



Charter 2016

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PRESIDENT'S NOTE

Welcome to a New Year! As a Master Naturalist, my resolution is to show just one person the natural world in a way they have not noticed it before. By changing one person, we can change the world.

We have a full calendar of events for you to be involved with this year. The City of Lake Charles has reached out to SLAMN for volunteers. The first event will be All about Alligators on January 27. Mark your calendar and check Track it Forward for future events.

We are continuing to lead a monthly Guided Nature Walk at Sam Houston Jones State Park (usually held the third Thursday of the month). There is also a Guided Beginners Bird Walk the following Saturday. You can go along as a guide or just a participant. Our Facebook Group will post upcoming events.

We will be working with the City of Lake Charles on the revitalization of the natural areas at Tuten Park. The back area is cleared and the Outdoor Classroom has been reopened. We may need you to come help with planning or planting of native plants.

The new workshops begin on January 20th. We have a great group signed up this year. You can volunteer to be a facilitator at the workshops.

There are many volunteer opportunities. Come out and get involved. The world needs you!
I'll 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

JANUARY EVENTS

General Meeting

Wednesday January 10, 5:30 – 8pm

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

Speaker: Kimberly Albrecht, Program Manager at City of Lake Charles

Native Plant Highlight: Common blue violet (*Viola sororia*)

January Field Trip

Saturday January 13, 9am – 1pm

Location: Allen Acres, 5070 Highway 399, Pitkin, LA 70656

Event: Tom Sawyer Days

Dr Allen recently had surgery and he needs help getting his property ready for Spring. He invites you to Allen Acres to help with planting, transplanting, trimming, weed pulling, painting, and more. We will stop for one or more hikes around and perhaps to the Ouiska Chitto and to look at and eat plants. You can bring a shovel, gloves, and clippers or just show up and we will provide tools. Bring plastic bags to take your free plants home. He offers free food, plant id, some seeds, and lots of plants like three kinds of mountains mints, big blue stem, little bluestem, horsemint, bee balm, ashy sunflower (with these, you would have the beginning of a prairie) rabbit tobacco, epazote, wild chervil, cedar, American holly, yaupon, elderberry and lots more. A few pawpaws also. He needs to know how many people are coming so he can plan for lunch. Members, Sign up on Track it Forward. Questions? Email Barbara at barbaramor201@gmail.com. Carpooling from Moss Bluff is available.

ARBOR DAY

By Pam Langley

How it started

J. Sterling Morton is credited with starting the first Arbor Day. J. Sterling Morton owned a newspaper in Nebraska City, Nebraska and served his community in various political seats being chosen as President Grover Cleveland's Secretary of Agriculture in 1893. He had grown up in New York state and moved to the Territory of Nebraska in 1854 from Michigan where he had attended college. The stark differences of the wooded landscapes he was familiar with to the prairie landscape in Nebraska lead him to become an ardent supporter of tree planting. Convinced that trees would provide a much-needed wind break on the Nebraska plains that

would help in keeping farmers' soil from blowing away, Morton urged Nebraskans to plant trees. He proposed a competition with a monetary award to the person who planted the most trees on the first Arbor Day. The state Agriculture Department approved, and the first Arbor Day was held in Nebraska City, Nebraska on April 10th, 1872. On that first Arbor Day there were approximately 1 million trees planted. The following years' events were just as successful and became a popular event in Nebraska. In 1874 Nebraska's Governor, Robert W. Furnas, officially proclaimed Arbor Day on April 10 in Nebraska. Thirteen years later Nebraska honored their Arbor Day founder by officially moving Arbor Day to April 22, which was J. Sterling Morton's birthday.

The popularity of the event spread to other states and during the 1830's several states had established Arbor Days as holidays. In the 1880's it became popular in schools to celebrate Arbor Day by having students plant trees in honor of famous people or historical events.

