Louisiana Natural Areas Registry Quarterly Newsletter

October 2011

Volume 9 Number 1 of 4

Working with Landowners towards Conservation of Louisiana's Native Habitats

http//www.wlf.louisiana.gov/wildlife/natural-areas-registry-program/

Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries

Natural Areas Update

We are recognizing one new Natural Area this quarter. This addition brings our Natural Areas to 116, capturing 38,109 acres in 36 of 64 parishes. **TUNICA HILLS STATE PRESERVATION AREA** is owned by the Louisiana Office of State Parks and consists of 628 acres in West Feliciana Parish near Tunica Hills Wildlife Management Area. It is composed of a good example of a southern mesophytic hardwood forest and batture pioneer community along the sand bars and margins of the Mississippi River. The state and globally rare Southern Mesophytic Hardwood Forest is the primary natural community on this site. Within Louisiana, this forest type is located only in the northwestern Florida Parishes in an area known as 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 and ten rare animal species that are known to occur in the Tunica Hills and have the potential to be found on this site.

Tunica Hills State Preservation Area

David Daigle 2011 Regional ESAP Winner

David Daigle was recognized as a 2011 regional Environmental Stewardship Award Program (ESAP) winner during the 2011 Cattle Industry Summer Conference in Kissimmee, Florida. David and his wife, Mary Ann, have been Natural Areas Registry members since 2006. They have six Natural Areas registries that consist of two critically imperiled plant communities in Louisiana, western acidic longleaf pine savannah and flatwoods ponds. David is a member of the Forest Stewardship Program and the Louisiana Native Plant Initiative. He manages for red-cockaded woodpeckers and collects native plants for restoration purposes. David has also attained permanent protection for many of his properties through conservation easements and longleaf mitigation banks. Pictured on the second page is their Cow Creek Natural Area where LNHP recently discovered the federally endangered American Chaffseed (*Schwalbea americana*).

Daigle Farms is the Region II ESAP award winner and will compete with five other regional winners for the national ESAP award, which will be announced during the 2012 Cattle Industry Annual Convention and Trade Show in Nashville, Tennessee. The ESAP award is sponsored by Dow AgroSciences; the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation

Service (NRCS); United States Fish and Wildlife; the National Cattlemen's Foundation; and the National Cattlemen's Beef Association. Daigle runs a cow herd in wetland areas classified as critically imperiled habitat by the Louisiana Natural Heritage Program. Through utilizing grazing management and prescribed burning, he not only maintains a productive cattle operation, but also provides habitat for the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker and the American Chaffseed plant. His stewardship practices and cattle genetic selection have allowed him to produce beef with minimum

Mary Ann, Clara, and David Daigle

inputs. According to the Louisiana Grazing Lands Conservation Coalition and USDA NRCS in Louisiana, which jointly nominated Daigle Farms, his conservation practices ensure the sustainability of the ecosystem. Through a dedication to responsible environmental practices and conservation, Daigle has partnered with federal and state agencies to manage natural resources and preserve wildlife habitat. According to a letter of support for Daigle's nomination, Chris Ebel, NRCS rangeland management specialist, said Daigle tries to consider how management decisions affect long term sustainability of the whole system. "To David Daigle, sustainability is simple," Ebel said. "Manage the natural resources so that the system works to produce products that are useful to man. If the manager does this without substantially degrading any of the system components, then you have sustainability. David Daigle continuously goes out of his way to promote conservation and sustainable agriculture.

Original article at Environmental Stewardship web site http://www.environmentalstewardship.org/regionii-daiglefarms.aspx
**NCBA's Region II includes Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee.*

What is Wetland Mitigation Banking?

by Kyle Balkum, LDWF

We've all heard of or done business with community banks, commercial banks, offshore banks or investment banks. We know that these banks essentially serve as a financial middleman, connecting borrowers in need of capitol with lenders who have a surplus of capitol. But what is wetland mitigation banking? And who are the borrowers and lenders?

