

Southwest Louisiana Master Naturalists

Nature Notes



Charter 2016

Vol 2 ISSUE 2 April 2017

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President's Note:

Master Naturalists,

Spring is officially here! Irises and other wildflowers are blooming, birds are beginning their migrations, and BioBlitz season has begun. The LMNA 2017 Rendezvous was a great experience with around 100 Louisiana master naturalists attending! We heard great talks from a variety of speakers about how we, as master naturalists, can get involved in citizen science, further our naturalist skills in various taxon groups, and becoming more inspired by nature.

This March, Louisiana's iNaturalist users recorded over 1,300 observations, and the 99 unique observers this month are second only to the Pokémon Go craze last August. However, iNaturalist participation isn't the goal. It is the result of the naturalist community growing and becoming more connected and enthusiastic.

My hope is that as our group (both in Southwest Louisiana and across the state) grows, we educate our fellow citizens about the importance of biodiversity and the environment, thus creating more naturalists in the process. This, along with helping our naturalists grow, is the primary goal of our organization. *(Continued on page 2)*

Calendar Quick View

Apr 8: SLAMN Workshop
Apr 14-15 BREC BioBlitz
Apr 22: SLAMN Workshop
Apr 22: SLAMN Meeting
May 6: SLAMN Workshop
May 20: SLAMN Workshop



Iris giganteaerulea



Black Gamecock (Iris brevicaulis)

Educating the public about the importance of natural history is a big part of my job, but I can only put on so many classes and events alone. To do more, I need your help. If you would like to teach a class, create a natural history workshop, or even put on an event, I would love to work with you to help that happen! All you need is an interest in a particular part of nature and a willingness to teach people about it. I can provide the platform through reserving the room at Tuten Park or Riverside Park (in north Lake Charles), advertising the event through KPLC and the American Press, and assisting you in teaching!

This spring, I'll be teaching classes about attracting hummingbirds to your yard, trans-gulf bird migration, and sustainable gardening. Later this year, I'll be offering firefly walks and night hikes. If anyone would like to assist me in any of the classes that I'm working on or would like for me to offer classes on specific topics, let me know.

Thanks, Irvin



Meeting Notes

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Upcoming General Meeting Location and Date Sam Houston Jones State Park, April 22, 1:00 to 2:00 P.M. All members are invited to attend.

President: Irvin Louque

Vice-President: Tommy Hillman

Treasurer: Robby Maxwell

Secretary: Julie Amy

At-large Board Members:

Chuck Battaglia,

David Booth,

Theresa Cross,

Lori McGee,

Deborah Frank

Reminder: SLAMN yearly
membership \$15.00.

Mail your dues to:

Robby Maxwell SLAMN Treasurer

20333 Bourque Rd.

Iowa, LA 70647

January Meeting Highlights

- Deborah Frank will serve as LMNA representative along with Robbie Maxwell and Irvin Louque for our chapter. She replaces Brian Sean Early.
- Chapter funds will be used to purchase student grade butterfly nets for our pollinator class.
- Chapter funds will be used to print handouts for the 2017 class session.
- Irvin has 500 pamphlets for members to distribute at various functions and organizations.
- Tommy Hillman will pick the top 3 choices for our chapter T-shirt. The t-shirts will be produced for chapter members, guest speakers, and to sell at public events.
- It was decided that we will set-up a booth at the annual Garden and Expo Show help on March 24 and 25 at Burton Colosseum. We will set-up a booth next to the Gulf Coast Bird Club booth. Theresa Cross volunteered to make a display board for the table. Chet St. Romain volunteered to chair the organization of the booth and volunteers.
- Reminder: Documentation of volunteer hours for members are due. Members provide 20 volunteer hours per year 20/year, from January to January. The purpose of volunteer hours is to allow the chapter's nonprofessional members to teach the public. Robbie asks for everyone to send him your hours as you accumulate them. Also, send Robbie the link or description of your Continuing Education course hours. Be sure to keep track of your hours volunteer and continuing education hours.
- Next meeting: April 22 at Sam Houston Jones State Park, at the Amphibian and Reptile workshop. Time 1:00 P.M. – 2:00 P.M.

