing and then shoot off toward the Southwest. It is a great energy saver.

The warblers begin their movements southward at first in August and then more strongly in September and October. They will pass through and spend the winter in Central and South America to return in the Spring. Two examples of typical August and September warblers are the Yellow Warbler and the Northern Waterthrush (which is also a warbler and not a thrush at all). Many of these can be seen in your backyard habitat or in small woodland patches in our area as they pass through. These are beautiful birds to behold. They respond well to squeaks birders make to attract birds.



Yellow Warbler.



Northern Waterthrush

Other warblers are coming to spend the winter with us here. Soon they will settle down into the Winter populations. We will have some opportunities to view and enjoy them as we conduct Christmas Bird Counts (CBC) in our area. A CBC is where we try to do a complete census of a 15-mile diameter circle. We have one in the Lake Charles area and hope that you can get some volunteer hours in helping with this survey again this year. Stay tuned. ♦

Gulf Fritillary in Photos

Contributed by Pam Langley

The Gulf Fritillary (*Agraulis vanillae*) is the official butterfly of Louisiana and is abundant across the state. Here is a picture essay of the Gulf Fritillary's life cycle.



The adult butterfly lays eggs on the host plant, the passion vine (*Passiflora*)



Eggs take from 4 to 8 days to hatch.

The egg hatches into a caterpillar. It stays a caterpillar from 2 to 3 weeks.



When ready it wraps up in a chrysalis that looks like a dried leaf.



This pupal stage lasts from 5 to 10 days. At the end of that time a bright orange butterfly emerges.



There can be several generations in one year. They will migrate to more northern parts of their range in spring and move southward in the late summer and fall.

All these photos were taken in my yard! ♦



Hit Me with Your Best Shot

Contributed by Dan Plummer

Gallery by the Lake national bird photography exhibition to open September 30th

The fourth annual "Hit Me with your Best Shot" Bird Photography Exhibition by Gallery by the Lake opens at the Historic City Hall Arts & Cultural Center at 1001 Ryan Street in Lake Charles second floor gallery on Friday September 30th with an award ceremony and reception starting at 5:30 pm. The show competition and show were initiated by Gallery by the Lake with support of the Arts and Humanities Council of SWLA and Calcasieu Parish to celebrate the joys and benefits of birdwatching and showcase the work of wildlife photographers from across the US. The show will run through November 26th, 2022. Admission is free. Current hours of operation are Tuesday to Friday 10-6 and Saturday 10-2.

This year's call for entries received over 290 images from 61 entrants in 23 states, including entries from several local nature photographers. The top fifty images were judged and selected by the editorial staff of BWD Magazine, a popular publication for birdwatchers. Cash prizes will be awarded to the Best in Show and top three images. In addition to the physical exhibition, an online version can be viewed at the Gallery by the Lake website (www.gallerybythelake.org) once the exhibition opens.



"Who Are You" by Susan Kjellsen

The project and Gallery by the Lake Inc. are supported by a grant from the Calcasieu Parish Police Jury as administered by the Arts and Humanities Council of SWLA.

About Gallery by the Lake:

Gallery by the Lake Inc. is a non-profit organization whose members are artists living in the SWLA/Southeast Texas region. The mission of the Gallery by the Lake is to share and inspire the esthetic power of visual arts in our community. Its programs consist of Saturday art classes and regular exhibitions in the Historic City Hall in Lake Charles. For information about the gallery, its programs, or becoming a member, visit the gallery's website <https://www.gallerybythelake.org> or email us at gallerybythelakeswla@gmail.com.

