



Charter 2016

Vol 5 ISSUE 4 Dec 2020

In This Issue:

President's Note	1	Naturalist Notes:	
<u>Meeting Notes</u>	3	<u>Revisiting a lesson from the Past by Connie McDonald</u>	11
Local News:		<u>Staying Home, Finding Inspiration by Megg Sorensen</u>	13
<u>Christmas Gathering</u>	4	<u>Stepping Outside – New Beginnings by David Booth</u>	15
<u>Peveto Clean-up</u>	4	<u>Replanting After the Storms by Robby Maxwell</u>	17
<u>Acorns of Hope</u>	5	<u>My Lifer Grasshopper Sparrow by David Booth</u>	19
<u>Images of Trees</u>	6		
<u>Volunteer Opportunities</u>	7	<u>Upcoming Events</u>	21
<u>Continuing Education Opportunities</u>	9	<u>Resources</u>	22
<u>iNaturalist Spotlight</u>	10	<u>Board Members</u>	23

President's Note:

Greetings, Master Naturalists!

Tis the season for Christmas Bird Counts!

What a year this has been! We started out the year looking forward to completing our fifth master naturalist course and after a few workshops, a decade's worth of chaos and events happened. As I wrote in a previous president's note this year, the chaos of this year might be affecting all of the humans out there, but there are plenty of natural phenomena (both expected and unexpected) to keep all of us busy.

Calendar Quick View

Dec 12, 2020 9:30 am Kayaking trip
Regatta

Dec 12, 2020 1:00 pm Lunch at The
Regatta

Jan 16, 2021 Trip to Peveto, meet at
Peveto 10:00 am



President's Note:

[Back](#)

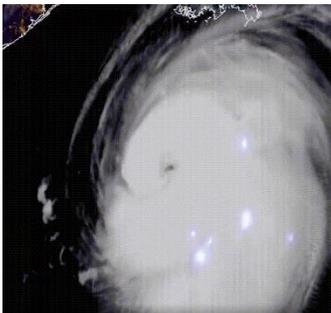
In the bird world, this winter is shaping up to be a remarkable one already! This fall, two separate Fork-tailed Flycatchers showed up in Calcasieu Parish, neatly one on each side of the parish. These were the fourth and fifth members of this South American/Central American species to be seen in our area over the past few years. In addition to the flycatchers, the Eastern US is experiencing an eruption of various finch species that usually stay farther north. Species such as Pine Siskin, Purple Finch, and Evening Grosbeak are surging south in numbers rarely seen. Pine Siskins and Purple Finches are currently being seen in the area at sunflower feeders. Evening Grosbeaks haven't reached the state yet (the nearest have been reported in Pine Bluff, Arkansas), but there are hopes that we'll finally see them in Louisiana for the first time this millennium. Lastly, winter hummingbirds are here in bigger numbers this year than in at least the past five winters. So far, over 360 winter hummingbirds have been reported, representing 8 species.

Pandemic or hurricanes, the natural world keeps moving forward. That's something that gives me great comfort. Along with the natural world, we're going to keep moving as well. The annual Christmas Bird Counts will continue this year, though the Lake Charles count and the Sabine NWR count will be cancelled this year due to complications from the hurricanes. The City Nature Challenge will also proceed in April. Our annual course is planned to resume in March, though we'll be flexible as much as we can in regards to speakers, topics, meeting locations, and more. More information on that will be in future issues of *Nature Notes*.

Stay safe, stay healthy, and get outside!

Thanks,

Irvin Louque




*Merry
Christmas
and Happy
New Year!*



Meeting Notes

[Back](#)

Tentative General Meeting Location and Date February 6, 2021 Outdoor location TBA at 2:00

Meeting News

President: **Irvin Louque**

Vice-President:

Barbara Morris

Treasurer: **Clay Ardoin**

Secretary: **Patty Palmer**

At-large Board Members:

David Booth,

Theresa Cross,

Tommy Hillman

Robby Maxwell

Reminder: SLAMN yearly membership \$15.00.

**Please complete the [membership renewal form](#)
Mail your dues and form to:**

Clay Ardoin

SLAMN Treasurer

227 Fallis Rd.

Lafayette, LA 70507



Log-in your volunteer and continuing education hours using [Track It Forward](#)

Set-up your account and start logging in your SLAMN CE&V hours.

