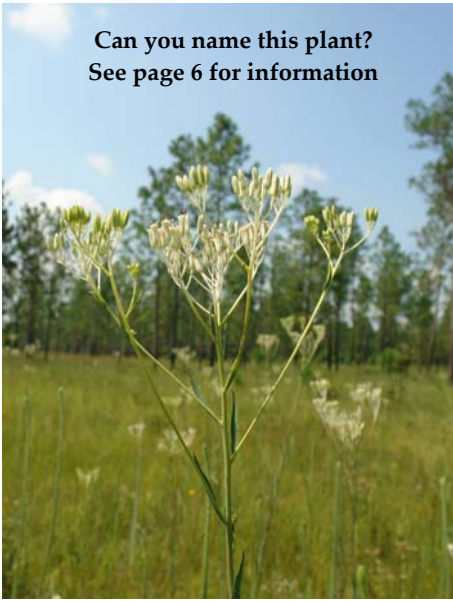


Can you name this plant?  
See page 6 for information



# LOUISIANA NATURAL AREAS REGISTRY

Landowner Recognition Program for Citizen-based Conservation

## Quarterly Newsletter

March 2008

Volume 5 Number 3 of 4



Working with Landowners towards Conservation of Louisiana's Ecologically Sensitive Lands

<http://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/experience/naturalheritage/naturalareasregistry/>

### NATURAL AREAS REGISTRY UPDATE

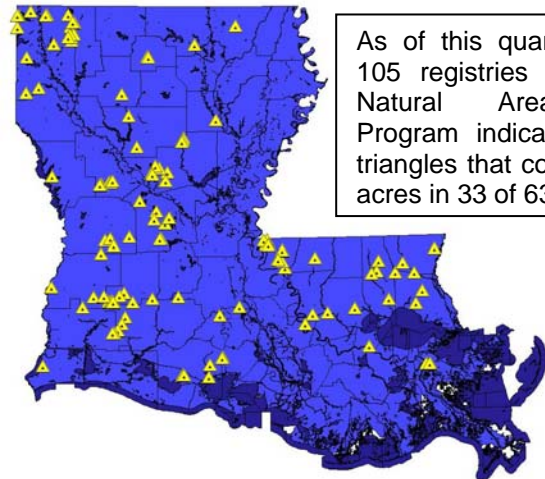
We are acknowledging one new Natural Areas Registry member this quarter that encompasses 14 acres in Grant Parish. Serenity Waters Natural Area is owned by Shalyian Jenkins. Her new registry contains a small stream forest along Coleman Branch that supports two large beds of the Louisiana Pearlshell mussel (*Margaritifera hembeli*), federally-listed as threatened, and the common Wabash Pigtoe (*Fusconaia flava*). Aran Meyer and Judy Jones presented a certificate of appreciation and Natural Areas signs to Shalyian Jenkins. The Louisiana Pearlshell mussel is endemic to Louisiana and occurs only in the Bayou Boeuf drainage in Rapides Parish and Bayou Rigolette / Bayou Marteau drainage in Grant Parish where they prefer stable sand and gravel bottoms of clear flowing creeks. Shalyian's small stream forest is characterized by multiple-aged tree species that include southern magnolia (*Magnolia grandiflora*), American Beech (*Fagus grandifolia*), hackberry (*Celtis laevigata*), baldcypress (*Taxodium distichum*), and swamp chestnut oak (*Quercus michauxii*). Beechdrops (*Epifagus virginiana*), associated with American beech trees, is a parasitic herbaceous plant that attaches to the roots of American beach trees were common. The small stream forest transitions toward a mixed loblolly pine hardwood forest at higher elevations where many cranefly orchids (*Tipularia discolor*) occur.



