



Charter 2016

Vol 1 ISSUE 2 December 2016

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President's Note:

Season's greetings, Master Naturalists!

Finally the cooler weather has reached Louisiana, and it's much easier to get outside. We're getting close to Christmas Bird Count (CBC) season, and I want to encourage everyone to get out and take part in at least one CBC. Don't worry if you don't know your birds! CBC compilers generally pair inexperienced birders with experienced ones so you won't be thrown to the wolves. It's really easy as a naturalist to get caught up gathering data for all sorts citizen science projects. Remember to just go out there and observe nature for yourself also. The easiest way to improve your naturalist skills is to go outside, observe organisms, and take notes (draw them too if you're willing or able).

Calendar Quick View

Dec 18: Sabine Christmas Bird Count

Dec 30: Lake Charles Christmas Bird Count

Jan 4: SLAMN Meeting

Jan 28: SLAMN Workshop

Mar 31: LMNA Annual Meet-up



President's Note:

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I've had weeks or months pass without doing any birding that wasn't related to my job or some other obligation. After a while of feeling stuck in a rut, I realized that I hadn't been out birding for fun in ages. For me, birding is a restorative activity, and I bet being out in nature similar for many of you. So, please take part in citizen science (iNaturalist, eBird, Christmas Bird Count, etc.) But remember to go out there and observe for fun. Make notes and progress in your naturalist skills. You can always submit your observations to iNaturalist or eBird after the fact!

See ya'll in January,

Irvin Louque



Meeting Notes

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Upcoming Meeting Location and Date
Tuten Park, January 4th at 5:30 P.M.
All members are invited to attend.

The following officers were re-elected for another term at our October meeting:

President: Irvin Louque

Vice-President: Tommy Hillman

Treasurer: Robby Maxwell

Secretary: Julie Amy

At-large Board Members:

Chuck Battaglia,

David Booth,

Theresa Cross,

Brian Sean Early,

Lori McGee

October Meeting Highlights

- Current officers were elected for second term.
- Website photo gallery set-up for Logo selection.
- Logo needed for T-shirts. Tommy Hillman is in charge of T-shirts
- SLAMN pamphlet will be printed by local printers Lake Charles Printing or Knight Media.
- Irvin drafted a SLAMN application which was shared with members at the meeting.
- Outreach activities were discussed. Invasive Round-up at Tuten Park planned.
- Dan Guillory presented a log for keeping CE hours and shared it with members.
- Newsletter, Nature Notes, will be published every two months and once a month during the spring. Frequency of the Newsletter will be revisited.
- LMNA presentations discussed: David Booth will present a backyard science presentation. Robbie and Daniel Maxwell will lead an aquatic bioblitz. Volunteers still needed for A/V and kitchen food setup. Cost is \$80 to attend. <http://www.louisianamasternaturalist.org/>

Reminder: SLAMN \$15.00 yearly membership is due. If you plan on attending the Annual LMNA Meet-up at Chicot State Park on March 31, 2017, you need to pay the \$80.00 registration fee. The fees can be paid at our meetings to Robby Maxwell or mailed to:

Robby Maxwell *SLAMN Treasurer*

20333 Bourque Rd.

Iowa, LA 70647



Here is our new Southwest Louisiana Master Naturalists logo.

The picture was selected by popular vote. Irvin Louque took this picture at Tuten Park.



Local News:

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November 12, 2016 Tuten Park Invasive Species Roundup

Southwest Louisiana Master Naturalists held an Air Potato Round-up at Tuten Park on Saturday November 12. Irvin Louque, Tuten Park Manager and Master Naturalists led a group of 8 volunteers in mechanically removing the invasive species, Air Potato vine, from the park. After the removal of the Air Plant Potato vines, SLAMN member Robby Maxwell gave a wonderful and comprehensive presentation on “Louisiana Invasive Aquatic Species” to SLAMN members. This excellent presentation highlighted invasive threats to Louisiana’s ecosystems that included Water Hyacinths, Giant Salvinia, and Peruvian Water Grass.

Piles of the Air Potato vine removed during the Invasive Round-up at Tuten Park.



Water Hyacinths



Giant Salvinia



Local News:

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Saturday November 19th Sam Houston Jones State Park Bird Banding



Southwest Louisiana Master Naturalists and club member **Irvin Louque** set-up bird banding activities at Sam Houston Jones State Park on Saturday and had a great turn-out of volunteers! About 15 undergraduate students participated. The students were there for bonus points for their Wildlife Management Techniques class.



Results from bird banding:

- 1 female Ruby-crowned Kinglet
- 1 male American Woodcock
- 2 Hermit Thrushes
- 2 female Northern Cardinals



November 26th Sam Houston Jones State Park Bird Walk



Sam Houston Jones State Park Bird Walk led by experienced birder and SWLA Master Naturalists **David Booth** was well attended. Participants enjoyed a beautiful day with great views of wonderful birds. As a special treat, the group viewed the Rufous Hummingbird that is a frequent visitor to a local hummingbird feeder.