Access *Track It Forward* on the SLAMN website:

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

Committee Reports:

- 2021 Master Naturalist (MN) Course: The course, is tentatively scheduled to start in March 2021. We will continue the course where it left off in March 2020. We will monitor the COVID-19 restrictions and the classes will adjust as needed. The front half of Tuten Park may be ready for reopening by Feb. 2021. Although the classroom building was not damaged, the outdoor pavilion in the back half of the park was destroyed which would have been used as the COVID-19 outdoor backup plan.
- Rendezvous Planning Committee: At the Louisiana Master Naturalist State Board meeting, the decision was made to cancel Rendezvous 2021. They are looking into coordinated events across the state. Check the Facebook or webpage for developing info. LMNA also has a YouTube Channel. The link is on their home page at www.louisianamasternaturalists.org

New Business:

Our Role in Lake Charles' Recovery:

- Discussion occurred about the extreme loss of trees in the area following both hurricanes, and the planting of trees and clean-up of trails at Sam Houston Jones State Park. Volunteer opportunities at Sam Houston Jones State Park will not be ready for at least 6 months.
- Acorns of Hope - is a non-profit organization founded in 2005 following Hurricane Rita by Robert Thibodeaux (~Bob's Tree Preservation), created to repopulate live oaks that were lost in SWLA. Currently, the goal of the organization is to restore thousands of trees destroyed and damaged by Hurricanes Laura and Delta. Brandi Cox (brandicox4830@gmail.com), local organizer, will be scheduling a tree planting effort throughout Lake Charles and will be looking for volunteers soon for this effort. This organization was featured on KPLC Ch. 7 News on Oct. 28, 2020.
- Nominations are being accepted for Board Positions. This includes Committee Chairs as well as Officer Positions. We need help with promotions, online and news outlet postings, library, volunteer coordinator, Educational outreach, and Field Trips. You can also assist on these committees. If you would like to have a leadership role in the organization, please contact Irvin Louque at irvinlouque@gmail.com. Voting will be held in January.

Other Business:

- 2020 Christmas Bird Counts – David Booth has cancelled these events due to the pandemic and the hurricanes.
- 2021 SLAMN Calendar -
 - Next SLAMN Board Meeting – Wed. Jan. 20th, 2021 @ 5 pm (Tentative Virtual Meeting.)
 - Tentative Next SLAMN General Meeting – Sat. Feb. 6th, 2021 @ 2:00 pm, outdoor location To Be Determined.

Christmas Gathering

Saturday, December 12, at 1:00 pm The Regatta Restaurant Lake Arthur, LA www.regattarestaurantla.com

Come out to the lake for a little friendly cheer! This is a great location for bird watching, gathering apple snails, and kayaking. We will sit outdoors on the deck if the weather allows. The Acadiana Master Naturalist Group has been invited. It will be nice to meet some of our neighbors. So, put on your mask and come on out.

Interested in kayaking? Kayakers will arrive at 9:30 am at the Regatta Restaurant and paddle the shoreline. For information or concerns, call **Barbara Morris 337-302-0168**.

SWLA Master Naturalists Help with Peveto Sanctuary Clean-up in Cameron Parish

On Saturday November 14, several of our Master Naturalists joined in with members of the Baton Rouge Audubon Society, the Louisiana Ornithological Society and the Gulf Coast Bird Club while addressing the many fallen trees and large limbs throughout Peveto Sanctuary. The Sanctuary, located along the Gulf Coast in Cameron Parish, is owned and operated by Baton Rouge Audubon Chapter. It is an important migratory bird sanctuary providing cover, food and water during bird migrations. Master Naturalists from other organizations were present as well with good effect. Overall about 15 volunteers banded together from many parts of the state to open up trails in the wooded sections of the sanctuary. Some trimmed out trails and others pruned and cleared growth from live oaks which were planted in previous volunteer efforts. We thank all who volunteered and also wish to remind Master Naturalist volunteers to log in your hours on “Track it Forward”.



Local News:

[Back](#)

Acorns of Hope plans to plant thousands of trees in SWLA

By Cinnamon Cornell | October 28, 2020 at 7:29 PM CDT

<https://www.kplctv.com/2020/10/28/acorns-hope-plans-plant-thousands-treesswla/>

LAKE CHARLES, La. (KPLC) - After Hurricane Rita, a nonprofit called Acorns of Hope was created to repopulate live oaks that were lost in Southwest Louisiana. Fifteen years later the organization is looking to restore the tree population destroyed by Hurricanes Laura and Delta. In the aftermath of back-to back hurricanes it was easy to see hundreds if not thousands of trees were damaged or completely destroyed by the storms. Now Acorns of Hope is working to fix that with a new project.

"Our goal is to plant in as many locations evenly throughout the city," organizer Brandi Cox said. "I mean we're not talking hundreds we're talking thousands of trees we are planning to do."

The goal is to plant about 10,000 trees. The three to four year-long project will include restoring a variety of trees and improving the soil.

"We're going to get the soil back right [and] plant live oaks; we want to plant magnolia trees because they have these big leaves that'll help with the air quality cause there's all kinds of toxins in the air and in the soil after a storm," she said. "[We <https://www.kplctv.com/2020/10/28/acorns-hope-plans-plant-thousands-treesswla/> will also plant] holly trees, it's just like the circle of life that's going to feed the birds, they also help purify the air and then the birds help get the soil right and you know make the trees grow."

