

LOUISIANA NATURAL AREAS REGISTRY

Quarterly Newsletter

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Can you name the flowers above?
See back page for answer.

Working with landowners towards conservation of Louisiana's ecologically sensitive lands

NATURAL AREAS REGISTRY UPDATE

by Judy Jones

We are acknowledging six new Natural Areas Registries this quarter that encompass 4,290.28 acres in four Louisiana Parishes (Bienville, Lincoln, Washington, and West Feliciana Parish). This brings our total Registry acreage to 39,794 among 85 registry members. Dwight Landreneau, Secretary of Wildlife and Fisheries, recommended that we consider registering high quality Office of State Parks sites with the Natural Areas Registry Program. Three new registry sites, Big Cypress, Bogue Chitto State Park, and Tunica Hills State Preservation Natural Areas were selected as some of the best Louisiana Office of State Parks natural sites. Three privately owned natural areas (Asklepieon, Sanctuary, and Wafer Creek Ranch) were recommended for recognition. Chris Reid, our botanist, recommended that we recognize John and Sue Siebenthaler (Asklepieon Natural Area) for their efforts in restoring their forest and eradicating Chinese Parasol trees. I recommended that we recognize Don and Karen Puckett for preserving their forest (Sanctuary Natural Area), and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) recommended that we recognize Johnny Armstrong (Wafer Creek Ranch Natural Area) for preserving and restoring his shortleaf pine forest in Lincoln Parish.



Big Cypress Natural Area is owned by Louisiana Office of State Parks and it consists of 240 acres in Bienville Parish where it borders Saline Bayou. It has an excellent example of an old-growth forest, considered rare in Louisiana. The Big Cypress Natural Area contains one of the last areas where a significant number of



extremely large cypress trees can be found. Numerous Baldcypress (*Taxodium distichum*) with circumferences ranging from 18 to 26 feet and average ages of approximately 1,500 years old occur on the

site. Baldcypress swamps occur on intermittently exposed soils, are periodically flooded, and many are commonly intersected by bayous as this one is. Regeneration requires exceptionally long droughts for germination and establishment of young baldcypress trees. These swamps are important for improving the quality of water. Aquatic fauna like crawfish, aquatic insect larvae, reptiles, and amphibians are abundant.

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Photo: © Tom & Pat Leeson



Bald Eagle Keeping Watch Over Eaglet

Two state rare plants occur here, Northern Burmannia (*Burmannia biflora*; shown above at right), and the Southern Shield Wood-Fern (*Dryopteris ludoviciana*). The state endangered Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*; shown at left) is also known to occur in baldcypress swamps like this one.

Bogue Chitto State Park Natural Area is owned by Louisiana Office of State Parks and it consists of 55 acres in Washington Parish. It captures a Hardwood Slope Forest, locally called Frichie’s Gorge, and it consists of American beech (*Fagus americana*), Southern Magnolia (*Magnolia virginiana*), and white oak (*Quercus alba*) in a unique geological area. Hardwood Slope Forests usually occur on slopes rising out of small stream floodplains that dissect pinelands in northern, western, central, and southeastern Louisiana. The Natural Area contains a high quality Bayhead Swamp with Black Gum (*Nyssa sylvatica*), Sweetbay (*Magnolia virginiana*), and Virginia Willow (*Itea virginica*). Bayhead swamps occur in the heads of creeks or branches, at the base of slopes, in acid depressions in pine flat woods, and on borders of swamps. They are very swamp like and soils are usually deep, mucky, and very acidic. Three state rare plants are known to occur in the Natural Area: Odorless Bayberry (*Myrica inodora*), Silky Camellia



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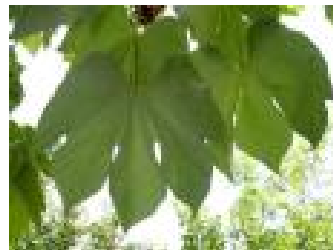
Odorless Bayberry (*Myrica inodora*), Silky Camellia

(*Stewartia malacodendron*), and Indian Cucumber-root (*Medeola virginiana*; shown below at left). One state rare amphibian occurs here – Southern Red Salamander (*Pseudotriton ruber*; shown below at left).

Asklepieion (Healing Sanctuary) Natural Area, Sanctuary Natural Area, and Tunica Hills State Preservation Natural Area are located in West Feliciana Parish. Each registry site consists of the



globally rare Southern Mesophytic Hardwood Forest. Within Louisiana, this forest type is located only in the northwestern Florida Parishes in the Tunica Hills. This natural community developed on deep, fertile, loessial deposits that have eroded over thousands of years to form a characteristic highly-dissected landscape of high, narrow ridges, steep slopes, and deep ravines that usually



have intermittent to permanent streams. These dissected hills have sustained localized populations of some Appalachian species, primarily herbaceous, thought to have originally migrated south ahead of advancing glaciers in the past ice age. Currently, there are nineteen rare plant species like Canada Wild-Ginger (*Asarum canadense*; shown above) and ten rare animal species that are known to occur in the Tunica Hills and have the potential to be found on these sites. **Asklepieion (Healing Sanctuary) Natural Area**

is owned by John and Sue Siebenthaler and it consists of 8 acres located east of Saint Francisville. The owners have been restoring their forest to its natural state and actively eradicating exotic Chinese Parasol trees (*Firmiana simplex*; shown above) that were invading the property. Check out John's web page about eradicating Chinese Parasol trees at <http://chineseparasol.siebenthalercreative.com> if you have internet access.