Photos courtesy of David Booth



Continuing Education Opportunities:

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Continuing Education and Volunteer

Sam Houston Jones State Park Bird Banding Louisiana Bird Observatory

Irvin Louque holds bird banding activities at Sam Houston Jones Park on Saturdays. Volunteers are welcome! Learn how to set-up mist nets, age birds, and collect important data for conservation efforts. Please check with Irvin for dates and times. Anyone interested is encouraged to contact Irvin Louque through email or phone (225)206-0400

irvinlouque@gmail.com



Volunteer Opportunities:

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Continuing Education and Volunteer Opportunity

Check out the Volunteer Instructor Program.

Aquatic VIP

<http://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/document/aquatic-vip-flyer>

<https://ldwf.wufoo.com/forms/aquatic-vip/>



WANTED Master Naturalists or Birders



Wanted, one or two Master Naturalists or Birders who would be interested in starting a monthly Birdwalk/Naturewalk for folks in the downtown Lake Charles area. Drew Park has long been targeted as having great potential for a regular weekly morning birding outing. With the large oak trees, local backyard feeders and access to the lake by walking path, it makes a wonderful backdrop for inviting new birders who are interested but shy about making area car trips. If you are possibly interested or would like to help please contact David Booth at 526-0837 or email at david@boothenvironmental.com.

Volunteer Opportunities:

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Save the Date!



LMNA ANNUAL MEET UP 2017
(FOR CERTIFIED & ENROLLED MASTER NATURALISTS)
FRIDAY 3/31 - SUNDAY 4/2
CHICOT STATE PARK

Want to help us plan? Join a Planning Team!

- **Speaker Team:** Recruit speakers, coordinate speaker schedule
- **Food Team:** Plan, organize and execute meal time
- **Activity Team:** Planning workshops, hikes, & other activities
- **Volunteer Team:** Recruit and manage volunteers
- **Tech and Prep Team:** Procure AV equipment, assist presenters
- **Spoke and Tabling Team:** Seek donations & tabling organizations
- **Registration Team:** Point of contact for registration, work reg., table

Email lamasternaturalist@gmail.com for more information!

Volunteer for the Louisiana Master Naturalists Meet UP

<http://www.louisianamasternaturalist.org/>

Please let us know if you are interested in joining a planning team by emailing:

lamasternaturalist@gmail.com.

You can get volunteer hours!

Friday, December 30th 2016 Lake Charles Christmas Bird Count – “Save the Date” and plan to volunteer to participate in the Lake Charles Christmas Bird Count. The Lake Charles CBC will occur on December 30, 2016. Last year we recorded 108 species including Painted Bunting, Great Kiskadee, and Vermilion Flycatcher. Anyone interested is encouraged to contact Irvin Louque through email or phone (225)206-0400 irvinlouque@gmail.com



Christmas Bird Count

Join the Christmas Bird Count

You can add to a century of citizen science data by signing up for a count near you

Photo: Camilla Cerea/Audubon

[CBC Home](#) | [Access Count Results](#) | [History of the Christmas Bird Count](#)

Sunday, Dec. 18th 2016 Sabine Christmas Bird Count – Plan to volunteer for the all-day birding event of the year at the Sabine National Wildlife Refuge and neighboring spots. No experience necessary! This is a great opportunity to participate in this very important worldwide bird count. For more information about participating the Christmas Bird Count, contact Jeanie Pousson, Gulf Coast Bird Club Coordinator for the Sabine NWR sector: phone: 540-7726, or email jeanie.pousson@gmail.com

Audubon Christmas Bird Count

<http://www.audubon.org/conservation/join-christmas-bird-count>

Volunteer Opportunities:

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Volunteer for one or more Christmas Bird Counts. There are Christmas Bird Counts taking place around the state. Lend a hand and contact one or more of the state organizers listed below to volunteer. Your help will be greatly appreciated.

Louisiana Christmas Bird Count Information 2016-17

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
		14 WL, JB, CB	15 CW	16 LT, BC	17 CR, SH, DA, NZ	18 SA
19 SC	20	21 GI, NA	22	23	24	25
26 RB	27 NS	28 NO, NI	29 LA	30 LC, ST	31 CL	1
2 TH	3 CL	4 PI	5 PP	6	7	8