Contact

Dan Plummer, President

Gallery by the Lake

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Dan's cell 337 842 6820

Native Fish in the Home Aquarium

BY Robby Maxwell

When most people in the US think of fish in an aquarium, they envision tropical fish usually from Asia or South America. This notion is fueled by some strange urge that we must possess something exotic or different. This idea of exotic novelty has really been the norm in fishkeeping for over 100 years. Oddly, the fish that we can find in our ditches or a few minutes from home are not widely known or considered for aquariums. If you go to Europe, you will see people keeping North American fish at home, but I doubt you'll see too many European fish in tanks. The idea of what's exotic and intriguing is consistent between continents

North America, and specifically Louisiana, has many native fish that are suitable and fascinating in an aquarium. I've typically kept freshwater native aquariums, but right now I have two Gulf Coast tanks and one local freshwater tank. I started dabbling in aquariums with wild-caught freshwater fish 17 years ago when I was studying native fish in college and as an intern in the River Studies Program at Texas Parks and Wildlife. I've kept or taken care of several species since then.

Louisiana freshwater native tanks can be kept much like tropical ones, but you probably won't need to buy a heater. The seasonal temperature swings they may experience in a house are nothing compared to what they deal with in the wild. Saltwater tanks will generally need a heater, depending on the fish that are being kept. More estuarine fish can deal with temperature swings better than fish that are typically found in the main body of the Gulf of Mexico.

Before we go too far into the specifics, there are some ground rules to collecting native fish for the aquarium, or really any reason. First off, know the laws. For Louisiana, the laws on collecting fish are found in the fishing regulations here: <https://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/page/seasons-and-regulations>. You will always need a fishing license to take fish from the wild. Second, you should not collect fish that you cannot identify. There are fish that are protected at the federal and state level, and they are listed as prohibited species. Third, consider your gear. Legal species must be caught by legal methods, which means many are restricted to hook and line while others are allowed to be taken by one or more other methods, including various traps and nets. There are also exotic invasive species that are illegal to possess or even return to the water alive. In short, read the rules, know the rules, and play by the rules. For most community aquarium fish, a seine or dipnet is the best way to collect them. Have a container with an aerator ready to hold fish, and make sure to fill it with cool water that you don't let get too hot. Part of native fish keeping is conservation through education and going against that mindset isn't helping anyone or anything.

Most people know what black bass (*Micropterus* spp.), catfish (Ictaluridae), and sunfish (*Lepomis* spp. aka bream or perch) are. These are diverse groups of fish, but aren't great in a typical home aquarium because they get too big or are too aggressive. I've taken care of tanks with these large natives and others, but have had more success with freshwater community-type natives for the home aquarium.

If you do want to keep smaller sunfish, there are a few species like Orange Spotted (*L. humilis*), Bantam (*L. symmetricus*), and Dollar (*L. marginatus*), that are aggressive, but can be kept in a small or medium-sized home tank. Banded Pygmy Sunfish (*Elassoma zonatum*) are odd sunfish; they are tiny and not aggressive, shy really. They can be kept in nano tanks of 2.5 gallons or less, they like lots of vegetation and hiding spots, and will only eat frozen or live food. They don't like anything boisterous around but are cool to keep once established. Small catfish can be kept easily, too.

Bullhead catfish (*Ameiurus* spp.) are smaller than most commonly eaten catfish, and do well in larger home aquariums, since they can still get to be 12" or so. The small catfish we have out here are madtoms. They will eat anything they can fit in their mouths but are otherwise peaceful and fairly shy.



A community tank of plants and fish from the Calcasieu River.

We have three types of livebearers (Family Poeciliidae), fish that give birth to live young, in Louisiana: Western Mosquitofish (*Gambusia affinis*), Sailfin Molly (*Poecilia latipinna*), and Least Killifish (*Heterandria formosa*). Mosquitofish are great for outdoor ponds, but are really kind of bland looking and aggressive. The Sailfin Molly is one of the few native fish you will find in typical fish shops. They have been hybridized and bred for color, but the wild-type coloring can be found for sale, too. These are flashy and easy fish that can survive in fresh to salt water, and really do enjoy some salt. In this group, my favorite is the Least Killifish (*Heterandria formosa*). It's the smallest fish in North America, and has a number of unique life history traits. They look a lot like a small Mosquitofish, but have nice patterns and are less aggressive. They'll drop about one surprisingly large baby fish a day when pregnant. I currently have a few of these in a 2.5 gallon tank with plants, grass shrimp, and a Shrimp Crawler.