Sanctuary Natural Area is owned by Don and Karen Puckett and it consists of 10.28 acres. **Tunica Hills State Preservation Natural Area** is owned by Louisiana Office of State Parks and it consists of 3,477 acres in West Feliciana Parish near Tunica Hills Wildlife Management Area.

Wafer Creek Ranch Natural Area is owned by Johnny Armstrong and comprises 500 acres in Lincoln Parish. A shortleaf pine / oak-hickory



forest occurs on ridges and slopes along two branches of Wafer Creek, and contains an old-growth shortleaf pine component with many one hundred plus year old shortleaf pine trees. This forest community occurs on dry hills, principally in central and northern Louisiana, although it may occur sporadically in the Florida Parishes. There are nineteen known occurrences of this forest community in Louisiana. The owner has recorded



many native and Neotropical migratory birds, like the Black-throated Green Warbler (*Dendroica virens*; shown above), that have utilized this area over the past 24 years

and is restoring the forest community per management guidelines. The state rare Silver-haired Bat (*Lasiomycteris noctivagan*) is known to occur in old growth shortleaf pine / oak-hickory forests and have the potential to be found on this site.



Hillside Seepage Bog with insectivorous pitcher plants.

April 22 – Saturday

10:00 am to 4:00 pm

Hosted by

Kisatchie National Forest

We are happy to announce Louisiana's first Natural Areas Field Day. One of our registered Natural Areas members, Kisatchie National Forest, graciously agreed to host this event in their Kisatchie Ranger District. The purpose of this field day is to give our registry members the opportunity to learn about other plant communities in our state and to see how active land management can improve and conserve their natural areas. It is also an opportunity to meet and share information with other members. Transportation is available from LDWF headquarters in Baton Rouge. Please see the enclosed flyer for registration and location details. Lunch and drinks will be supplied.

Kisatchie National Forest (KNF) has 13 registered areas that encompass 1,717.3 acres located in four parishes (Natchitoches, Rapides, Vernon, and Winn) of central Louisiana. KNF registries are unlike other privately owned registries because they are publicly accessible. Their 13 registered Natural Areas are Brushy Creek / Magnolia Ridge, Cooter's Bog, Drakes Creek, Fleming Glade, Leo's, Middle Branch Bog, North Bayou L'Ivrogne, Palustris Prairie, Saline Bayou Sandy

Woodlands, Sheard Branch Sandstone Barrens, Sheard Branch Boulders, Steep Hill, and Wild Azalea Seep. There are 13 plant community types within KNF registered Natural Areas. These include: Small Stream Forests, Hardwood Slope Forests, Calcareous Forests, Fleming Glades, Western Xeric Sandhill Woodlands, Mixed Hardwood-Loblolly Forests, Hillside Bogs, Sandstone Glades/Barrens, Riparian Forests, Western Upland Longleaf Pine Forests, Western Longleaf Pine Savannahs, Bayhead Swamps, and Forested Seeps. Most of KNF Natural Areas have one or more colonies of the endangered Red-cockaded Woodpeckers (*Picoides borealis*). KNF staff plan soon to provide information about their registries on the KNF web site. They are delighted and proud to host the first Natural Areas Field Day. Kisatchie National Forest botanists Peter Nilles, Converse Griffith, and Shannan Sharp will be introducing us to four plant communities in the Kisatchie Forest District. These include hillside seepage bogs, western upland longleaf pine forest, forested seeps, and western xeric sandhill woodlands.

Hillside Seepage Bogs are imperiled Louisiana communities because of their rarity or because some other factor makes them especially vulnerable to extirpation. Many people know these communities as Pitcher Plant Bogs. These communities are open, continually moist, floristically diverse habitats occurring along slopes of ravines and hills in upland pine forests. They



occur primarily in central and western Louisiana but are present sporadically in the eastern Florida Parishes. Individual occurrences are usually limited in aerial extent, ranging from much less than one acre up to several acres. Bayhead swamps are

often present along the drain at the base of the boggy slopes. Frequent fire is essential to preclude invasion and site dominance by woody species. Peat build-up may be considerable to several inches. Soils are typically quite sandy and very

acidic (pH 4.5-5.0). Hillside Seepage Bogs are underlain by impervious sandstone or clay layer that, when conditions are right, causes ground water to constantly seep to the soil surface. Recent studies show more than 100 species may be present in a bog. Vegetation is dominated by a large number of graminoids like bluestems (*Andropogon* spp.) and three awn grasses (*Aristida* spp.). Yellow trumpets (*Sarracenia alata*, shown below at left) are common, interesting, insectivorous plants. Hillside Seepage Bogs occur at: Cooter's Bog Natural Area in Vernon Parish along the western banks of Big Brushy Creek, Drakes Creek Natural Area in Vernon Parish, Leo's Natural Area in Vernon Parish along the western banks of Whisky Chitto Creek; and those in Natchitoches Parish are Middle Branch Bog, North Bayou L'Ivrogne, and Steep Hill Natural Areas.