????	BR	Baton Rouge	Dan Mooney	dan.mooney@birdnerds.com
16-Dec	BC	Bossier-Caddo (Red River)	Terri Jacobson	Terri_Jacobson@fws.gov
3-Jan	CA	Catahoula NWR	Marty Floyd	Progne99@aol.com
14-Dec	CB	Claiborne	John Dillon	kisforkryptonite@gmail.com
17-Dec	CR	Creole	Erik Johnson	ejohnson@audubon.org
15-Dec	CW	Crowley	Marty Floyd	Progne99@aol.com
3-Jan	CL	C'ville-Lecompte	Marty Floyd	Progne99@aol.com
17-Dec	DA	D'Arbonne	Joan Brown	bljnbr@att.net
????	FP	Fort Polk	Jim Johnson	<i>(limited access)</i>
21-Dec	GI	Grand Isle	Chris Brantley	chrisbrantley@charter.net
14-Dec	JB	Johnson Bayou	John Whittle	johnawhittle@aol.com
16-Dec	LT	Lacassine-Thornw	Rob Dobbs	rcdobbs@gmail.com
29-Dec	LA	Lafayette	Erik Johnson	ejohnson@audubon.org
30-Dec	LC	Lake Charles	Irvin Louque	irvinlouque@gmail.com
21-Dec	NA	Nachitoches	Charlie Lyons	lyon5516@bellsouth.net
17-Dec	NZ	Natchez*	Stratton Bull	strattonbull@earthlink.net
28-Dec	NI	New Iberia	Erik Johnson	ejohnson@audubon.org
28-Dec	NO	New Orleans	Glenn Oussett	goussett@bellsouth.net
27-Dec	NS	Northshore-Slidell	Thomas Trenchard	trench19@hotmail.com
4-Jan	PI	Palmetto Island	Toddy Guidry	guidrys@cox.net
5-Jan	PP	Pine Prairie	Marty Floyd	Progne99@aol.com
26-Dec	RB	Reser-Bonnet Carre	Melvin Weber	mweber@rtconline.com
18-Dec	SA	Sabine NWR	Jeanie Pousson	jeanie.pousson@gmail.com
17-Dec	SH	Shreveport	Charlie Lyons	lyon5516@bellsouth.net
30-Dec	ST	St Tammany	Linda Beall	lbeall@minilogic.com
19-Dec	SC	Sweet Lake-Cam Pr	Samatha Collins	Scollins@wlf.la.gov
2-Jan	TH	Thibodaux	Delaina LeBlanc	delaina@btnep.org
????	VE	Venice	Robert Purrington	danny@tulane.edu
14-Dec	WL	White Lake	Michael Seymour	mseymour@wlf.la.gov

Volunteer Opportunities:

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U.S. Fish & Wildlife Services Southwest Louisiana NWR Complex

<https://www.fws.gov/swlarefugecomplex/volunteers.html>

Volunteers and student interns provide much needed assistance with refuge projects. They are often able to complete work that the refuge would be unable to do. The hours, work assignments, et cetera are tailored to meet the needs of both the refuge and the volunteer or intern.

Refuge housing may be available to qualified interns and volunteers. Volunteer projects include conducting biological surveys, providing clerical assistance in the office, general maintenance of facilities and equipment, photography and art work, habitat restoration activities, and environmental education just to name a few.

Please contact the SW LA refuge complex headquarters for additional information regarding openings and how to apply.

SW LA NWR Complex Headquarters
Attn: Volunteer Coordinator
1428 Hwy. 27
Bell City, LA 70630
337-598-2216

Diane Borden-Billiot



<http://www.crcl.org/>

Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana upcoming events and volunteer opportunities:

<http://www.crcl.org/get-involved/volunteer.html>

10,000 Trees for Louisiana in Lake Maurepas

Dec 1, 2016 10:00 am – 4:00 pm

Dec 2, 2016 9:00 am – 4:00 pm

Dec 3, 2016 9:00 am – 4:00 pm

Volunteer to help restore our coastal forests in Braithwaite

Dec 9, 2016 10:00 am – 4:00 pm

Restore the Coastal Forests in Braithwaite

Dec 10, 2016 9:00 am – 4:00 pm

10,000 Trees for Louisiana in Lake Maurepas

Jan 13, 2017 10:00 am – 4:00 pm

Jan 14, 2017 9:00 am – 4:00 pm

Jan 19, 2017 10:00 am – 4:00 pm

Jan 20, 2017 9:00 am – 4:00 pm

Jan 21, 2017 9:00 am – 4:00 pm

Feb 3, 2017 10:00 am – 4:00 pm

Feb 4, 2017 9:00 am – 4:00 pm

Upcoming Events:

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Save the Date!

LOUISIANA MASTER NATURALIST ASSOCIATION

LMNA ANNUAL MEET UP 2017
(FOR CERTIFIED & ENROLLED MASTER NATURALISTS)

FRIDAY 3/31- SUNDAY 4/2
CHICOT STATE PARK

Want to help us plan? Join a Planning Team!

- **Speaker Team:** Recruit speakers, coordinate speaker schedule
- **Food Team:** Plan, organize and execute meal time
- **Activity Team:** Planning workshops, hikes, & other activities
- **Volunteer Team:** Recruit and manage volunteers
- **Tech and Prep Team:** Procures AV equipment, assists presenters
- **Sponsor and Tabling Team:** Seek donations & tabling organizations
- **Registration Team:** Point of contact for registration, works reg. table

Email lamasternaturalist@gmail.com for more information!