Cox said planting new trees is good for the environment and the trees can help in future storms. "It's hard to imagine that these oak trees [is] what's helping stop the wind but I have six live oaks in my backyard and the back of my house is all glass, it's on the lake," she said. "My live oaks look demolished [but] they're still standing; my house is still standing too so I know that they work to do that."

The non-profit is currently looking for volunteers for the project. For more information you can email Brandi Cox at brandicox4830@gmail.com.

Facebook: Acorns of Hope

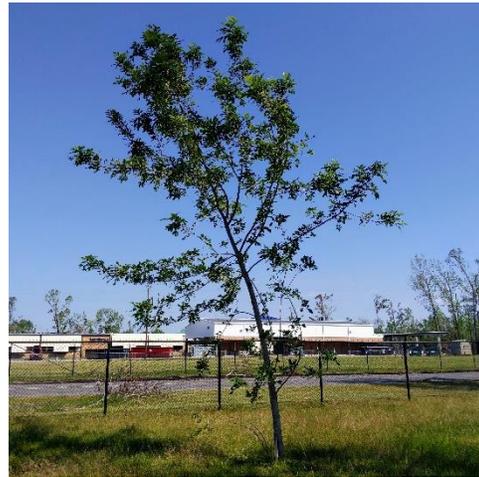
<https://www.facebook.com/Acorns-of-Hope-100397651884036/>



Local News:

[Back](#)

Images of Tuten Park after Hurricane Laura photos taken by Irvin Louque



Damaged Mulberry Tree at Drew Park photo taken by Bette Talbot

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Volunteer Opportunities:

[Back](#)

The Christmas Bird Counts are right around the corner. Volunteer for any of the Christmas Bird Counts taking place around the state. Your help is needed. Contact the compiler for the area you would like to help. Whether you are a seasoned veteran or a newbie, please consider helping out. Check calendar below for dates and maybe one or more will fit your holiday schedule. Compiler contact information and calendar are listed below. Thanks to all of the compilers who volunteer their time to this important process!

December 2020-January 2021

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						12
Audubon's 120th Christmas Counts: Louisiana CBCs			Official count period days are shaded: 14 December 2020 - 5 January 2021			
13	14 Geminids MS	15	16	17	18	19
	* Johnsons Bayou	* White Lake * Fort Polk (ra)	* Crowley		* Lacassine NWR- Thornwell * Northshore-Slidell	* Franklin * D'Arbonne * Shreveport
20	21 Ursids MS	22	23	24 Christmas Eve	25 Christmas Day	26
* Sweet Lake- Cameron Prairie NWR	* Bossier-Caddo (Red River) * New Iberia	* Tensas River NWR	* Grand Isle			* New Orleans
27	28	29	30	31 New Year's Eve	1 New Year's Day	2
* Pine Prairie	* Lafayette * Nachitoches	* Thibodaux	* St. Tammany * Catahoula			* Baton Rouge * Claiborne * Natchez @
3	4	5				
* Cheneyville- LeCompte * Creole		* Palmetto Island	Red = Holidays ra = restricted access			KEY: MS: peak meteor shower peak

Notes: Lake Charles and Sabine are canceled due to Hurricane Laura damage @Count circle straddles two states.

Count and Compiler contact information:

- Baton Rouge LABR; 2-Jan; Katie Percy kpercy@audubon.org
- Bossier-Caddo (Red River NWR) LABC; 21-Dec; [Terri Jacobson@fws.gov](mailto:Terri_Jacobson@fws.gov)
- Catahoula NWR LACA; 30-Dec; Marty Floyd; progne99@aol.com (337) 459-0445
- Cheneyville-LeCompte LACL; 3 Jan; Marty Floyd; progne99@aol.com (337) 459-0445
- Claiborne LACB; 2-Jan; John Dillon; kisforkryptonite@gmail.com
- Creole LACR; 3 Jan; Erik Johnson; ejohnson@audubon.org
- Crowley LACW; 16-Dec; Marty Floyd; progne99@aol.com (337) 459-0445
- D'Arbonne LADA; 19-Dec; John Dillon; kisforkryptonite@gmail.com
- Franklin LAFR; 19-Dec; Mike VanEtten; mlvanetten@yahoo.com (337) 962-4078
- Grand Isle LAGI; 23-Dec; Chris Brantley; chrisbrantley@charter.net