Southwest Louisiana Master Naturalists Chapter meetings are held quarterly on the first Wednesday of the month at Tuten Park at 5:30 p.m. unless otherwise noted.

Chapter tentative meeting dates for 2017 are April 22, July 5, and October 4

Local News:

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The Southwest Master Naturalists at the 2017 Garden Expo at Burton Coliseum

We had a great turn-out of interested people stopping at our booth for information about our program. Our members answered questions, provided information, and demonstrated naturalists' activities for all ages. A special thanks to **Theresa Cross** for designing the Southwest Master Naturalists display and for providing the animal and plant specimens for hands on learning. A special thanks to **Chet St. Romain** for organizing volunteers and to all the members who worked the booth.



Local News:

[Back](#)**Sparrow Identification Workshop by Arlene Cain**

Southwest Louisiana Master Naturalists Deborah Frank, Linda Wygoda, and I, attended the Audubon Louisiana Sparrow Identification Workshop Saturday, March 4th in St. Martinsville at the University of Louisiana Lafayette Experimental Farm. We learned some excellent sparrow identification tips from Audubon Louisiana ornithologist Erik Johnson. Erik provided a great presentation on the different sparrows in our area and really important tips on how to identify sparrows. As we all know, sparrows provide quite a challenge to identify. They are small, quick and are colored to be camouflaged and blend in with their environment. Erik taught us that size, subtle details, and behavior are key to identifying the "little brown jobs". We were fortunate to have a very beautiful day as we walked through fields chasing sparrows. We had a great time learning and putting to practice the great sparrow identification skills thanks to Eric. Some of the sparrows we saw were Henslow's sparrow, Swamp sparrow, White-throated sparrow, and Savannah sparrow. I highly recommend attending the Audubon Louisiana workshops. These workshops are a great way to learn about birds from the very best experts! Thank you Erik Johnson for a wonderful birding experience. I want to give a special thanks to Jessica Schulz for allowing us to view her photo of the Henslow's sparrow.

Photo Courtesy of Jessica Schulz



Henslow's Sparrow

Photo Courtesy of Erik Johnson



Workshop members viewing little Henslow's sparrow

Photo Courtesy of Arlene Cain

Erik Johnson leading the group on the hunt for sparrows

Photo Courtesy of Arlene Cain



GCBC Member Deborah Frank



Local News:

[Back](#)**Southwest Louisiana Master Naturalists at the LMNA Rendezvous, Chicot State Park!**

We had great representation at the Rendezvous with 17 members attending. The LMNA Rendezvous kicked off on Friday March 31 with keynote speaker Dr. Bob Thomas, president of LMNA and LMNGNO. His presentation was about the importance of our relationship with nature. Saturday was busy with many presentations, hikes and observations. Our Saturday keynote speaker was Kelby Ouchley, biologist and wildlife refuge manager. His presentation reminded us all of the importance of our connection to the natural world and providing examples of how we as humans are dependent on nature.

**Southwest Master Naturalists Review of Sessions:****Irvin Louque**

FrogWatch USA: This is a really good citizen science program that our chapter needs to be a part of in SWLA. Currently the only FrogWatch chapters in Louisiana are Audubon Zoo and the Baton Rouge Zoo. Stacey will be starting one at the Acadiana Nature Station and holding a volunteer workshop on July 8. I plan to attend and hope that several of our naturalists attend as well. I can think of several sites to regularly monitor frogs, including Tuten Park, Riverside Park, and Sam Houston Jones State Park.

FireflyWatch and Moth Counts with Dr. Charles Allen: This was so intriguing to me. I've participated sparingly in FireflyWatch, but I've never done any moth lighting. Dr. Allen showed us his method of identifying the moths: basically photographing them and sending them to experts, then naming and sorting the photographs by type or color so that he can find them again to match them against new moths. It was a great example of how any amateur naturalist might go about identifying organisms.

Lichens with Dale Kruse: This talk went well over my head pretty quickly, though it was interesting to find new features that I'd never noticed before, like cilia, on lichens. I'd never realized the diversity of lichens that can be seen on one branch until I attended his lichen hike. The methods how a three species symbiont reproduces (both asexually and sexually) are also pretty fascinating, though I'm not sure I even grasp it fully.