The Louisiana Master Naturalists Association will hosts an annual Rendezvous where members meet to learn, volunteer, and get to know their fellow Louisiana Master Naturalists. LMNA:

<http://www.louisianamasternaturalist.org/>

The 2017 Annual LMNA Rendezvous will be at Chicot State Park (Mar 31–Apr 2).

Southwest Louisiana Master Naturalists Workshop Dates and Description for 2017. (Times and dates are subject to change.) **Application and registration for New Members is required.**

Apply at: <http://www.swlamasternaturalists.org/apply.html>

Date	Title	Time	Location	Coordinator
1/21/2017	Overview - Naturalist Skills	9am-3pm	Tuten Park	Irvin Louque, Danielle Maxwell
2/4/2017	Citizen Science	9am-3pm	Tuten Park/Sam Houston Jones State Park	Irvin Louque, Theresa Cross
2/18/2017	Longleaf Pine	9am-3pm	David Daigle/Allen Acres, CC road Preserve	Chuck Battaglia
3/4/2017	Coastal Ecology/Geology	9am-3pm	Rockefeller SWR	Brian Sean Early
3/18/2017	Backyard Science and Applying Citizen Science	8am-2pm	Tuten Park	Theresa Cross
3/31/2017	LMNA Rendezvous		Chicot State Park	
4/8/2017	Birds	7am-1pm	Cameron Prairie NWR and/or Tuten Park	David booth, Theresa Cross
4/22/2017	Amphibians and Reptiles	8am-4pm	Sam Houston Jones State Park	Chuck Battaglia
5/6/2017	Cajun Prairie	8am-4pm	Eunice	Brian Sean Early, Tommy Hillman
5/20/2017	Pollinators	8am-4pm	LERC, CC Road Preserve	Chuck Battaglia
6/3/2017	Aquatic Invertebrates	8am-4pm	Tuten Park, Calcasieu River	Chuck Battaglia, Robby Maxwell
6/10/2017	Nocturnal Animals (Overnight)	4pm-10pm	Hodges Gardens	Theresa Cross, Chuck Battaglia
6/11/2017	Riverine Ecology (Overnight)	8am-2pm	Calcasieu Headwaters, Kisatchie	Robby Maxwell
6/24/2017	Graduation Overview of iNaturalist	11am-3pm	Tuten Park	Irvin Louque

Upcoming Events:

[Back](#)**December 10 – 11, 2016**<http://www.galvestonnaturetourism.org/holidaywiththecranes.asp>**Holiday with the Cranes
Galveston Texas**

For a unique holiday experience, spend a wild weekend in Galveston celebrating the return of the island's wintering Sandhill Cranes at Holiday with the Cranes, Dec. 10 – 11, 2016.

February 16-18, 2017 Eagle Expo<https://www.cajuncoast.com/event/eagle-expo>**EAGLE EXPO****Morgan City, LA 70380****February 16-18, 2017**

The Atchafalaya Basin, the largest overflow swamp in the country, is home to an abundance of wildlife, including rare and endangered species such as the American bald eagle. Our annual Eagle Expo includes boat tours into various waterways to view eagle's nests, raptor show, and presentations on the American bald eagle, wildlife, flora, fauna and the culture of the area by wildlife professionals and photographers, and much more. Admission and registration required.

February 23-28, 2017<http://www.whoopingcranefestival.org/>**Whooping Crane Festival
Port Aransas Texas**

Get your binoculars and checklists ready! The Coastal Bend is the only spot in the United States where the endangered whooping crane can be viewed at close range, and the Port Aransas Chamber of Commerce celebrates this astonishing natural wonder with an annual festival honoring these grand birds.





iNaturalist Spotlight and Photos:

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iNaturalist.org's Journal Official Blog

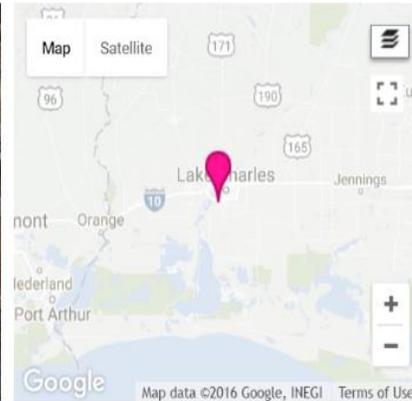
<https://www.inaturalist.org/blog>

Check out the "Observation of the Week" post.

iNaturalist Southwest Louisiana Master Naturalists Project Observation of the Month by Irvin Louque

Eastern North American Destroying Angel (*Amanita bisporigera*) · Observed by ilouque · November 23, 2016
· 03:04 AM CST

☆ Add to favorites 🔍 Identify + Add to project ➦ Share



ilouque's ID:
Eastern North American Destroying Angel (*Amanita bisporigera*) [Agree?](#)

Identotron

- Projects
- Southwest Louisiana Master ...
 - Biodiversity of Louisiana

Location: Tuten Park, LA, US (Google, OSM) [Details](#)

Join the Southwest Louisiana Master Naturalists project. Add your observations and photos to our group project.