Before we discuss mitigation banking in more detail, let's define what a mitigation bank is. A **mitigation bank** is a degraded wetland area that has been restored or enhanced. It may also be a unique, rare or difficult-to-replace wetland, in which case it would be preserved. Mitigation banks are permanently set aside to compensate for future wetland impacts resulting from permitted development activities.

There are currently over 80 Army Corps of Engineers approved mitigation banks in Louisiana. These banks contain all types of wetlands (i.e. marsh, bottomland hardwood forest, cypress/tupelo swamp, pine savanna, pine flatwoods) and are located in most hydrologic basins.

Now back to our banking analogy. After the bank sponsor restores the wetland area a certain number of **"credits"** are made available for sale. The number of credits corresponds to the degree of wetland improvement achieved by the sponsor. The wetland credits can be seen as surplus capitol that the sponsor, or lender, has generated. The bank is now open for business!

Now according to the Clean Water Act, a permit applicant who intends to impact wetlands must compensate for such impacts. The most common way is to purchase equivalent wetland credits from a mitigation bank. Thus, to meet regulatory requirements the permit applicant or borrower acquires capitol (i.e. wetland credits) from a lender. The credits acquired by the borrower must be of the same wetland type and located within the same watershed as the wetland

Cow Creek Natural Area
Western Acidic Longleaf Pine Savannah

impacted (this is referred to as "in kind" and "in basin" mitigation).

The price paid for mitigation bank credits is dictated by supply and demand and not by any government agency. It is now likely that an applicant will pay in excess of $10,000 per acre for forested wetland credits and in excess of $50,000 per acre for marsh credits.

Wetlands are valuable for many reasons including recreation, flood peak reduction, hurricane abatement and water quality improvement. They are also home to hundreds of species of wildlife and serve as nursery grounds for fish and shellfish. For these reasons, the Federal government established the longstanding policy goal of **''no net loss''** of wetlands. Wetland mitigation banking is critical in achieving this goal. Mitigation banking, like investment banking, is a for-profit business, but it is also a significant contributor to habitat conservation in Louisiana.

For more information on wetland mitigation banking please contact LDWF's Kyle Balkum at 225-765-2819.

License Still Needed to Hunt Feral Hogs

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) wants to remind citizens that a valid Louisiana hunting license is still required to take outlaw quadrupeds including feral hogs with the new laws that went into effect on August 15, 2011.

Legislation passed during the 2011 Legislative Session, provides additional options for citizens to take outlaw quadrupeds (armadillos, coyotes, feral hogs) and nuisance animals (nutria and beaver).

House Bill 294, signed into law by Governor Bobby Jindal as Act 95, makes it legal beginning August 15, 2011, to take outlaw quadrupeds, nutria and beaver at night from March through August on private property with any legal firearm. Anyone taking part in these activities at night is required to notify the parish sheriff's office 24 hours in advance of any such hunt.

Additionally, House Bill 169, signed into law by Governor Jindal as Act 29, allows the take of nuisance quadrupeds at night using sound suppressors on the firearm(s) utilized, beginning August 15, 2011. Anyone using such a weapon must have in possession a valid permit issued by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. The use of sound suppressed weapons is restricted to the take of outlaw quadrupeds, including coyotes and feral hogs, from March through August on private property.

LDWF is charged with managing and protecting Louisiana's abundant natural resources. For more information, visit us at www.w.f.louisiana.gov on Facebook at www.facebook.com/ldwffb or follow us on Twitter @LDWF.

For more information, contact Adam Einck at aeinck@wlf.la.gov.

Feral Hog Damage On Cooter's Bog

Feral hogs are causing damage to Cooter's Bog Natural Area on Kisatchie National Forest in Vernon Parish. This site consists of a mosaic of western hillside seepage bogs and upland longleaf pine communities. Feral hogs are causing damage by their excessive rooting for invertebrates, tubers, and other subterranean foods. Much of this damage occurs after rain events and leads to erosion, excess soil moisture, and the inability to operate equipment. Changes to the natural water flow patterns and water storage capacity of a bog degrades the natural community composition and structure, and ultimately causes destruction of this habitat type.