Local News:

[Back](#)**Chet St. Romain****Fireflies & Moth Counts – Dr. Charles Allen**

Firefly watch is sponsored by the Boston Museum of Science. The project used volunteers to track firefly activity. To participate, you must sign up using this link: https://legacy.mos.org/fireflywatch/sign_up. The website will instruct you on the tracking requirements – but basically its pretty simple. You fill out an observation sheet describing the area you are monitoring and the number of flashes observed in a 10 second period. This is a great citizen science project that requires a minimum of effort. In addition to talking about firefly watch, Dr. Allen spoke on moths and shared many pictures of moths he has documented at his home at Allen Acres.

Frogs are Wonderful – Bob Thomas

This was an informative presentation on frogs and how they are a great predictor of the health of an environment. Because frogs breathe through their skin, they are sensitive to environmental pollutants and stress. The presentation included pictures of unusual frogs from all over the world.

Canoe & Trail Adventures brought 9 canoes to the LMNA Rendezvous for use by participants. The canoes were available for individual use during the day and they conducted nighttime tours of the lake. This was a really unique way to experience Lake Chicot.



Local News:

[Back](#)**Dan Guillory**

One of the **Expert led Taxon** hikes was with the Mycology group. It was too early for edible mushrooms but our expert pointed out some other fungi useful in the decomposition of forest logs, and leaves.

Dr. Bob Thomas from Loyola University gave a funny and interesting talk **"Frogs are Wonderful"** on the various tree frog calls that can be heard on most nights in Louisiana. Our area is blessed with a wide variety of frog species making for some nighttime serenades!

Dr. Bob Thomas' daughter, **Aimee Thomas**- also a Loyola Professor, gave an enthusiastic talk on some common and unusual spiders **"How to Look at Spiders in Nature"**. Did you know that some spiders catch their prey by casting throw nets- much like you may have seen area fishermen throwing? Other spiders stun their prey with a bolo similar to those thrown by cowboys in Brazil. Her discussion on the mating habits of the black widow spider revealed some startling findings only recently discovered.

Robby Maxwell gave a great presentation "The Weird World in the Waters of Louisiana". His presentation included information about mass migrations, carnivorous plants, and parasitic fish.



Southwest Master Naturalists **Arlene Cain** won first place in the LMNA Nature Photo Competition.



Local News:

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We were so very excited to have SLAMN candidates **Judith Holland, Barbara Morris** and **Rachel Burns** join us at the Rendezvous! We enjoyed their enthusiasm and help. Pictured here are **Judith** and **Barbara**.

We had great attendance from our chapter! Those in attendance were:

Larry Amy, Julie Amy, David Booth, Rachel Burns, Arlene Cain, Deborah Frank, Dan Guillory, Tommy Hillman, Angela Hillman, Edith Holland, Irvin Louque, Robby Maxwell, Danielle Maxwell, Lori McGee, Barbara Morris, Chet St. Romain, and Linda Wygoda.

Special thanks to **David Booth** who was the LMNA Kitchen Coordinator and a special thanks to all the members of our group who assisted in the preparation of Sunday breakfast! We had a great time!

Continuing Education Opportunities:

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Continuing Education and Volunteer

April 22nd

Volunteers are needed.

Southwest Louisiana Master Naturalists **Irvin Louque** holds bird banding activities at Sam Houston Jones Park on Saturdays in collaboration with the **Louisiana Bird Observatory**.

Meet at 6:30 AM at the Red Trail parking lot at Sam Houston Jones State Park. The banding station is located at the first parking lot on the right and additional parking and restrooms is located on the left of the road. Anyone interested is encouraged to contact Irvin Louque through email or phone (225)206-0400 irvinlouque@gmail.com



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



Check out the Chenier Plain Coastal Restoration and Protection Authority website (<http://www.cpcrpa.org/>) and Facebook page. Attend a meeting and learn about the efforts to protect and conserve our coastal plains. Citizen participation is welcome. Meetings are held monthly (3rd Tuesday from 6 to 7:30 pm) between Calcasieu, Vermillion, and Cameron parishes. Check the website or Facebook page for location of meetings.