Welcome to Southwest Louisiana Master Naturalists

« Projects [Terms & Rules](#) | [Leave this project](#)

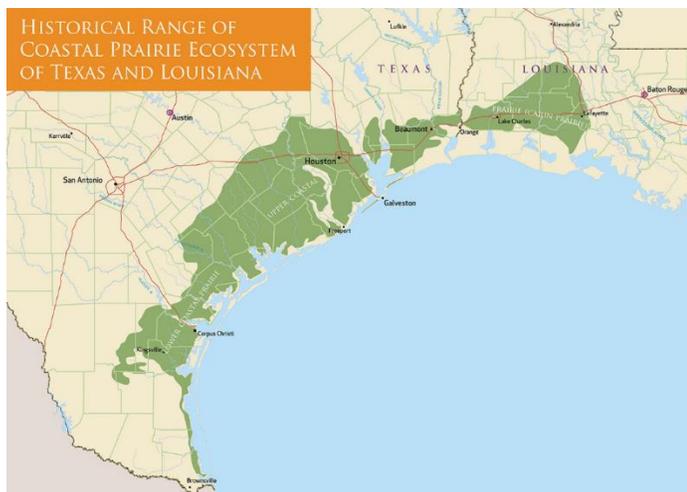
ADD OBSERVATIONS

Southwest Louisiana Master Naturalists

The Maxwell MicroPrairie Restoration Part I: Why I Decided to Kill the Lawn by Robby Maxwell

This is the first in a series covering our attempt to reconstruct a semblance of Cajun Prairie on our property. We are following the advice and methods of people that have done this before, but I really have no idea how this will turn out. This will either unfold as a story of success or failure. I've put in the effort to hopefully tip the scales toward success, but there are a number of factors that are out of my control. Either way, it's an attempt worth documenting.

The Cajun Prairie is the easternmost portion of the Coastal Prairie system of Texas and Louisiana. It once covered ~2.5 million acres, but the habitat has been reduced to a few hundred or possibly thousand acres of remnants and restorations, making it one of the most endangered habitat types in the United States. Historical reports and current remnants show a thriving and diverse habitat consisting of very rich grassland communities. The high rainfall, fire regime, soils, and extended growing/blooming season make for a unique ecosystem. We figured there's no better way to make a "backyard" wildlife habitat than to try to restore it to what it once was.



(Image Source: Katy Prairie Conservancy)

With connections made through the Southwest Louisiana Master Naturalists, we seriously began cooking up the idea to restore the land. Our property, as far from its natural state as it is, supports a fairly rich flora and fauna. Birds, reptiles, amphibians, arthropods, and fish abound. For example, we've documented nine species of snakes on our little plot without really looking for them (and none of them were venomous). The logical next step, we decided, was to improve and restore a section, and see what this land can really do. That step really consists of a number of steps, including research, correspondence, seed collection, land preparation, and finally planting. In other words, it's a lot of work to do it right.

Our property lies just south of the Hwy. 165 prairie remnants and due west of the Welsh remnant in the middle of pastureland that was once thriving prairie. We have fewer than 2.5 acres, and made the decision to convert 0.5 acres on the west end of the property into prairie in the spring of 2016. The section consisted of mostly St. Augustine and Bahia grass, with other weedy grasses and sedges interspersed in it. We have been promoting spring wildflower growth for the five years we've owned it, but in about May of every year have begun to mow it. It is bordered on the north by an often-wet ditch, the south by pecan trees, the west by a tree line with a shallow drainage ditch, and the east by a raised rock/shell driveway. Our house was built in the 1940's, and the original family farmed much of the land around us. I have heard from neighbors that this section has never seen a plow (the soils are intact), and once housed a large chicken coop. In later years it's just been a small field of very green grass. For much of the year it is too wet and mushy to mow, and will swallow up a truck if given the

opportunity. Why have we been just growing grass to mow? It's not even a fun place to play half of the year because it's so wet.

In June I applied my first of three rounds of herbicide to control the unwanted plants in June 2016. We considered a winter burn to prepare for planting, but after consultation and discussion, decided that the area would probably be too wet for a good burn with the purpose of removing the unwanted grasses. I used glyphosate (Roundup) in a backpack sprayer to kill the unwanted vegetation. It's the preferred herbicide because it kills a wide range of plants, is not a pre-emergent (doesn't keep new plants from sprouting), and has a very short half-life in the soil. It is possible to start a restoration without the use of herbicide, but takes much longer to establish native plants. I also removed two very large crape myrtles and a juniper.



Before (June) and after (November) herbicide application. The tall grass in the "before" picture is Vasey grass.

individual species and groups remain in envelopes and bags to be spread in favorable areas. There is a micro-topography that was evident by the types of grasses and forbs that were growing before I started the project, and will influence what will thrive where. My goal was to plant 10-15 lbs of seed. To date, I have collected 7.5 lbs of seed and 100+ species/species groups that I could identify. I am working on buying 4 lbs of local seed to meet my goal before planting.