Johnson's Bayou LAJB; 14-Dec; Gary Kelley; garymke@sbcglobal.net (409) 679-1616
Lacassine NWR-Thornwell LALT; 18-Dec; Rob Dobbs; rcdobbs@gmail.com
Lafayette LALA; 28-Dec; Erik Johnson; ejohnson@audubon.org
Natchitoches LANA; 28 Dec; Larry Raymond; lrraymond@aol.com
Natchez*; MSNZ; 2 Jan; Bob Strader; bstrader2@yahoo.com (601) 431-1631
New Iberia LANI; 21-Dec; Erik Johnson; ejohnson@audubon.org
New Orleans LANO; 26-Dec; Glenn Ousset; gousset@bellsouth.net (504) 495-4284
Northshore-Slidell LANS; 18-Dec; Wendy Rihner; wrihner@gmail.com
Palmetto Island LAPI; 5 Jan; Toddy Guidry; guidrys@cox.net
Pine Prairie LAPP; 27 Dec; Marty Floyd; progne99@aol.com (337) 459-0445
Shreveport LASH; 19-Dec; Charlie Lyon; lyon5516@bellsouth.net
St. Tammany Parish LAST; 30-Dec; Chris Brantley; chrisbrantley@charter.net
Sweet Lake-Cameron Prairie NWR LASC; 20-Dec; Rob Dobbs; rcdobbs@gmail.com
Tensas River NWR LATR; 22-Dec; Andrew Morang moranga@bellsouth.net
Thibodaux LATH; 29-Dec; Delaina LeBlanc; delaina@btnep.org
Venice LAVE; Dan Purrington; danny@tulane.edu
White Lake LAWL; 15-Dec; Rob Dobbs; rcdobbs@gmail.com
The Fort Polk (LAFP) CBC is restricted access and at present 15 Dec. Compiler: Abigail Arfman;
arfmanar@gmail.com ; * straddles two states. Bold - count anticipated but no date assigned.
—Marty Floyd, CBC Coordinator

Louisiana's 119th CBC Summary

During the 2018-2019 (119th) Audubon Christmas Bird Count, Louisiana birders for the first time conducted 30 counts, continuing a recent trend of CBC expansion and increased participation. Read all about last year's CBC at Louisiana Audubon:

<https://la.audubon.org/louisiana119thcbc?fbclid=IwAR0LW7pPpslIkSJ3qEVcxB91evpAjDrjRPtW-WaBYjm5tNTvLi7XJRyVI8>



Continuing Education Opportunities:

[Back](#)**Earn Continuing Education Credit.**

<https://consbio.org/>

Conservation Biology Institute Webinar Series**Understanding and Using New Tools for Conservation Planning for Climate Adaptation and Mitigation**

Climate-driven shifts in species and ecosystems are complicating efforts to conserve biodiversity at the landscape scale. Recognizing this challenge, agencies and non-governmental organizations are increasingly searching for tools and information that allow identification of climate refugia, corridors, and ecosystems which store irrecoverable carbon, areas that are key to enhancing the resilience of natural systems under climate change. AdaptWest is a spatial database for conservation planning that helps fill that information ...

**SCGIS - Case studies from TNC addressing conservation in times of crisis**

In this webinar by The Nature Conservancy present two case studies showcasing conservation in times of crisis. Montserrat Acosta-Morel will discuss TNC's work engaging communities and building resilient islands in the Caribbean using nature-based solutions (#1 below); and Yuta Masuda will talk about the effects of local warming from deforestation on the health and well-being of local communities in the pantropics (#2 below). CBI presents this webinar in ...

**SCGIS - COVID-19: Rethinking our relationships with wild animals & wild places**

The COVID-19 coronavirus has catapulted across the ever-evolving interface between humans and wild places, generating global impact and alarm. Quarantines have been imposed, and borders have been closed. Free movement of people, the pursuit of normal daily routines, economic well-being — and in too many instances, health and even life itself — have been dramatically curtailed by a virus that previously lived beyond the pale and a disease that was ...





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 Master Naturalists Brian-Sean Early

Vanillaleaf – *Carphephorus odoratissimus*

Add your observations to the Southwest Louisiana master Naturalists Project

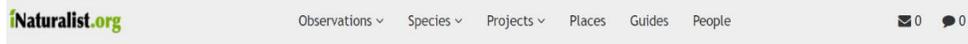
<https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/southwest-louisiana-master-naturalists>



Join the Southwest Louisiana Master Naturalists project.

Add your observations and photos to our group project.

<https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/southwest-louisiana-master-naturalists>



Welcome to Southwest Louisiana Master Naturalists

← Projects

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



Revisiting a Lesson from the Past by Connie McDonald

Hurricanes Laura and Delta destroyed most of the pines and hardwoods at our family camp near Indian Village on the Calcasieu River. The landscape is unrecognizable: Yesterday I drove right past it. The loggers and Wildlife and



Fisheries Agent who walked it with us says it looks like a tornado must have ripped through the property. My dad acquired our thirty-five acres in 1959. I remember my parents picking up my two younger brothers and me at school when I was nine, telling us they "had a surprise" for us. After what seemed like a long drive, they led us through a field, up a hill, and down a narrow trail through the woods. The sandy path was white and powdery soft. I kept stopping to pick tiny violets and yellow flowers, but they hurried us along. Our walk ended when we came to a huge white sandbar, stretching out into the river. All of us were beside ourselves: this was the most beautiful place we had ever seen. I remember skipping through the woods on the way back to the car, hollering out "This is Fairy Land!" Since that day, my family has enjoyed countless gatherings in this place; my parents were able to share it with their children and grandchildren for the rest of their lives.