Volunteers are needed. CRCL's spring marsh grass plantings

Our Freshwater Bayou Restoration Project takes place near Pecan Island, LA, about one hour and fifteen minutes away from Avery Island. Volunteers will be planting smooth cord grass and California bulrush. This project will promote rapid colonization of emergent marsh vegetation, reduce erosion, reverse the conversion of wetlands to shallow open water, and provide habitat for fish and for the resident and migratory bird species that use the region as wintering and nesting grounds. **Check out the CRCL's [Facebook albums](#).** These projects are held in remote areas and do require a reasonable level of physical fitness.

Our proposed dates for spring 2017: March 30-April 1

April 20-22

May 11-13

May 25-27

Please let Kacie Wright, the CRCL Habitat Restoration Coordinator, know if this project would be of any interest to you or any of your respective organizations - Kacie.wright@crcl.org

Volunteer Opportunities:

[Back](#)**Volunteers are needed!****Creating a Monarch WayStation Garden**

Camp Salmen Nature Park 2017 Spring project:

Saturday, March 18: Preparation of garden beds

Saturday, April 22: Plant Monarch WayStation flower beds

Saturday, May 13: Garden Completion EVENT AND

Butterfly Release!

Camp Salmen 35122 Parish Pkwy. Slidell, LA 985-288-5901

To volunteer or get more information contact Linda Auld

at nolabuglady@gmail.com<http://www.campsalmennaturepark.org/>**Calling all Louisiana Master Naturalists and Louisiana Master Gardeners! Volunteers are needed!***JOIN THE FUN at Camp Salmen!*

2017 Project to enhance the nature experience!

Help document the birds, butterflies, plants and reptiles creating a nature checklist of existing diversity to formulate a "Scavenger Hunt Discovery Map" for folks to enjoy during their field trips.

All planned field trip dates are on Saturdays: March 18, April 22, May 13, June 10, & Sept 23.

You are invited to spend some time at Camp Salmen whether in a group or by yourself. We need volunteers.

To volunteer or for more information contact Linda Auld, "BugLady", at: nolabuglady@gmail.com.

Camp Salmen 35122 Parish Parkway Slidell, LA Call: 1-985-898-3011

Upcoming Events:

[Back](#)**Southwest Louisiana Master Naturalist certification workshop April 8 – Bird Study**The workshop will be at Tuten Park and Cameron Prairie
7:00 am – 1:00 pm**Southwest Louisiana Master Naturalist certification workshop April 22 – Amphibians and Reptile Study**

The herp workshop will be from 2-8 pm. A combination of daytime herping, lecture, and nighttime herping/frog call identification.

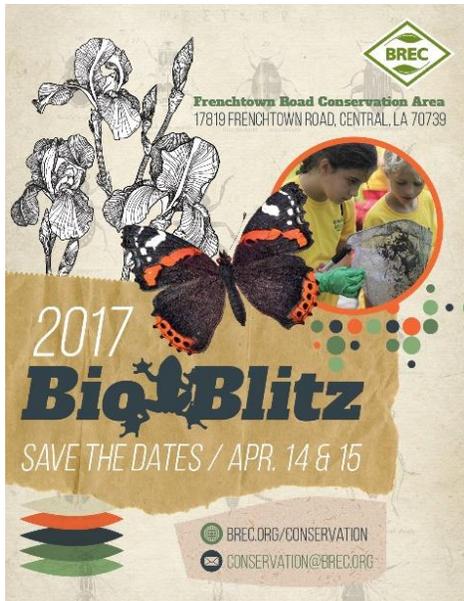
April 7 – 9, 2017 Birdfest Mandeville, LA<http://northlakenature.org/birdfest/>**2017 North Lake Nature Center Birdfest****North Lake Nature Center Hwy 190
Mandeville, Louisiana**

The Great Louisiana BirdFest is an annual event of the Northlake Nature Center. It is held each year in the spring when many species are migrating north through Louisiana from Mexico and South America. BirdFest trips will visit varied habitat including swamps, wetlands, pine savanna and hardwoods of southeast Louisiana.