Western Upland Longleaf Pine Forests, once a predominant natural community, are now rare in Louisiana. They occur in the hilly uplands of western and central Louisiana and occur on acidic loamy sands to acid clays associated with Pleistocene or Tertiary formations. This community is characteristically dissected by small to large branches or creek bottoms. Longleaf pine (*Pinus palustris*) is the dominant overstory species, and in locations where fire has frequently occurred, it is often the only canopy species. Where fire is less frequent or suppressed, a number of overstory associates may occur, including shortleaf (*Pinus echinata*), loblolly (*Pinus taeda*), and black gum (*Nyssa sylvatica*). The herbaceous flora may be very diverse if fire has frequently occurred and it is considered to be one of the most biologically diverse communities in Louisiana. Grasses like piney woods dropseed (*Sporobolus junceus*), composites like sunflowers (*Helianthus* spp.), and legumes like Baptisia spp. (shown above at right) are predominant in the ground layer. Sheard Branch Boulders and Sheard Branch Sandstone Barrens Natural Areas in Natchitoches Parish are surrounded by western upland longleaf pine forests.



Forested Seeps are rare Louisiana communities because they occur in a restricted region of the state or because of other factors making them vulnerable to extirpation.

Forested Seeps occur in central, western, and southeastern Louisiana, typically in mixed pine-hardwood forests, on hillsides, at the base of slopes, and in the narrow bottoms of small perennial or intermittent streams. They are usually very limited in size, seldom larger than a few acres, and often much smaller.



Forested seeps on slopes are continually moist due to constant seepage forced to the surface by an underlying impervious layer. Soils are characteristically quite sandy and acidic. Sweet bay (*Magnolia virginiana*), black gum (*Nyssa sylvatica*), and red maple (*Acer rubrum*) usually dominate the overstory. The understory is typically covered with ferns like cinnamon fern (*Osmunda cinnamomea*) shown above. Forested Seeps occur in Cooter's Bog Natural Area in Vernon Parish and Middle Branch Bog Natural Area in Natchitoches Parish.

Western Xeric Sandhill Woodlands are rare in our state. They occur principally in the uplands of central and northwestern Louisiana, but are found very infrequently in the eastern Florida Parishes. They develop on deep, sandy soils associated with Tertiary formations in central and northwestern Louisiana (particularly the Sparta formation), and Pleistocene intermediate terraces in southeastern Louisiana. Trees are often stunted because of extreme site conditions. The community may have the appearance of a scrubby shrub-woodland. Small, natural openings may be scattered. Overstory trees may include sand post oak (*Quercus stellata* var. *margaretta*) and blue jack oak (*Quercus incana*). Shrub species may include fringe-tree (*Asimina parviflora*).

The herbaceous layer is sparsely developed and there are many rare species indigenous to this habitat like scarlet catchfly (*Silene subciliata*) shown below at left).



Western Xeric Sandhill Woodlands occur at Saline Bayou Sandy Woodlands in Winn Parish along Saline Bayou.



Field Days

April 27 - Thursday
& April 29 - Saturday

Two landowner field days have been organized by the Longleaf Alliance, Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry, Natural Resource Conservation Service, Louisiana Forestry Association, Louisiana State University AgCenter, Beauregard Forestry Association, and the American Forest Foundation. The objective of the events are to provide technical assistance to private landowners, consulting foresters, and other individuals interested in restoring and managing longleaf pine forests in Louisiana. Longleaf pine is widely recognized as a valuable and attractive southern pine species. Fire maintained longleaf pine forests are among the most diverse ecosystems in North America, yielding quality habitat for both game and non-game wildlife, valuable forest products, and aesthetically pleasing landscapes. These field days will provide introductions to cost-share opportunities, regeneration and management techniques, and many other attributes associated with southeastern longleaf pine forests.

The first of two field days will be held Thursday, April 27, 2006 at Sandy Hollow Wildlife Management Area near Wilmer, LA. The second field day will be held Saturday, April 29, 2006 at a Stewardship Forest near Longville, LA. For more information or to request a registration brochure, contact Cody Cedotal, Forest Stewardship Biologist, Louisiana Department of Wildlife

and Fisheries by phone at (225) 765-2354 or via e-mail at ccedotal@wlf.louisiana.gov

Answer to name of flowers on first page.
Cypripedium kentuckiense - **Southern Lady's-Slipper**. This is a state and globally rare plant species that is tracked by LNHP. Picture was taken by Chris Reid in a hardwood slope forest on Fort Folk in Vernon Parish near Leesville during the Spring of 2003.

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