Seeing the aftermath of the hurricanes was heartbreaking. Viewing the devastation brought back a memory of a visit I made in 2006 to a family near New Orleans who had suffered great losses to the beautiful forest they tended after Katrina. At the time, they were about the same ages as my husband and I are now. The following is an excerpt from an article I wrote about that experience:

Publication: The Voice, Vol.11, No.2

Date: 2006

Website: <https://archive.nwp.org/cs/public/print/resource/2351>



My husband Mike and I spent Easter morning this year with Lucianne Carmichael, an educator, artist, and environmentalist. She and her husband, both in their seventies, tend seven acres of hardwood bottomland in Lower Algiers, which is a ferry ride across the Mississippi River from the French Quarter. Just off River Road, which runs alongside the levee, down a winding gravel path, is their forest and artists' workshop called A Studio in the Woods.

Lucianne met us at the gate, and the first thing I saw was a hundred year old pecan tree that had been blown down, its gigantic root system tipped up. A few yards away lay a tall water oak that had fallen across the edge of their pond. Lucianne explained that the day she returned to the woods after their forty-one day evacuation, she found what appeared to be total devastation. The canopy of trees- pecan, hackberry, and water oak- was gone. Twisted and fallen trees and limbs littered the property. She said it looked like a graveyard. Yet the magnolia tree next to the house was in full bloom, way ahead of season! At first she thought the magnolia was confused, but after roaming through the property with her husband and their gardener (who is a botanist) she realized that many plants were "blooming like crazy," scattering their seeds far ahead of the usual season. With the dense canopy destroyed, the smaller plants-some decades old- had shot up over six feet in the month or so the couple had been gone!

It was as if the forest somehow knew exactly what to do. Lucianne said that what happened in their woods holds important lessons for humans about recovery from and compensation for what we've lost.

The Carmichaels decided to leave every tree exactly as it had fallen. Lucianne said "These trees are our dear friends, and they deserve to be honored and studied. They have not finished their work in the forest." She envisions environmentalists and artists and writers and poets going to her woods to study, sketch, reflect, and find lessons in many forms, from public policy to poetry, in the fallen trees and the astonishing new growth.

I am hoping that what I learned from Lucianne and her forest many years ago will help me accept our loss, appreciate what we have, and look forward to the future.



Staying Home, Finding Inspiration by Megg Sorensen

Needless to say, it's been a hard year for everyone. As an artist and musician, nearly all of my work opportunities were cancelled in 2020. The good news, though, was that staying home for me meant more time to explore the natural bounty of my rural Southwest Louisiana home.



I'm part Polish, and originally from around Chicago, where I learned the Polish folk art of papercutting, wycinanki (vee-chee-non-key) as a child. Wycinanki has traditionally been made by rural peasants in Poland, and traditional motifs are almost always nature-based: birds, flowers, stars, trees. They depicted what they saw in their daily lives, and here in Louisiana, I try to do the same. Cancelled plans and lack of work gave me plenty of time to roam around and find inspiration in the flora and fauna of this beautiful region.

Right after the world shut down in March, I made a papercutting for Robby. If y'all know Robby, you know he asked for fish! This piece depicts an alligator gar, an American paddlefish, and has a border of American eels.

To amuse myself this summer, and to keep up my skills, I set up challenges for myself. The first one was to cut a paper flower each day for 30 days. Local flowers included magnolia blooms, native irises, maypop (passiflora incarnata), spiderworts, thistle, and rosemallow. During this 30 day period, I visited some nearby Cajun prairie remnants, which was quite an inspirational adventure!



Later in the summer, I did another 30-day challenge; this time with animals. Some of the animals were requested by my Patreon followers (one Louisiana supporter picked a mosquito; another asked for a wood duck). Many times, I got ideas for the papercuttings just from being out in my garden or taking walks. I had a lot of fun with these.

I made some Louisiana classics, like a crawfish, a brown pelican, and an alligator. I'm lucky enough to live in the same place that whooping cranes live all year, and I really enjoyed making a papercutting of the majestic bird! I also made a cutting of my favorite local frog, the southern leopard frog.