Upcoming Events:

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April 14 – 15, 2017 BREC Baton Rouge Bioblitz
<http://www.brec.org/index.cfm/event/BioBlitz>



Frenchtown Road Conservation Area
 17819 Frenchtown Road
 Central, LA 70739
 225.272.9200

Join BREC naturalists and local scientists in documenting the diversity of life at Frenchtown Road Conservation area. This is a full 24 hours event starting on Friday and ending Saturday afternoon where experts and citizen scientists search on land and water to find and identify as many species as possible. You can help by signing up to help document species with the help of scientists, by attending a scheduled hike or by visiting the Biodiversity Fair.

Sign up NOW: <http://www.brec.org/index.cfm/event/BioBlitz>

April 21 – 22, 2017 Bayou Teche Black Bear Festival
 Franklin Louisiana
<http://bayoutechebearfest.org/>

<http://bayoutechebearfest.org/birding.html>



April 21 – 23, 2017 Grand Isle Migratory Bird Festival
<http://grandisle.btnep.org/GrandIsleHome.aspx>



Bayou Teche Black Bear and Birding Festival
 Downtown Historic Franklin, Louisiana
 Bayou Teche Birding:

The St. Mary Loop: A part of the America's Wetland Birding Trail

The Bayou Teche Black Bear and Birding Festival is headquartered in downtown Franklin, Louisiana. Organized birding trips, led by knowledgeable biologists from the LSU Chapter of the Wildlife Society, the US Fish and Wildlife Service and other amateur birders, will take birders into the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge, the Atchafalaya Basin, and numerous other private land holdings in and around St. Mary Parish.

The Grand Isle Migratory Bird Festival
 Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program
 P O Box 2663, Thibodaux LA 70310

See songbirds in oak-hackberry woods, shorebirds and waders on beaches and in the marshes and raptors overhead. Grand Isle is an essential stop for songbirds during their spring and fall migrations across the Gulf of Mexico and is one of the best places in the world to see and study birds up close. The Grand Isle Sanctuary Group invites you to join our Spring Celebration.



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

April 2, 2017 Chicot State Park

Hermit Thrush



**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](#)



Maxwell MicroPrairie Restoration Part III: A Look Back at Seeding, and Jump Forward to Spring by Robby Maxwell

I've realized that the last piece I wrote skipped right over the mixing part of the recipe, and straight to the oven. Before I dive into the recent progress of the plantings, I'm going to need to step back and go over the seeding process.

If you go back to part 1 of this series, I described the seed collection process. We ended up with 7.5 lbs of collected seed and about 5 lbs of purchased South Louisiana prairie seed. As stated before, there were also a number of plugs and specimen plants that I planted. This provided more diversity, a kind of jumpstart, and reinforced the microbial activity in the soil. Studies have shown that many of these prairie plants, and I suspect many plants in general, fail to reach their full potential without a healthy subterranean microbial community.

All of my seeds were divided and ready to go, and the purchased seeds were en route to the house. The plot can turn into a mud pit, so I took advantage of the dry weather in November, and settled on December 2 as the planting date. I borrowed a harrow and roughed up the surface soil the night before the planting. That harrow, though relatively small for farm equipment, was a beast for one man to wrestle. My little Husqvarna lawnmower had no problem pulling it, though. I perfected the Mario Kart skid to get through a couple of slick low spots, but otherwise it was a breeze.

The next morning Mini-Me and I got up and laid down seed. We took advantage of the wind to help spread seed, and were very methodical about doing transects and trying to get the right seeds in the right place. By the evening, the seed purchased from the king of prairie seed, Marc Pastorek, had arrived. We got all the seed down, passed the harrow over it a few more times, and called it a night.



The next day was a little disheartening. We got about a foot of rain at the house, and the whole prairie plot was underwater. The good news was that I had a hard time finding floating seed in the line of flotsam and jetsam. The bad news was... well, it was all underwater and I had no clue what damage had been done.



Fast forward, and it wasn't the disaster I feared. We've been seeing our seeds germinate throughout the plot. The area near the drainage ditch looks like a lot of seed was scoured from it, but I can't come to any real conclusions, yet. I think harrowing the seed in and getting that good mix with the top half-inch or so of soil saved us.