Coleman Branch that supports two large beds of the Louisiana Pearlshell mussel (*Margaritifera hembeli*), federally-listed as threatened, and the common Wabash Pigtoe (*Fusconaia flava*). Aran Meyer and Judy Jones presented a certificate of appreciation and Natural Areas signs to Shalyian Jenkins. The Louisiana Pearlshell mussel is endemic to Louisiana and occurs only in the Bayou Boeuf drainage in Rapides Parish and Bayou Rigolette / Bayou Marteau drainage in Grant Parish where they prefer stable sand and gravel bottoms of clear flowing creeks. Shalyian's small stream forest is characterized by multiple-aged tree species that include southern magnolia (*Magnolia grandiflora*), American Beech (*Fagus grandifolia*), hackberry (*Celtis laevigata*), baldcypress (*Taxodium distichum*), and swamp chestnut oak (*Quercus michauxii*). Beechdrops (*Epifagus virginiana*), associated with American beech trees, is a parasitic herbaceous plant that



As of this quarter, there are 105 registries in Louisiana's Natural Areas Registry Program indicated by yellow triangles that comprise 45,885 acres in 33 of 63 parishes.



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Natural Areas Registry members that require prescribed fire management to maintain their longleaf pine forests and associated ecosystems were invited to the Prescribed Fire Workshop on March 27<sup>th</sup> at Sandy Hollow Wildlife Management Area in Tangipahoa Parish. Natural Areas owners from Camp Whispering Pines, Snider Bend, and Sprucewood Farm were among 99 that attended the



workshop. Representatives from the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, Department of Agriculture and Forestry, Natural

Heritage Program, and LSU Extension Service presented information on prescribed fire benefits to forestry and wildlife, the Forest Stewardship Program, influences to native plant communities, legal ramifications, and methods with a field demonstration. 🌿

## NATURAL AREAS CAN PROVIDE KEY SITES FOR BIOLOGICAL RESEARCH

By Patti Faulkner

The biological value of our Louisiana Natural Areas Registry sites is inherent in the name, NATURAL AREAS. These sites were selected for the Registry because of their unique natural features, because they provide some of the last native habitat for rare species of animals and plants in Louisiana, and because the owners of these unique places believe in the exceptional natural value of their lands. Threatened natural communities such as longleaf pine savannahs, saline prairies, coastal prairies, herbaceous bogs and old growth forests, to name a few, are sheltered and thoughtfully managed on these properties. Registry members can be proud of their contribution to Louisiana and future generations by ensuring that these unique places continue to endure.

However, merely setting aside a property as a natural area will not guarantee that the natural values of the land will live on. Each unique natural area must be evaluated and managed for the specific species and associated habitat located on the area. As the old adage goes, “knowledge is power.” In order for our state’s natural communities and species to thrive and persist, we must learn more about them and thereby determine the best way to manage them for long term survival. Our state’s Natural Areas can and do provide ideal sites and opportunities to conduct this essential biological research.

Of course, landowners are contacted first by the Louisiana Natural Heritage Program (LNHP) with information on any proposed research project, and no research or other work is allowed on registered Natural Areas without the landowner’s express permission. If the proposed project fits in with the landowner’s objectives and permission is granted, then the owner is kept informed of the project details, progress of the research, and provided with a report of the research findings.

LNHP staff are always active cooperators with research groups or organizations involved in work on Natural Areas. Scientists with federal and state entities including Louisiana State University (LSU), Southeastern Louisiana University (SE), Louisiana State University – Shreveport (LSU-S), U.S. Forest Service (USFS), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) have conducted or are currently conducting research projects on registered Natural Areas. Research projects on Natural Areas are funded through a variety of sources including the State Wildlife Grants Program (SWG), USFWS Section 6 Endangered Species Funds, LDWF agency funds, and academic grants.

In addition to outside groups, many of our registered landowners themselves are conducting management and restoration “research” on their own properties. These owners work with LNHP or other conservation organizations such as The Nature Conservancy to develop a management strategy and determine which management practices best fit their habitat(s). These practices are then applied and results or responses are monitored to determine which practices work best for their properties.