Arbor Day Today

Today Arbor Day is celebrated in all 50 states and is most commonly observed on the last Friday in April, though some states have moved the date to coincide with the best tree planting weather. For example, Arbor Day in **Louisiana** is observed on the **third Friday in January**, while in Alaska it is celebrated on the third Monday in May. Louisiana's Arbor Day this year is January 19th.

The importance of planting trees is also celebrated in several other countries around the world. Australia, Brazil, Canada, Germany, and Scotland are just a few of the many countries that celebrate their own version of Arbor Day or in some cases Arbor Week.

Most of us in the United States live in an urban setting. Trees can contribute in many positive ways to the urban environment. Trees can provide cooler temperatures, cleaner air, higher property values and healthier residents. Trees also sequester carbon which is important in



The prairie landscape of Nebraska was not as inviting to settlers as the wooded hills of New York. Shown at top is a Nebraska prairie and below it is a fall scene from New York state. Grain farmers however thought the plains of Nebraska would make perfect wheat fields and they plowed up the prairie grasses, paving the way for the dust bowl years later.

fighting climate change. Healthy trees can also provide a windbreak so dearly needed during hurricane seasons in our area.

The National Arbor Day Foundation is a non-profit organization that promotes participation in Arbor Days and tree planting in general. They held a vote for America's favorite tree in 2004. The mighty oak won by a landslide, earning 101,000 votes. America's National Tree is now the oak.

Due to the challenges of climate change, the Arbor Day Foundation is scaling their efforts to plant 500 million trees by 2027 in areas where they're needed most. They are asking everyone to plant a tree where it is needed. And as we all know, due to the hurricanes of 2020, Lake Charles and the surrounding areas are in dire need of trees.

Interested in Planting a Tree

The Gulf Coast Soil and Water Conservation District is having their annual tree sale starting January 22 through January 26, but be advised that trees are sold on a first come first served basis until all the trees are sold (or until the 26th). The trees are bareroot seedlings and cost \$2 each. They promote planting native species and most of the seedlings they sell are native to our area. This year they will be offering Bald Cypress, Cherrybark Oak, Green Ash, Laurel Oak, Live Oak, Mayhaw, Nuttall Oak, Overcup Oak, Common Persimmon, Red Maple, Red Mulberry, Sawtooth Oak, Shumard Oak, Native Pecan, and White Oak. The sale will be located at the Lake Charles USDA Center, 5417 Gerstner Memorial Drive, Lake Charles. Only cash or checks are accepted for payment.

If you do plant a tree, be sure to do your homework on the species you choose to plant. Things you should know before planting include how big it will get in both height and width, how fast it will grow, if it is deciduous or evergreen, sun exposure needed for good growth, and the soil conditions it prefers. More information can be found in LSU's publication entitled Native Tree Guide: [pub2926NativeTreeGuide.pdf \(lsuagcenter.com\)](https://pub2926NativeTreeGuide.pdf). And of course, you want to plant a tree that is native to our area since they will support our wildlife, birds, and insects better than any non-native tree.

THE PURPLE MARTIN (*Progne subis*)

by Mike Schoen

It was around 1968 when a man came knocking on our door, not selling vacuum cleaners but Purple Martin houses. Mr. Gene Dolan was with the Young Men's Business Club of Lake Charles, and he was raising money for a Vietnam Memorial on the lakefront. I didn't know a thing about the largest swallow around but answering that knock kicked off an obsession that I've had for over 50 years.

That day I purchased a 12 room aluminum house and surprisingly had immediate success with attracting purple martins to nest and hatch some offspring. Who knows, if I had not been successful that first year, I may not have been interested in them and moved on. But they came,

and that was it, and the rest is history. Over the years, I picked up more information on the bird and also bought more bird housing.

The Purple Martin is almost solely reliant on man-made housing to nest. Early history shows they were found in holes in trees. Later they went to gourds which were provided by Indians and are now primarily in houses manufactured by humans. Sometimes you see them in structures like telephone poles and the like when housing is scarce. I currently have one house with 12 compartments, a 24 room castle and 2 sets of 12, plastic gourds, which are their favorite. I guess it reminds the martins of the time when they used to follow along with Indians, who provided the gourds to attract them.