I began collecting seeds from roadsides, remnants, and restored prairie in June. For the past six months I have gone out at least once a week, weather permitting, and hand collected. Some seeds I sorted by species or species groups (i.e. coneflowers), and others I just bagged by locality and date. I've combined my batch collections of seeds into three groups: standard, shade, and wet. The



Liatris in the Midland remnant



Prairie plug containing switchgrass, ashy sunflower, an aster, and *Dicanthelium*

In addition to seeds, I have 45 flags in my yard marking prairie plugs to seed mycorrhizae and the microbial community beneath the soil, collected specimen plants (i.e. *Chasmanthium* and *Salvia* in the shade), and potted plants that were either purchased or given to me (i.e. *Asclepias* spp. and *Erythrina herbacea*).

One thing I've noticed over the years working in and enjoying a

variety of aquatic and terrestrial habitats professionally and on my free time is that new projects bring new perspectives, and really open your eyes to a world that most people blindly pass up. When I was in school, it was always funny driving over any river, stream, or ditch with a truckload of aquatic biology students. Everyone would sit up in their seats and crane their necks to get a glimpse at the waters below, making a quick mental read of the habitat. I find myself doing the same thing today as I drive by remnant prairies and areas where some prairie plants are holding on. I've acutely experienced an increased awareness as my weekly visits to the local prairie remnants have exposed me to the constant flux and interactions of this ecosystem. It's very exciting to think that this will soon be happening again, probably for the first time in 70 to 100 years, within view of my dining room.

I think we're off to a pretty good start, and I can't wait to get the seeds out. That should happen sometime during the month of December. The next installment will cover the seeding process and whatever comes next.

Further Reading:

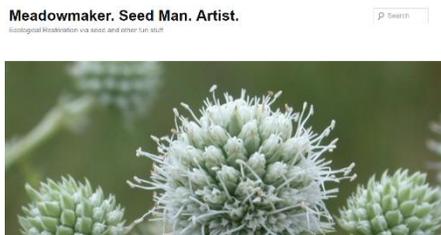
Cajun Prairie Habitat Preservation Society
<http://www.cajunprairie.org/>



Malcolm Vidrine's Cajun Prairie Gardens Blog
<https://cajunprairiegardens.com/>



Marc Pastorek's Prairie Blog
<https://marcpastorek.com/>



Vidrine, Malcolm F. The Cajun Prairie: a Natural History.
 Malcolm F. Vidrine, 2010.

<https://www.amazon.com/Cajun-Prairie-Natural-History/dp/0615368131>



Air Potatoes, an invasive plant species in Louisiana by Linda Wygoda



The air potato (*Dioscorea bulbifera*) is an invasive vine from Southeast Asia. The vine is thought to have come to the United States by way of Africa. It grows quickly, up to 8 inches per day and can reach over 70 feet in length! It grows into the canopy of trees, smothering vegetation and increasing the risk of crown fires. The vine is spread mainly by the “air potatoes” or bulbils that form at the leaf axis. These bulbils can be various sizes and shapes. In winter, the vine dies back and drops the bulbils on the ground. The bulbils will eventually be covered by leaves and dirt and become underground tubers, which can grow in size. In spring these tubers create the next crop of air potatoes.

Air potato is in the family Dioscoreaceae, or simply the Yam Family. Leaves are broadly cordate (heart shaped) and alternately arranged on stems. A distinguishing characteristic of air potato is that all leaf veins arise from the leaf base, unlike other herbaceous vines such as smilax and morning glories.

Dioscorea alata or winged yam can easily be mistaken for air potato, *D. bulbifera*. Winged yam gets its name from its winged internodes, a characteristic feature of the species. Another difference between *D. alata* and *D. bulbifera* is the arrangement of the leaves. *D. alata* has opposite leaves as opposed to the alternate leaves of air potato. Winged yam grows to 30 feet, roughly half the length of the invasive species. This species of *Dioscorea* does not produce nearly as many bulbils as *D. bulbifera*. However, this species can also be considered invasive and problematic, but to a lesser extent than *D. bulbifera*.

Although considered to be a species of yam, most references state that these plants are toxic and should not be consumed.

Population Control: Air potatoes can be controlled by biological, chemical, and mechanical methods. Biological control of air potatoes has recently been used in Florida. A leaf feeding beetle from Asia, *Lilioceris cheni* Gressitt and Kimoto (*Coleoptera: Chrysomelidae*), was released in Florida as a biological control agent of air potato in late 2011. The beetle was discovered in Nepal by scientists and later the same species was found in Yunnan Province of China. Host range testing conducted demonstrated that both Nepalese and Chinese biotypes of the air potato beetles would only feed and complete development on *Dioscorea bulbifera*. They do not feed on any other species of *Dioscorea*, including the Florida native species, *D. floridana* and *D. villosa*, or the other invasive yam in Florida, *D. alata*. Adult beetles are either bright red (Chinese biotype) or brown (Nepalese biotype), and about 9 mm (3/8”) long. They live for up to six months, during which they lay as many as 4,000 eggs in clusters on the undersides of young, expanding air potato leaves. Adult females bite the veins of the leaves on which they oviposit, causing the expanding leaves to curl at the edges and cup the eggs, perhaps to provide protection from inclement weather or egg predators.