My favorite SW Louisiana-inspired papercutting from this year hangs on my wall and embodies one of the better memories I have of 2020. This year I had plenty of time to explore the fantastic gifts on the fencerows, including dewberries and blackberries in the spring, and maypops in the summer. I have fallen in love with this incredible native plant. The blooms are unparalleled, and have captivated me since I moved down South. This year, I harvested the leaves and blooms and dehydrated them to make a lovely and effective calming tea. Then, of course, are the fruit! When the maypops, also known as passionfruit, began to ripen, I would take a walk with my catahoulas every day to check the progress and pick the ripe maypops. And each day, I would hear that signature song of the northern bobwhite.

My partner, who grew up here, hadn't heard bobwhites in years until last year, so I am always grateful that they have returned. There are two that I hear, and sometimes see, in the tall grasses of the pasture near my house. They are depicted here, in paper, with the magnificent maypop bloom overhead. The ripening fruits hang down from the vines. Maypops are the host plant of the gulf fritillary butterfly, and I would always find plenty of their spiky orange and black caterpillars munching on the leaves, so of course I added those to this piece. Dotting the edges are blue mistflowers, a native prairie plant that I was always glad to happen upon when I was on my walks.



Although there has been a lot of hardship and loss in 2020, I am grateful for the extra time I got to spend getting more acquainted with the land I live on, and the life it supports. For me, art is a way of celebrating the beautiful biodiversity of Southwest Louisiana, as well as encouraging the protection and appreciation of our native ecosystems.



Stepping Outside – New Beginnings by David Booth

Waking up early on Christmas morning, she grabbed her binoculars, bundled up and walked out the door. The wind lifted her hair from her face and produced a tear in her eyes. She focused in and saw her first birds of the day: Blue Jay, Mockingbird, Wren, Chickadee, Titmouse and others. This was her first Christmas Bird Count; first in Louisiana and one of the first ever. The place: Baldwin, Louisiana in St. Mary's Parish. The year: 1900. (Yes, that is no typo.... 1900!). Now, over 120 years later we remember her effort and still talk about how, single handedly, Mrs. Lucy Gould Baldwin was part of the first ever official Christmas Bird Counts. She lived at the Baldwin Plantation and was likely a subscriber to "Bird Lore" which publicized the start of the CBC concept. "Bird Lore" published the CBC results for the first 41 years.

She only counted a couple years, but a count circle in St. Mary Parish was started up in 2018 by Mike VanEtten from the Lafayette area, a new beginning. The circle includes the towns of Baldwin, Franklin, Centerville, and the Bayou Teche National Wildlife Refuge, a Black Bear sanctuary. Mike was inspired by her story. Having participated in a number of CBCs in SW Louisiana, and since he was a member of the Friends of Bayou Teche Refuge, he saw an opportunity to tie together birders and the Bayou Teche Refuge. Mike stepped forward to serve as compiler for the Franklin, LA CBC, and has been working hard to get the count well established. He can use some help on this upcoming 3rd year of this bird count, which is scheduled for **Saturday Dec 19, 2020**.

The count is the typical 15 mile wide circle with territories set up for a number of birding parties. Most are by car but there are boat routes available into the refuge waterways, plus there is a fairly long section of Bayou Teche, and a portion of the Atchafalaya Basin within the count circle. Thus, there are areas that can be accessed and birded by driving, walking, canoeing, and via motorboat. Please contact **Mike VanEtten** at 337-962-4078, mlvanetten@yahoo.com, to confirm that you are interested, and to go over details and answer questions.

Lucy didn't set any high count records. She didn't find any rarities. At 60 years of age, she just got out there and did what she could and got things started. What's the take away from this? First, it should be clear from Lucy and Mike's examples that anyone with the energy, time and effort can establish or work on a CBC. There is a lot of guidance out there for that. Secondly, we can all contribute something and we don't have to be experts. Teams can use drivers, photographers and recorders to keep count of the birds identified. Each of us has a contribution we can make. Feeder watchers don't even have to leave the yard. That's a lot like Mrs. Baldwin did. She logged in 14 species, likely working her yard and from her porch. We can at least do that. Give Mike, or one of the compilers for the other CBC's around the state a call. Let's continue a fine tradition.



THE MASSÉ~DARBY HOUSE

REPRESENTS A DISTINCT STYLE OF FRENCH COLONIAL DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE, ONCE COMMON THROUGHOUT LOUISIANA BUT NOW RARE. BUILT ON A SPANISH LAND-GRANT TO ANDRE MASSÉ, PROBABLY IN THE PERIOD 1764-1776, IT IS THE OLDEST EXTANT STRUCTURE IN ST. MARY PARISH.

THE HOUSE HAS BEEN HOME TO SEVERAL NOTABLE LOUISIANANS, INCLUDING AGRICOLE FUSELIER, CHARLES GREVEMBERG AND PHILANTHROPIST AND EDUCATOR JOHN BALDWIN, AFTER WHOM THE TOWN IS NAMED.