Feral hogs directly compete with other wildlife for resources, especially hard and soft mast. Additionally, feral hogs are plagued by a multitude of diseases that can affect humans, commercial swine operations, and wildlife.

References:

Coping with Feral Hogs. Michael Perot with Landowners for Wildlife. LDWF. www.wlf.louisiana.gov

Western Hillside Seepage Bogs Fact Sheet at web site http://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/wildlife/natural-communities-fact-sheets

Field Office Technical Guides (FOTGs)

United States Department of Agriculture offers resources to help you with the management of your property. A technical guide that specifically applies to individual geographic areas was developed for the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). These documents are referred to as Field Office Technical Guides (FOTGs) and are used as primary scientific references that contain technical information about the conservation of soil, water, air and related plant and animal resources. FOTGs are available at local United States Department of Agriculture Service Centers and on line at http://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/treemenuFS.aspx.

FOTG's have Five Sections.

Section I General References: General state maps, descriptions of Major Land Resource Areas, watershed information, links to NRCS reference manuals and handbooks, conservation practice costs, agricultural laws and regulations, cultural resources, and information about protected plant and animal species.

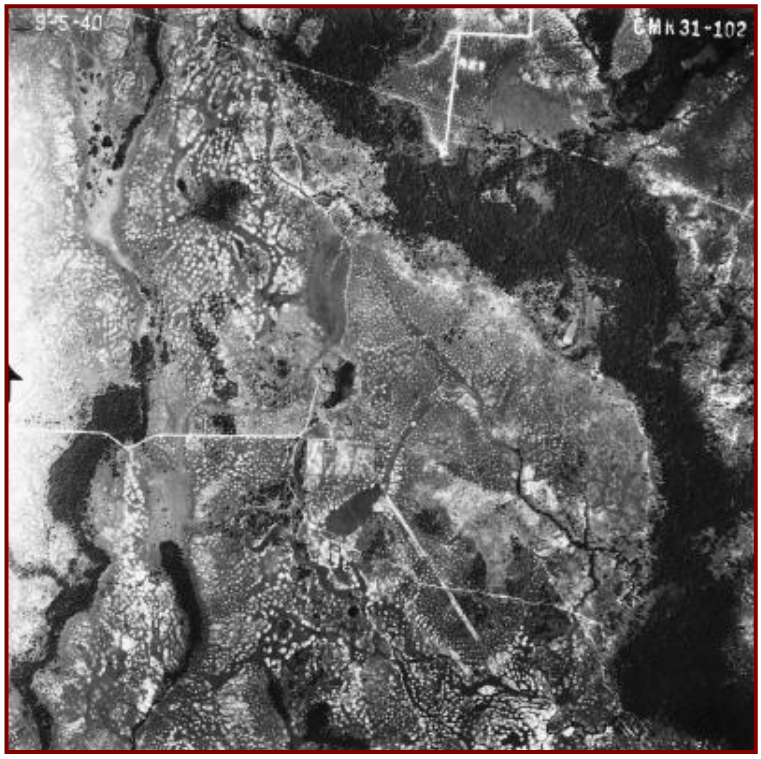
Section II Natural Resources Information: Detailed information about soil, water, air, plant, and animal resources.

Section III Conservation Management Systems: NRCS Quality Criteria that establishes standards for resource conditions that help provide sustained use.

Section IV Practice Standards and Specifications: NRCS Conservation Practices are detailed requirements for installing the practice in the state.

Section V Conservation Effects: Background information on how Conservation Practices affect each identified resource concerns in the state.