Eggs hatch in about 4 days, and the reddish colored larvae feed on leaves for around 10 days. Late stage larvae and adults occasionally feed on bulbils. Fully mature larvae drop to the ground and burrow into the soil where they secrete a whitish oral substance that hardens into a cocoon. Several pupae often clump together within this material. Adults emerge from the soil after about 16 days and begin to lay eggs 15 days later. Larvae are often found feeding in groups on the growing tips, which inhibits vine elongation and reduces the ability of the plant to climb vertical structures. The leaves and vines of air potato die back in the winter depriving the beetles of a food source. During this time, the adult beetles enter a resting state beneath leaf litter or other debris on the ground. The overwintered adults emerge during spring when air potato vines sprout from bulbils and subterranean tubers, and the adults begin once again to feed and lay eggs.

The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Division of Plant Industry (DPI) joined the rearing and release program in 2012, and have resulted in the release of over 145,000 beetles at 175 sites in 32 counties. Beetle survival and establishment has been demonstrated at several release sites, and resulted in a reduced height of vines, decreased bulbil production, and most importantly, an increase in native vegetation.

Mechanical removal of air potatoes is no easy job, but it CAN be done!

WINTER: Collect air potatoes that have fallen on the ground. They may still be attached to dead vines, so pulling down the vines may result in more potatoes falling.

SPRING: Look for newly sprouting vines and follow them to the buried potatoes. Dig out the buried potatoes.

SUMMER: Cut the vines back to slow down the year's potato production. Follow vines to their source and dig out the potatoes.

FALL: Vines will begin to die back in cold weather. Air potatoes will start to fall. Collect fallen potatoes and if possible, dig out buried potatoes.

References:

Center For Aquatic and Invasive Plants, University of Florida, Institute of Food and Agricultural Services, <http://plants.ifas.ufl.edu/plant-directory/dioscorea-bulbifera/>

Institute of Food and Agricultural Services Extension, University of Florida, http://solutionsforyourlife.ufl.edu/hot_topics/environment/air_potato.shtml

Lilioceris cheni Gressit and Kimono – air potato leaf beetle

http://entnemdept.ufl.edu/creatures/BENEFICIAL/BEETLES/air_potato_leaf_beetle.htm



Naturalists Notes:

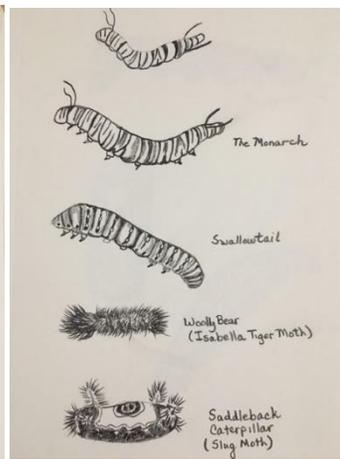
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The Naturalist Sketch Book by Linda Wygoda

One way to increase your observation skill is by drawing in your field journal. Drawing helps you to pay closer attention to details, looking again and again at something that you “thought” you already knew. The field sketchbook was an important tool of early naturalists, and a tool that is still relevant today in helping us to learn more about the natural world. A drawing or sketch helps you to remember details, to categorize observations, and most importantly to slow down as you observe your subject.

But you say, “I can’t draw”. There is such a myth that drawing is exclusively an innate ability. Nothing could be further from the truth. By practicing, we can develop our skills in drawing. Each drawing is a practice and something to learn from before we draw again. The more you draw the better you will become. Your field sketchbook can become a source of learning and inspiration.

There are many different ways to make a field journal page, from simple to quite complex. You may concentrate on a single subject or a montage of images from a particular area. Add details and notes. Track changes over the season. Sometimes drawing differences in closely related species is a useful exercise in discovering differences you weren’t aware of.



Original Sketches by Linda Wygoda

Resources:

John Muir Laws

<http://johnmuirlaws.com/>

Books, blogs, tutorials about nature sketching



Cathy Johnson

<http://cathyjohnson.info/>



Val Webb

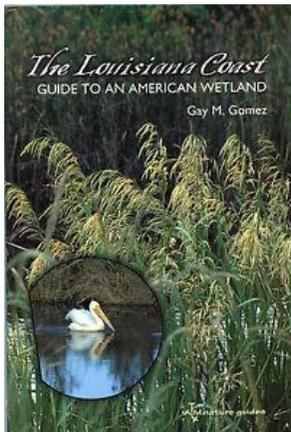
<https://valwebb.wordpress.com/>



"The world shows up for us, but it doesn't show up for free. We must show up, too, and bring along what knowledge and skills we've cultivated. As with a painting in a gallery, the world has no meaning—no presence to be experienced—apart from our ability to engagement with it."
—Alva Noe