Why would the American Indian want to attract Martins, because they ate bugs. Yep, they eat flies, mosquitoes, gnats, and dragonflies. I've even seen one try to choke down a locust. Here in southwest Louisiana, how can you not admire a bird that reduces our pesky bug population? I'm all for that! They don't eat seed and won't generally go to a feeder, unless it's a platform with mealworms. They can be enticed to visit those periodically.

Unfortunately, these birds are not with us year-round, they are migratory, coming from Brazil. They arrive sometime in late January and leave late June into July. It's a long perilous journey, either up the Yucatan or going through Cuba on into Florida.



Purple Martins at their favorite abode. Photo by Mike Schoen.

If you want to see them before they take off, go to the Gibbstown bridge, near Pintail drive around the 4th of July. You will see thousands of birds on the wires and in the trees, gathering for their trip south.

Attracting them can be as easy as purchasing a bird house and a 12 to 14 foot pole. The pole can be cemented in the ground or stuck in the ground and secured with a T-post. I recommend going to the website of the Purple Martin Conservation Association (PMCA) www.purplemartin.org site. Be careful, there they will provide you with all the information for attracting the most wanted bird in America – and you'll be hooked just like me!

SPRINGTIME BERRIES

By Karen Schoen

I look forward to spring every year and the opportunity to venture into the woods, fields and along fence lines in search of berries. We have both dewberries and blackberries in our area, and it is hard to differentiate between the two. Dewberries ripen earlier, have shorter stems and tend to be lower to the ground than blackberries.

The berries begin in the briar patches as white, five petal flowers in February and March. Over the next couple of months, the flowers turn into tiny green berries. As they mature, they turn red and will be deep purple at the peak of ripeness.



Southern Dewberry (Rubus trivialis). Photo from <https://warcapps.usgs.gov/> - Larry Allain



Native Sawtooth Blackberry (Rubus argutus). Photo from <https://warcapps.usgs.gov/> - Larry Allain

Berry picking is a great introduction to enjoying nature at its finest, a great adventure for the entire family. The berries have prickles so wear long pants and sleeves. It is best to visit the berry patches every few days because the berries on the vine continue to ripen each day. One day's red berries will be the ones ready to be picked a few days later.

I grew up in Hackberry and we picked berries by the buckets full. We had berry pies, berry cobblers, berry dumplings, berry jelly and, best of all, bowls full of berries covered in sugar and cream. Be sure to pick you some each year and enjoy one of God's simplest foods.

I am a member of the 2023 Southwest Louisiana Master Naturalist class and have learned so much this past year. The folks that have facilitated our activities are incredible. They are passionate and so very knowledgeable. It's been so much fun!! I encourage anyone that is considering the certification program to sign on for 2024!

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

All dates are subject to change. For more information and to sign up, go to www.TrackitForward.com
 Red text indicates Workshops. Blue text indicates events with City of Lake Charles.

January 10	General Meeting --- (LSU AG Center) Meeting 6:00 Social 5:30
January 13	Field Trip – Tom Sawyer Days at Allen Acres (see January Events for info)
January 18	Guided Nature Walk at Sam Houston Park 9-11am
January 20	Introduction/Applied Natural Science
January 27	Nature in Focus, LC Welcome Center, Alligators
February 3	Biology/ Ecology
February 15	Guided Nature Walk at Sam Houston Park 9-11am
February 17	Bird Study
February 24	Nature in Focus Tuten Park Trees 10-12
March 2	Backyard Habitat
March 6	Board Meeting WLF offices
March 5 & 7	Booker Fowler Fish Hatchery Event
March 16	Astronomy
March 16	Safe Solar Eclipse Viewing Workshop, Sulphur Library, 1:00pm. Public invited
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 (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, Birds 10-12
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 8	Riverine Ecology and Fish
June 15	Family Fun Day
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
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 assgns
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

NOTE: PELICAN PADDLERS OF SWLA Guided Kayaking every Thursday 6:00pm on 210 Beach north.