Least Killifish

The best community aquarium fish are the native analogs to what you'll likely see in a tropical fish store. These are the minnows (sometimes called shiners, family Leuciscidae), which are similar to tetras and barbs that you will find in a pet store. We do have flashy colorful minnows like Striped Shiner (*Luxilus chrosocephalus*), Redfin Shiner (*Lythrurus umbratilis*), and Flagfin Shiners (*Pteronotropis signipinnis*), to name just a few. Shiners have variety of patterns, body shapes, and behaviors that make them entertaining in a tank. In that setting you can really begin to see what sets them apart from each other. Of these less colorful minnows, I've kept and enjoyed Pallid Shiners (*Hybopsis amnis*), the incredibly common Blacktail Shiners (*Cyprinella venusta*), and Weed Shiners (*Notropis texanus*).

Topminnows (Fundulidae), are similar to tropical killifish found in the aquarium trade. Topminnows range from the dual tone Blackspot or Blackstripe Topminnows (*Fundulus notatus* and *F. olivaceus*) to the strikingly colored Western Starhead and Golden Topminnow (*F. blairae* and *F. chrysotus*).

Some of the most charismatic fish you can keep in a tank are the darters (Percidae). Darters are similar to some loaches that you'll see for sale in pet stores. They like to hang around each other, and are really charismatic fish. Like the others, native darters range from the beautiful striking colors of the Redspot Darter (*Etheostoma artesiae*) and Slough Darter (*E. gracile*) to fish that are straw colored dark markings. The Scaly Sand Darter (*Ammocrypta vivax*) is small and sand colored, but I really enjoyed them in a sandy tank I kept years ago. They bury themselves in the sand with just their eyes exposed when spooked. Various logperch species and some of the other large darters (*Percina* spp.) are also really great in a tank. They're heavily patterned and have good personalities.

The two saltwater native fish I keep are oddballs, and definitely not community fish. Since they live alone, we do give these names. The first one is a Gulf Toadfish (*Opsanus beta*) named Goblin. It's what I grew up calling a dogfish and is commonly caught inshore on the Gulf coast. People usually think they're ugly, but they are unique looking fish with a large lumpy looking demeanor. Goblin swam into a fish trap I was cleaning out, when it was only about an inch long, and I brought it home with me. Goblin's pretty much a garbage disposal that'll eat any whole or piece of fish or crustacean I throw in his tank, live or dead. His only tank mates are hermit crabs, mud crabs, and an anemone as he will eat everything else. Like many big solitary fish, Goblin is grumpy and will let us know when he's hungry or wants attention. He also lets me pet him while doing water changes. I do keep a heater in his tank, but could probably do without it. Toadfish aren't picky about salinity, so I keep the tank between half and full seawater, with minor fluctuation over time due to water changes. Gulf Toadfish aren't for everyone, but despite my really not wanting to mess with saltwater tanks, I'm happy to have Goblin in the livingroom.



Goblin the Gulf Toadfish

Finally, one of the more bizarre fish I've ever kept, native or exotic, is the Sargassum Fish (*Histrio histrio*), a type of anglerfish or frogfish that spends its life floating around in sargassum (a type of floating seaweed). This is an ambush predator that will gobble up anything that wanders by. We found our first one in mats of sargassum washing up on the beach. We brought it home, and were immediately amazed by the looks and behavior of the new fish. This fish has uncanny camouflage (as do many creatures in sargassum), the ability to change color, a lure on its head, pelvic fins it uses like hands, and strange gill placement. Like the Gulf Toadfish, it's basically a swimming mouth. Sargassum Fish can eat huge fish that are as large as they are.