The mystery plant on the front page is an **American chaffseed (*Schwalbea americana*)**. It is a member of the snapdragon family (Scrophulariacea). American Chaffseed is a federally endangered plant that historically occurred in Allen, Beauregard, Calcasieu, and Rapides Parishes. Today, it occurs only Allen and Beauregard Parishes. American Chaffseed is one of only three federally endangered plants in Louisiana. Previous year's fruiting stems are often persistent as shown in the picture above. The yellow-flowered plant in the background is narrowleaf silkgrass (*Pityopsis graminifolia*), which is a characteristic associate. They flower from April through June and are purplish-yellow. Stems are hairy and the plant can grow up to 2 feet tall without branching. However, plants tend to be short and inconspicuous without fire. Their leaves have three prominent veins and occur alternately on the stem while gradually getting smaller up the stem. They prefer full sun to light shade under a sparse pine canopy. The only extant occurrence in Louisiana is on pimple mounds with well-drained sandy soil imbedded in flat, poorly drained longleaf pine flatwoods savannah, but may possibly occur in hilly upland longleaf pine country as well. American chaffseed is extremely fire-dependant and requires growing season (May and June) prescribed burns for maximum control of woody plants. Common plant associates include longleaf pine (*Pinus palustris*), blackjack oak (*Quercus marilandica*), narrowleaf silkgrass (*Pityopsis graminifolia*), and hair-awn muhly grass (Muhlenbergia expansa).



Pimple mounds are low, rudely circular or elliptical dome-like mounds that are composed of loamy sand that range from 10 feet to 100 feet in diameter and can be up to two feet in height. At bottom left is an aerial photograph of pimple mounds (white dots) within southern Beauregard and northern Calcasieu parishes about five miles southeast of De Quincy, Louisiana. (Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service photography taken September 5, 1940)

References:

Schwalbea americana – American chaffseed. Rare Plants of Louisiana. Louisiana Dept of Wildlife & Fisheries at http://www.lgs.lsu.edu/deploy/uploads/6geofacts.pdf

Louisiana GeoFacts. Feb 2001. Public Information Series No. 6. http://www.lgs.lsu.edu/deploy/uploads/6geofacts.pdf

LOUISIANA NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM (LNHP)
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries
2000 Quail Drive; P.O. Box 98000
Baton Rouge, LA 70898-9000

AMITY BASS – Biologist Manager/Community Ecologist
(225) 765-2975, abass@wlf.la.gov

JEFF BOUNDY – Herpetologist
(225) 765-2815, jboundy@wlf.la.gov

DALE BREITHAUPT – Student Worker
debreithaupht@wlf.la.gov

BLAIN CERAME – Technician
bcerame@wlf.la.gov

CONNIE DUNN - Administrative Assistant
(225) 765-2811, cdunn@wlf.la.gov

BEAU GREGORY – Zoologist
(225) 765-2820, bgregory@wlf.la.gov

JUDY JONES - Natural Areas Registry Coordinator
(225) 765-2822, jjones@wlf.la.gov

KERI LANDRY - Field Biologist
(225) 765-2809, klandry@wlf.la.gov

NICOLE LORENZ - Data Manager
(225) 765-2643, nlorenz@wlf.la.gov

TRACY MANCUSO - Administrative Program Specialist
(225) 765-2812, tmancuso@wlf.la.gov

CAROLYN MICHON - Assistant Data Manager
(225) 765-2357, cmichon@wlf.la.gov

CHRIS REID – Botanist
(225) 765-2828, creid@wlf.la.gov

MICHAEL SEYMOUR - Nongame Avian Biologist
(225) 763-3554, mseymour@wlf.la.gov

RANDY WIGGINS – Field Biologist
(225) 765-2823, rwiggins@wlf.la.gov

PREVIOUS NEWSLETTER, JUNE 2011, VOL. 8, NO. 4 OF 4. An article focused on beneficial conservation programs for pollinators. The mystery photo included a Black Swallowtail (*Papilio polyxenes*) and Abbeville Red Iris (*Iris nelsonii*).