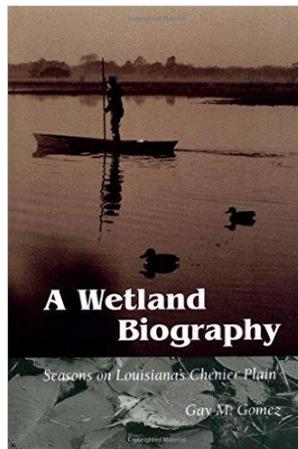
Resources for the Naturalists: [Back](#)

Books:



The Louisiana Coast: Guide to an American Wetland (Gulf Coast Books, sponsored by Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi) October 9, 2008 by [Gay M. Gomez](#)

https://www.amazon.com/Gay-M.-Gomez/e/B001H6UBNC/ref=dp_byline_cont_book_1



[A Wetland Biography: Seasons on Louisiana's Chenier Plain](#)
Jul 5, 2010
by [Gay M. Gomez](#)

https://www.amazon.com/Gay-M.-Gomez/e/B001H6UBNC/ref=dp_byline_cont_book_1

Apps:

Ducks Unlimited Mobil App

<http://www.ducks.org/Hunting/Mobile-Apps>



Description

Experience the new, official Ducks Unlimited iPhone App. DU has combined all of its popular apps into one go-to resource. The DU Migration Map, Waterfowler's Journal, DU Member features, Waterfowl ID, and more – all of the features and tools you have grown to love – all in one app. The new DU App includes a wide range of content and features that are important to DU supporters, waterfowl hunters, and conservationists throughout North America.



BeeSmart Pollinator Gardener

<http://pollinator.org/beesmartapp.htm>



Description

With the **Bee Smart® Pollinator Gardener's** easy user interface,

browse through a database of nearly 1,000 native plants. Filter your plants by what pollinators you want to attract, light and soil requirements, bloom color, and plant type.

This is an excellent plant reference to attract bees, butterflies, hummingbirds, beetles, bats, and other pollinators to the garden, farm, school and every landscape.



The **Bee Smart® Pollinator Gardener** is your comprehensive guide to selecting plants for pollinators specific to your area. Never get caught wondering what plants to buy again!

It is available on both Android and iOS (iPhone, iPad, iPod) platforms.



With the **Bee Smart® Pollinator Gardener's** easy user interface, browse through a database of nearly 1,000 native plants. Filter your plants by what pollinators you want to attract, light and soil requirements, bloom color, and plant type. This is an excellent plant reference to attract bees, butterflies, hummingbirds, beetles, bats, and other pollinators to the garden, farm, school and every landscape.

Features include:

- Nearly 1,000 pollinator friendly plants native to the United States.
- Customizable plant lists based on your preferences including pollinator type, flower color, soil type, sunlight and plant type.
- Regionally specific plant lists based on the geographical and ecological attributes of your location (your ecoregion) just by entering your zip code!
- A wide variety of perennials, annuals, trees, shrubs, and vines to browse.
- An easy to use search option for querying on common or botanical plant names.
- Colorful plant images.
- Once you've created your customized plant list by starring your favorites, simply bring it to a nursery or garden center – never forget what to buy or plant again!

Resources for the Naturalists:

[Back](#)

Websites of Interest:

Biodiversity Heritage Library

<http://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/>

Stunningly beautiful nature images from famous naturalists and artist online, Facebook, Flickr, and Twitter. This is a wonderful natural science resource!

Wildflowercenter

http://www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id_plant=COCO13

Feather Atlas Flight Feathers of North American Birds

<https://www.fws.gov/lab/featheratlas/index.php>

Butterflies and Moths of North America

http://www.butterfliesandmoths.org/identification_tools

Happy Holidays!



Our Mission Statement:

The mission of the Southwest Louisiana Master Naturalists is to promote awareness, understanding, and respect of Louisiana's natural resources using unbiased, accurate, scientific information provided by a trained corps of volunteers. These volunteers provide education, outreach, and services dedicated to the conservation and management of our ecosystems

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IT'S YOUR NEWSLETTER!

We welcome contributions of original writing of observations on nature in our area of Southwest Louisiana. We also welcome reports, reviews, poems, sketches, paintings and digital photographs. Please type "Newsletter" in the subject line of the email. When you send a digital photograph, please include in the email the subject, your name, location, date and any interesting story or information about the photograph. Please send your email to: arlenevidaurri.cain@yahoo.com

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iNaturalist.org is a place where you can record what you see in nature, meet other nature lovers, and learn about the natural world.



From hikers to hunters, birders to beach-combers, the world is filled with naturalists, and many of us record what we find. What if all those observations could be shared online? You might discover someone who finds beautiful wildflowers at your favorite birding spot, or learn about the birds you see on the way to work. If enough people recorded their observations, it would be like a living record of life on Earth that scientists and land managers could use to monitor changes in biodiversity, and that anyone could use to learn more about nature.