Replanting After the Storms by Robby Maxwell

Like just about everybody in this part of Louisiana, we have plenty of property damage after getting walloped by back-to-back hurricanes. Like many, we're also in the middle of the slow process of getting repairs to our house taken care of. Most of those jobs are too big to take care of in-house, but one thing I can move forward with is taking care of the habitat on our property in the meantime.

We're on about 2.5 acres with replanted prairie and other various habitat improvements. Hurricane Laura uprooted or broke about three dozen trees either on the property or on the tree line bordering our property, dropping them onto our land. Included in that number was a large, approximately 80-year old water oak that fell the carport and shed. We took out three other large water oaks that never should've been planted that close to the house. For the first time in decades, you can see our roof from space, and there's a lot of sun in the backyard. In addition to water oaks, we lost mostly sugarberries and black cherries and a couple of cedars. Pecans lost limbs, but thankfully are still standing. The unfortunate observation is that tallows (mostly in the tree line to the south of our land) fared very well, with few broken and none uprooted. We removed the pines on the property years ago, because they weren't doing well here, anyway, and I'm glad we did. We had four burn piles that took 3-5 days, each, to burn. The debris truck took seven loads of giant water oak from the roadside.

With the tree cleanup mostly done (leaving some piled up on the edges of the property), we decided it was about time to start to replant. After all, those are improvements that will take time, but we can set in motion. Two of the burn piles were up against prairie areas, and that was to clear area for expansion. With so many trees gone, we have new sunny areas that are ready for planting, and a few formerly shady spots (I miss the swing and hammock, already) we want back in the shade.

As I have for many years, I'd already been collecting some seeds here and there throughout the year, but not nearly enough for what I needed to plant after the storm. The main consideration is for the future, now. We want to plant smarter and more sustainably. Trees like water oaks and pines should not be planted near houses, and even with storm-resistant trees, care should be taken regarding where they're replanted. So far, I've dropped prairie seeds I've collected at our place and nearby prairie remnants, planted a number of trees and forbes from the Acadiana Native Plant Project, planted trees and forbes from Mail Order Natives, some nice trees from Harmon Nursery, and have ordered some other Pure Native seeds from the Ecology Lab at UL.

Since trees are the hot topic after the storm, here's a rundown of what we planted. Harmon nursery has a great selection of native trees at a good size right now. From Harmon Nursery, we got two Orange Island live oaks, which are a fast-growing line that originated at Jefferson Island. They are the closest trees we've planted to the house, and still are at least 55' from it. I also bought three 6' cypress for behind the house in an area that is pretty wet and was formerly shady. Live oaks and cypress are two of the most storm-resistant trees we can grow out here. We also got a number of small trees that we planted in other parts of the property including, cow oak, overcup oak, willow oak, winged elm, and red bay. This will definitely bolster diversity out here, as the only tree we planted that was already present on the property was cypress.

I know a lot of people out here aren't as fortunate to have the resources or ability right now to worry about putting plants in the ground, yet, but along with rebuilding stronger and more resiliently, we also all need to replant with resilience and enrichment as a priority.

List of native plant resources for SWLA:

Acadian Native Plant Project <https://greauxnative.org/>

UL Ecology Lab PureNative seeds <https://ecology.louisiana.edu/purenative>

Harmon Nursery <https://www.facebook.com/Harmon-Greenhouse-and-Nursery-129539057118169/>

The Urban Naturalist <https://theurbannaturalists.com/>

Mail Order Natives <https://mailordernatives.com/>

Remnant prairies, roadside ditches, swamp edges, etc. Be mindful to not be destructive or break the law while collecting, but local natives can't be beat. Seeds and cuttings are a low impact way to expand your diversity.

Baldcypress



Logs left for habitat



Burn pile that was seeded with prairie plants



Orange Island Live Oak



My Lifer Grasshopper Sparrow by David Booth

This month, after many years of searching, I was fortunate to find not one but two Grasshopper Sparrows. Others have found and photographed them in years past, even in Calcasieu Parish my home parish, but alas whenever I would go out and try to refind these birds I always came up empty handed. I even had a plan to drive up to the North West section of Louisiana where some breeding birds were known to have occurred but when I checked with John Dillon, I found out that this only occurred during very dry years and they would not be found this past summer.

So, this winter, knowing that they were likely here ... somewhere, I kept on trying. It's a bit like fishing, you find a likely spot, very grassy and where other sparrows are hanging out and then throw a 'lure'. In this case I would play their recorded song and calls to entice them into view. These notes are very high pitched and hard for me to hear, even with the volume all the way up. I use a medium sized Bluetooth speaker I purchased from Wal-Mart. Now about that speaker, I have gone through at least a dozen of these little buggers. The first two were top drawer and cost about \$60. I kept leaving them on the roof and taking off. Well, I learned that the \$10 speaker from Walmart was a better option. Now I use a clothes pin on the key switch to remind me to pull the speaker in before I start the engine.