I've been throwing some more specimens in the ground with the help of my friend, Dr. Malcolm Vidrine. I even got to take part in a rescue mission to save an experimental plot of local prairie plants from being repurposed (read as annihilated) into agricultural research. Those plants got lucky, and through the efforts of a number of prairie enthusiasts have been found new homes across South Louisiana, and will bloom another day. Some even made it all the way to the LDWF Headquarters garden in Baton Rouge.

The haul from the rescue mission



A Rattlesnake Master lives on!

It's weedy, weedy, weedy in the Microprairie these days, but that's no cause for concern. The perennials I've laid into the ground will win that long fight given the proper care. I mean, what's tougher than a plant that begs for a good fire to sweep over it? I'm tracking blooms, and still eagerly anticipating what is coming up. Some notable early blooms are *Coreopsis*, Indian Pinks, primroses, and various Louisiana Irises. Though we didn't have much of a winter, it's definitely spring now, and the bugs are enjoying the weather and the complex habitat they have emerging before them. We're definitely on the upswing out here.



Showy Evening Primrose



Spider lurking in a Hibiscus leaf



Further Reading:

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



Cajun Prairie Habitat Preservation Society

Dedicated to the study, preservation, restoration and education in regard to the Cajun Prairie Habitat, associated



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



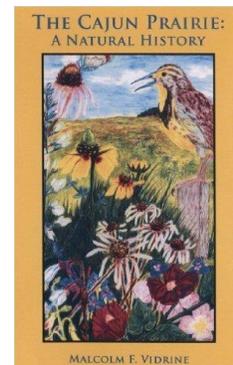
Marc Pastorek's Prairie Blog
<https://marcpastorek.com/>

Meadowmaker. Seed Man. Artist.
 Ecological Restoration via seed and other fun stuff

Search



Vidrine, Malcolm F. The Cajun Prairie: a Natural History. Malcolm F. Vidrine, 2010.
<https://www.amazon.com/Cajun-Prairie-Natural-History/dp/0615368131>



A Brief Introduction to the Louisiana Iris by Irvin Louque

Most Louisianans are probably at least familiar with the term “Louisiana iris,” though fewer may be familiar with the five species of Louisiana irises, four of which grow wild in our state. Any naturalist in Louisiana ought to become familiar with our state wildflower *Iris giganticaerulea* and its close relatives (*I. fulva*, *I. nelsonii*, *I. brevicaulis*, and *I. hexagona*).

Louisiana irises, considered by many to be any of the five species in the series *Hexagonae* within the genus *Iris*, can hybridize and produce fertile offspring and are native various portions to the eastern and central United States. Louisiana irises and their hybrids are extremely popular among gardeners in the US and abroad. Their ability to grow both in water gardens and conventional garden beds and wide variety of colors have contributed to their popularity.

In South Louisiana, Louisiana irises begin growth with the arrival of cooler temperatures in the fall. Their upright green leaves provide a nice splash of color in the dead of winter. Around mid-March, flower stalks begin to rise and Louisiana irises bloom from mid-March through April and May, depending on the species and variety. In a study of *I. fulva* and *I. brevicaulis* (and their hybrids), the most numerous pollinators included American bumblebees (*Bombus pennsylvanicus*) and Ruby-throated Hummingbirds (*Archilochus colubris*).² In Louisiana’s marshes, the large, early flowers of Louisiana irises can be an important nectar and pollen source for these large pollinators.

Iris giganticaerulea, as you may deduce from its scientific name, is also called the giant blue iris.³ This is Louisiana’s state wildflower and likely the most common iris you might find in the freshwater marshes and swamps along Louisiana’s gulf coast. It’s the largest Louisiana iris and produces flowers 5 inches across and anywhere from 4 to 6 feet tall.⁴ This species is only found along the gulf coast of Texas, Louisiana, and possibly Mississippi. The giant blue iris is considered globally vulnerable (G3), though it can be abundant locally.



Iris giganticaerulea

Iris fulva, the copper iris, is a much smaller Louisiana iris and naturally has rusty red flowers.³ This iris usually has flowers 3–4 inches across and about 3 feet tall. The copper iris grows predominantly within the Mississippi River drainage up to Kentucky, Illinois, and Ohio down to Louisiana and Mississippi. It has contributed red color and cold tolerance to many Louisiana iris hybrids produced by breeders.