The following is a listing of research projects and the registered Natural Areas hosting those projects:

### 1. Insect Assemblages of Rare Saline Prairies

**Natural Areas:** Weyerhaeuser Saline Prairies and Fort

**Partners:** SE Univ, LNHP, LA State Arthropod Museum



The project involves a systematic, year-long survey to provide a data set of

the insect species that utilize these rare ecosystems and the micro-habitats within them (salt slicks, pimple mounds, prairie, prairie-woodland interface).



### 2. Monitoring of Earthfruit (*Geocarpon mimum*) Populations in Louisiana

**Natural Areas:** Fort, Weyerhaeuser Saline Prairies, and Dickson Nature Preserve

**Partners:** Bog Research, Inc., LNHP, USFWS



Establishment of plots and continued yearly monitoring of earthfruit locations to determine population trends in Louisiana for this federally-listed plant.

### 3. Surveys for Several Rare Animal Species in Northwest Louisiana

**Natural Areas:** Dickson Nature Preserve

**Partners:** private contract biologist, LNHP

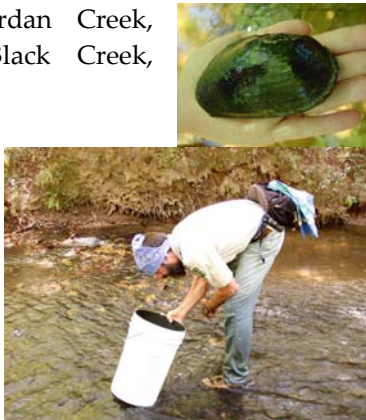
A census study of a reported Ringtail (*Bassariscus astutus*) population in southern Caddo Parish, Louisiana, and a survey of crawfish, spiders, and bats in northwestern Louisiana. The goal of these projects is to determine the geographic distribution, relative abundance, and preferred habitat of each species encountered.

### 4. Status Survey of the Louisiana Pearlshell Mussel (*Margaritifera hembeli*)

**Natural Areas:** Laird's Jordan Creek, Serenity Waters, Sharey's Black Creek, Shirley's Jordan Creek

**Partners:** USFWS, LNHP

A survey of streams with known habitat and locations for the federally-listed LA pearlshell mussel to determine the current extent and population size within Louisiana.



### 5. Status Survey of the Gopher Tortoise (*Gopherus polyphemus*)

**Natural Areas:** Rester Family **Partners:** USFWS, LNHP

A survey of the eastern Florida Parishes with known habitat and locations for the federally-listed gopher tortoise to determine the current extent and population size within Louisiana.

### 6. Habitat Use Preference of the Henslow's Sparrow (*Ammodramus henslowii*)

**Natural Areas:** Camp Whispering Pines, Barnes Creek Savannah, and Rector's Prairie

**Partners:** LSU, LNHP

Surveys of Henslow's sparrow habitat for usage patterns in relation to habitat structure, species composition and fire frequency.



### 7. Floristics of Marsh-fringing Coastal Prairies

**Natural Areas:** Marceaux Island Prairie

**Partners:** USGS, LNHP

Year-long survey of species composition, relative abundance and % cover for coastal prairie species in two marsh-fringing prairies.

### 8. Floristics of a Winn Parish Saline Prairie

**Natural Areas:** Weyerhaeuser Saline Prairies (Upper Prairie site)

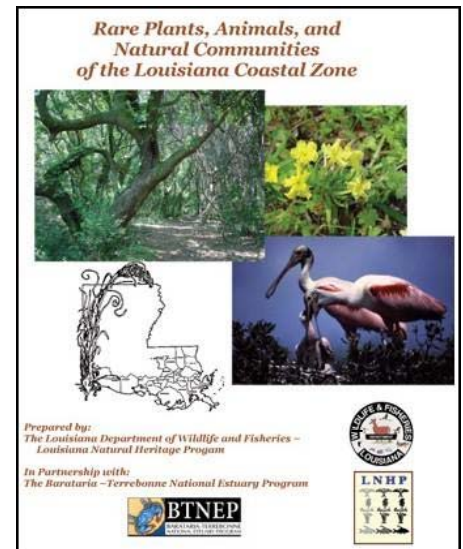
**Partners:** Bog Research, Inc., LNHP

Year-long survey of species composition, relative abundance, and % cover for saline prairie species. 🌸