On this day, I stopped at several likely spots. I picked out a nice field with tall broomsage grass on one side and with very short grass on the other side. I played the recording for Grasshopper Sparrow. I got very excited when a flat-headed big beaked sparrow responded to the call and was working the grass stalks coming in closer and closer in response to the call. It sure looked like a potential Grasshopper Sparrow to me (having never seen one). But it didn't seem to have the bold eye-ring the field guide was showing. Everything else seemed good. I debated with myself and the guide, until I realized that these birds were LeConte's Sparrows. This is still a great bird and a close cousin to the Grasshopper. I was almost fooled. But got to see some nice LeConte's, a rare event in itself.

Driving around some more, I had several no response stops. I went to the gulley on Tom Stegall Road SE of Lake Charles. There was some really nice grass on the North West side of the gulley, so I tried again. I played and played and played with no visible response. Giving up, I pulled in my speaker and leaned in to start the car engine and as an afterthought looked out the window to the rear. There was a suspect bird sitting on the wire just behind the car! With my binoculars, I could make out the flat head, big beak and WOW what an eye ring! It was a definite Grasshopper Sparrow. I grabbed the camera and started to shoot. "Warning no battery power left" was the response. What? How could that be? So I shot a couple of cell phone photos, which were insufficient. Then, a second Grasshopper hopped up to join the first! Unbelievable. I had perfect light and no camera battery. Oh! I can plug into the lighter, almost forgot about that, in a few minutes, I had enough charge to shoot the accompanying photos. Mission accomplished. A life bird, a new Calcasieu Parish List bird and a much needed 2020 bird as well.





Grasshopper Sparrow photos by David Booth



Upcoming Events:

[Back](#)

Southwest Master Naturalists Calendar

Date to be announced Cleanup at Tuten Park

December 12, 2020 Kayaking at Lake Arthur. Meet at The Regatta Restaurant at 9:30, in the water at 10:00. Pack and Paddle will have boats to rent for \$47.50 per person, or bring your own. Please sign up on [Track It Forward](#).

December 12, 2020 Lunch at The Regatta Restaurant in Lake Arthur. We will meet at 12:30 on the back deck. Lunch will be at 1:00. Please take necessary precautions. Please sign up on [Track it Forward](#).

January 16, 2021 Let's do a trip to Peveto and the Beach. Meet at Peveto at 10:00 am. Sign up on [Track it Forward](#).

Get involved with the Audubon Christmas Bird Count! Volunteer to help at one of the many CBC's going on around our state.

<https://www.audubon.org/conservation/science/christmas-bird-count>



Resources for the Naturalists:

[Back](#)**Audubon Christmas Bird Count**

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

History of the Christmas Bird Count

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

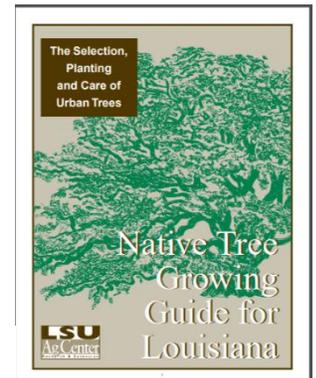
Tree Care Tips and Techniques

<https://www.arborday.org/trees/tips/>



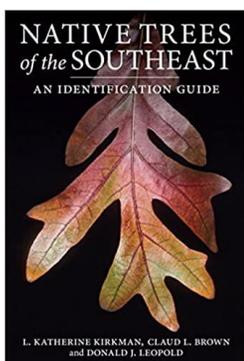
LSU Agricultural Center free PDF: The Selection, Planting and Care of Urban Trees

<https://www.lsuagcenter.com/NR/rdonlyres/F5E6FA92-D84F-4716-9176-355A62765838/18167/pub2926NativeTreeGuide.pdf>



Trees for Me - Native Trees of Louisiana

<http://www.treesforme.com/louisiana.html>



Native Trees of the Southeast

by L. Katherine Kirkman (Author), Claud L. Brown (Author), Donald Joseph Leopold (Author)

<https://www.amazon.com/Native-Trees-Southeast-Katherine-Kirkman/dp/0881928283>

The diversity of woody plants in the Southeast is unparalleled in North America. *Native Trees of the Southeast* is a practical, compact field guide for the identification of the more than 225 trees native to the region, from the Carolinas and eastern Tennessee south through Georgia into northern Florida and west through Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Arkansas into eastern Texas. For confident identification, nearly 600 photographs, close to 500 of them in color, illustrate leaves, flowers and fruits or cones, bark, and twigs with buds.



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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SLAMN	Tommy Hillman	tommyhillman@att.net
Gulf Coast Bird Club	David Booth	david@boothenvironmental.com
3801 Nelson Road, Lake Charles, LA 70601		225 206 0400

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 the Newsletter Editor: arlenevidaurri.cain@yahoo.com



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