Ogre the Sargassum Fish

Our first Sargassum Fish taught me that these oceanic fish do need heaters, even if they're native. Our first one died during a temperature drop in the winter. We have a new one that a friend caught while dip netting some floating sargassum (shout out to Mary) for a few months. We named this new addition Ogre, and he's eating everything and growing fast. These fish also have the ability to seemingly take everything

they eat and turn it into pure growth. Once these fish get comfortable, they abandon their ambush behavior, and actively hunt and beg, putting on a big show with their oversized fins and fluid movements. Like the Gulf Toadfish, you can't keep a lot with a Sargassum Fish since they eat everything. I'm working on growing macroalgae in the tank, and have hermit crabs, mud crabs, and snails in there. With the Sargassum fish, I am more careful with keeping the water at seawater salinity, but otherwise, it's not a particularly picky fish.

Natives can also be kept in ponds (ditch the koi), troughs, and a number of different settings indoors and out. They're a good way to get a glimpse into a hidden world that's all around us and teach us that there's a lot going on that we are usually ignorant of. One thing I can't stress enough, which is true for native plants, too, is that you should really observe the habitat the fish are found in. Think about what it's like throughout the year, and that will inform you on how best to keep the fish. Do they like to hide, do they like open space, do they like flowing or still water, what is the water like? Those are big considerations when trying to keep any fish in captivity. ♦



A Shrimp Crawfish

Let's Share Our Nature Travels!

Lori Marinovich

Lori Marinovich has suggested that we start sharing our favorite vacation nature photos at our general meetings. Her spiel:

Show me yours and I'll show you mine - Naturalists travel

WOW!!! I was able to travel to ALASKA in July 2022. So much wow I haven't been able to put it all down to share with the group. Let's all pitch in and do a Travel Tales and Trails session at the next general meeting on January 4, 2023.

Send in 1-2 photos with a caption for us to present to the group at the general meeting. We will compile into a brief presentation. I'll go first. Send photos to Lori at elleu1@yahoo.com

Reed lakes trailhead, Western Columbine, Aquilegia Formosa (pictured on right)



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

When	What	Where
October 14-15	Cal-Cam Fair Booth	Sulphur
October 29, 4-7pm	Candy Crawl Booth	Downtown Lake Charles
November 5 8am - Noon	Walk and Wag Booth	Sulphur

Upcoming SLAMN Events

- **General Meeting**

Wednesday Oct. 5, 2022

Location: Farrah Hall, Rm 101, McNeese Campus

Time: 5:30 Social 6:00 Meeting

Speaker: SISU Mushrooms, Thomas Harper will be sharing information on Cultivation of Mushrooms. He will bring mushroom blocks and mushroom blooms that you can purchase to take home.

Other topics: Election of Officers and Committee Chairpersons/ Renewal of membership dues collected.

- **Field Trip**

Saturday October 8th

We will head over to Robby Maxwells, Soggy Prairie in Lacassine from 9-12. Come see what is in bloom. Robby will demonstrate seed collection and we will help him to harvest seeds in the prairie.

SLAMN CALENDAR

2022	
Oct. 5	General Meeting. Election of Board Members and Committee Assignments
Oct. 8	Field Trip. Soggy Prairie (Maxwell)
Oct. 14-15	Cal-Cam Fair Booth, Sulphur
Oct. 29	Candy Crawl Booth, 4-7pm, downtown Lake Charles
Nov. 5	Walk and Wag Booth, Sulphur 8am - noon
2023	
Jan 4	General Meeting, McNeese Social - 5:30, Meeting – 6:00pm
Jan 7	Field trip (TBA)
Jan 21	New Master Naturalist Courses begin
Mar 1	Board Meeting
Mar 8	Booker Fowler Fish Hatchery Event (TBA)

Mar 24-25	SWLA Garden Expo Booth, Burton Coliseum
April 5	General Meeting Social - 5:30, Meeting – 6:00pm
April 8	Field Trip (TBA)
April 21-23	Rendezvous Hosted by SWLA Master Naturalists, Hackberry
June 7	Board Meeting
July 12	General Meeting Social - 5:30, Meeting – 6:00pm
July 15	Field Trip – Family Fun Day
Sept 6	Board Meeting (Nominations for Board Members and Committees)
Oct 4	General Meeting (Election of Board Members and Committee Assignments)
Oct 7	Field Trip
Dec 6	Board Meeting