Iris fulva

Iris brevicaulis, the zig zag iris, is the smallest Louisiana iris.³ Unlike the other Louisiana irises, you won’t find it in swampy or marshy areas. The zig zag iris naturally grows in uplands along the Gulf Coast up to Missouri, Kentucky, Ohio, and Illinois, and is even found in Ontario though it’s endangered there. The zig zag iris has been used extensively in hybridization to impart cold tolerance and its unique zig zag form.

The Abbeville red iris, *Iris nelsonii*, was a sensation among Louisiana iris enthusiasts in 1938.³ Fittingly, this swamp dwelling, tall red iris was sometimes called the “Super Fulva.” This iris has more intensely red flowers than *I. fulva* and the flowers are about 5 inches across and 3-4 feet tall. As in the name, the Abbeville red iris can only be found naturally in the Abbeville area. Research over the years has shown that *I. nelsonii* is a species of hybrid origin with genetic traces of *I. giganteaerulea*, *I. fulva*, and *I. brevicaulis*. Since all natural stands of *I. nelsonii* are on private lands, a protected colony has been established at Palmetto Island State Park in Abbeville by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries. It is considered imperiled (S1) in Louisiana.⁵



The fifth Louisiana iris (*Iris hexagona*, the Dixie iris) doesn't naturally occur in Louisiana, but it does occur in Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina, and Florida.³ This species is somewhat similar to the giant blue iris. Its flowers are generally white, light blue, or blue and about 4.5 inches across and about 4 feet tall.

Louisiana irises are, and should be, considered one of Louisiana's native charismatic species, though their identity has become a bit muddled with the prevalence of hybrids in the nursery trade (and the confusion of calling the invasive *Iris pseudacorus* a Louisiana iris when it is not). With the unfortunate trifecta of coastal marsh subsidence, saltwater intrusion, and hurricanes, *Iris giganteaerulea* is now hard to find in the coastal marshes where it once was common.

The disappearance of these and many other unique forms of wild Louisiana irises led to Charles Perilloux and the Greater New Orleans Iris Society to create the Louisiana Iris Species Preservation Project.⁶ This project's goal is to preserve the genetic diversity of the five Louisiana iris species. This and other projects such as the “A Louisiana Pond” project⁷ are working grow unique irises, promote them among the public, and eventually reintroduce irises to protected habitats within their native ranges.



To ensure that future generations also grow up around our state wildflower, master naturalists across Louisiana can use their collective voices to advocate for the wetland habitats that Louisiana irises need, grow species irises, volunteer in iris rescue projects, and volunteer at wetland restoration projects.

References

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5. Abbeville Red Iris (*Iris nelsonii*). Friends of Palmetto Island State Park. <https://www.friendsofpalmetto.org/abbeville-red-iris.html>.
6. Louisiana Iris Species Preservation Project. Greater New Orleans Iris Society. www.louisianairisgnois.com/SpeciesPreservation/.
7. A Louisiana Pond. <https://www.facebook.com/A-Louisiana-Pond-747816732022261/>.

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- Iris fulva*—Credit: [Photo](#) by Flickr user M Fletcher licensed CC BY-NC-ND 2.0
- Iris giganteaerulea*—Credit: [Photo](#) by Irvin Louque licensed CC BY 2.0.
- Black Gamecock (showing zig zag traits of *Iris brevicaulis*)—Credit: [Photo](#) by Flickr user jacki-dee licenced CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

Additional Reading

- Musacchia, Joe. 2015. Understanding Louisiana iris, part 1: *Iris giganteaerulea*. World of Irises: Blog of The American Iris Society. <https://theamericanirissociety.blogspot.com/2015/03/understanding-louisiana-iris-part-1-i.html>.
- Musacchia, Joe. 2015. Understanding Louisiana iris, part 2: *Iris fulva*. World of Irises: Blog of The American Iris Society. <https://theamericanirissociety.blogspot.com/2015/06/understanding-louisiana-iris-part-2-i.html>.
- Musacchia, Joe. 2015. Understanding Louisiana iris, part 3: *Iris brevicaulis*. World of Irises: Blog of The American Iris Society. <https://theamericanirissociety.blogspot.com/2015/08/understanding-louisiana-iris-part-3.html>.
- Musacchia, Joe. 2015. Understanding Louisiana iris, part 4: *Iris nelsonii*. World of Irises: Blog of The American Iris Society. <https://theamericanirissociety.blogspot.com/2015/10/understanding-louisiana-iris-part-4-i.html>.
- Musacchia, Joe. 2015. Understanding Louisiana iris, part 5: applying what we learned to modern cultivars. World of Irises: Blog of The American Iris Society. <https://theamericanirissociety.blogspot.com/2015/12/understanding-louisiana-iris-part-5.html>.