## LOUISIANA COASTAL ZONE RARE SPECIES and NATURAL COMMUNITY FACT SHEETS

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries' (LDWF) Natural Heritage Program has posted new facts sheets for Louisiana's Coastal Zone rare species and associated natural communities on the LDWF Web site. These fact sheets can be found at [www.wlf.louisiana.gov/experience/naturalheritage/coastalzone](http://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/experience/naturalheritage/coastalzone).

The fact sheets were developed in partnership with the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program (BTNEP) and partially funded by the BTNEP Mini-Grants Program (Fact Sheet Cover at right). These fact sheets are designed to provide basic information on animals, plants or natural communities that will aid in identifying sensitive species and their habitats, will serve as a useful tool for educators, and will help guide development of management plans and review of coastal zone projects.



Each two-sided fact sheet contains general information on rare species and natural communities including: state & global rarity ranks, recognition characteristics, photos, range, habitat, LA river basins, threats, and beneficial management practices.

The Louisiana Natural Heritage Program (LNHP) was founded in 1984 with the goal of developing and maintaining a database on rare, threatened and endangered (r/t/e) species of plants and animals and natural communities for Louisiana. In the process of working toward this goal, LNHP has accumulated over 6,000 occurrences of r/t/e species.

Of the total natural elements tracked by LNHP, 30 percent are known to occur in Louisiana's coastal zone. Due to the large number of rare plant and animal species in the Louisiana coastal zone, and also because of the high level of natural and man-made threats associated with the area, LNHP partnered with BTNEP to provide this information for each of the rare species and natural communities along Louisiana's coast.

The Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program was established in 1991 with its primary mission to preserve and restore the 4.2 million acre region lying between the

Atchafalaya Basin and Mississippi Rivers. BTNEP's Mini-Grant Program is just one of the tools it uses to encourage and promote government agency and stakeholder efforts related to restoration and preservation in the estuary system. The 2008 Mini Grant Program will be accepting new applications on or before March 3, 2008.

"Our partnership with BTNEP has helped us develop concise fact sheets that will provide educational material to the public and assist in the conservation of rare, threatened, and endangered species and natural communities in Louisiana's coastal zone," said Gary Lester, LDWF Natural Heritage Program Coordinator.

BTNEP Education Coordinator Susan Testroet-Bergeron added, "These fact sheets are a great tool. BTNEP is pleased to have partnered with the professionals at the department (LDWF). The sheets are beautiful, educational and essential to our understanding of the unique creatures and habitats of coastal estuaries." 🌸

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#### **Previous Newsletter, Dec 2007, Vol. 5, No. 2 of 4**

We included an article "Prescribed Burn Insurance Available to LFA Members" from "Forest & People" Fourth Quarter 2007. We covered Calcareous Plant Communities (Calcareous Forest and Calcareous Prairie) and associated animal species - Loggerhead Shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*). Front page plant photo – Coral or Cherokee Bean, *Erythrina herbacea*.

Photo from the first page is *Arnoglossum ovatum* **Egg-leaf Indian Plantain** taken at Cow Creek Natural Area owned by David and Mary Ann Daigle. This herbaceous plant is a member of the Asteraceae Family. It is recognized as a tall single-stem plant with large alternate leaves that are wavy or have toothed margins and have prominent lateral veins paralleling the midvein. The flat-topped inflorescences or cylindrical rayless heads have bracts (leaf-like structure at the base of the flower) that are often winged. Egg-leaf Indian Plantain occurs in wet longleaf pine flatwoods and savannahs like Cow Creek Natural Area. You can see this magnificent plant flowering in early summer through early fall depending on fire timing. David Daigle and Chris Reid are enjoying the plantain and the other beautiful plant species in the photo below.