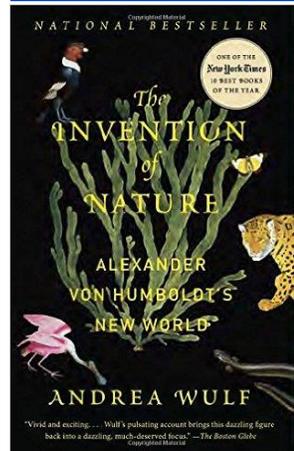
Resources for the Naturalists:

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Books:

The Invention of Nature: Alexander von Humboldt's New World by Andrea Wulf October 2016

https://www.amazon.com/Invention-Nature-Alexander-Humboldts-World/dp/0345806298/ref=as_li_ss_tl?encoding=UTF8&qid=&r=&linkCode=sl1&tag=thewellread02-20&linkId=e30c8be41d4fe28967a9ab56c61da03a



A Best Book of the Year: *The New York Times*

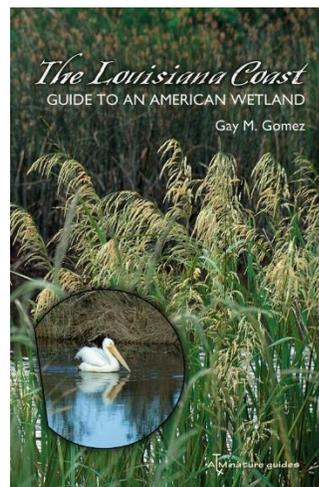
Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1859) was the most famous scientist of his age, a visionary German naturalist and polymath whose discoveries forever changed the way we understand the natural world. Among his most revolutionary ideas was a radical conception of nature as a complex and interconnected global force that does not exist

for the use of humankind alone. In North America, Humboldt's name still graces towns, counties, parks, bays, lakes, mountains, and a river.

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Apps:

Explore App

http://explore.org/apps/pages/explore_apps/



Live nature cams, world-class wildlife photos, and educational films. explore.org is the philanthropic multimedia division of the Annenberg Foundation.



Nature's Notebook Mobil App

<https://www.usanpn.org/nm/mobile-apps>



Nature's Notebook is a citizen science program for observing and recording plant and animal life cycle events, like flowering and bird migration (also known as phenology). Create an account, and register your

location online first. Then use the app for going out into the field to record your observations through the seasons. Find out more at

www.usanpn.org/participate/observe

Websites of Interest:

Explore

<http://explore.org/live-cams/player/northern-lights-cam>



The Naturalists Notebook

<http://www.thenaturalistsnotebook.com/>



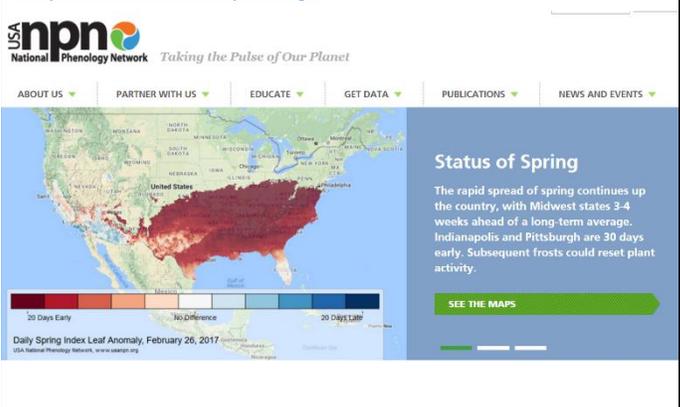
Nature's Notebook

https://usanpn.org/natures_notebook



USA National Phenology Network

<https://www.usanpn.org/>



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.

