

Natural Communities of Louisiana



Live Oak Natural Levee Forest

Rarity Rank: S1S2/G2

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--------|-----------|---|------|---|--------|
| State | | | | | |
| Global | | | | | |
| | imperiled | | rare | | secure |

Synonyms: Natural Levee Forest, Frontland Forest

Ecological Systems:

CES203.512 Lower Mississippi River Bottomland and Floodplain Forest

General Description:

- Occurs principally in southeastern Louisiana on natural levees or frontlands, and on “islands” within marshes and swamps
- Similar in some respects to coastal live oak-hackberry forest in that both develop on natural ridges in the coastal zone and overstory dominants are comparable, however natural levee forests have a greater species richness and diversity
- Composed primarily of sandy loams and clays, these ridges range from 4 to 6 feet above sea level
- Soil pH is circumneutral (6.6 – 7.0), and organic matter content is high
- Important wildlife habitat and serves as vital resting habitat for trans-gulf-migratory birds



Plant Community Associates

Common overstory tree species include:

Quercus virginiana (live oak)
Ulmus americana (American elm)
Acer rubrum (red maple)
Quercus laurifolia (laurel oak)
Liquidambar styraciflua (sweetgum)

Quercus nigra (water oak)
Celtis laevigata (hackberry)
Fraxinus pennsylvanica (green ash)
Gleditsia triacanthos (honey locust)
Acer negundo (box-elder)

Common midstory & understory species include:

Crataegus viridis (green hawthorn)
Morus rubra (red mulberry)
Cornus foemina (swamp dogwood)
Persea borbonia (red bay)

Diospyros virginiana (persimmon)
Sabal minor (dwarf palmetto)
Morella cerifera (wax myrtle)
Viburnum dentatum (arrowwood)

Common herbaceous layer species include:

Tradescantia spp. (spiderworts)
Solidago sempervirens (seaside goldenrod)
Sanicula canadensis (snakeroot)

Arisaema dracontium (green dragon)
Samolus verlandieri (water-pimpernel)
Nemophylla aphylla (baby blue eyes)

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Common herbaceous layer species continued:

Geum canadensis (geum)
Eupatorium spp. (thoroughworts)
Polygonum virginica (jumpseed)
Packera glabella (= *Senecio glabellus*) (yellow-top)
Mikania scandens (climbing hempvine)
Cocculus carolinianum (Carolina moonseed)
Berchemia scandens (rattan vine)
Thelypteris spp. (marsh ferns)

Common epiphytes include:

Tillandsia usneoides (Spanish moss)
Polypodium polypodioides (resurrection fern)

Federally-listed plant & animal species:

Ursus americanus luteolus (Louisiana black bear)

Hydrocotyle spp. (penny-worts)
Polygonum spp. (smartweeds)
Panicum spp. (panic grasses)
Oplismenus hirtellus (basket grass)
Campsis radicans (trumpet creeper)
Toxicodendron radicans (poison ivy)
Smilax rotundifolia (greenbrier)

Phoradendron tomentosum (mistle-toe)

Threatened; G5T2; S2

Range:

Occur in the Deltaic Plain of extreme southeastern Louisiana parishes from Orleans and St. Bernard Parishes westward to St. Mary Parish. Of the original 500,000 to 1,000,000 acres in Louisiana, currently only 1-5 % of presettlement extent remains.

LA River Basins:

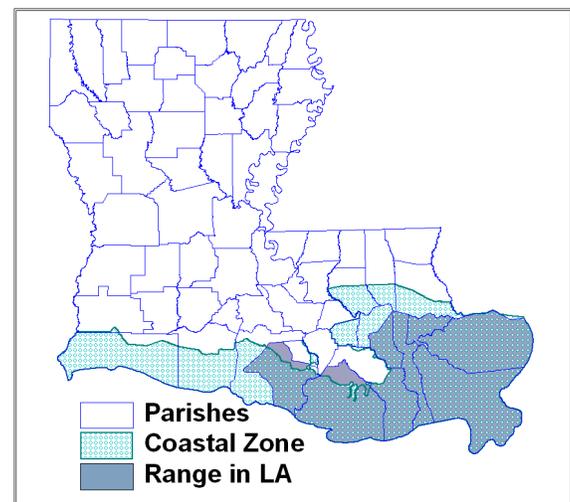
Pontchartrain, Mississippi, Barataria, Terrebonne, Atchafalaya, Vermilion-Teche

Threats:

- Residential development
- Roads and utility construction
- Coastal erosion and saltwater intrusion
- Invasive and exotic species
- Overgrazing which damages understory vegetation and inhibits natural stand regeneration

Beneficial Management Practices:

- Prevent conversion of existing natural forests to other land uses
- Remove any invasive exotic plant species with use of spot herbicides or mechanical means
- Prohibit livestock grazing



Prothonotary warbler (*Protonotaria citrea*) is one of the migratory bird species that utilize coastal natural levee live oak forests.

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For more information, please visit our Web pages at

www.wlf.la.gov/wildlife/louisiana-natural-heritage-program or 225-765-2811

www.BTNEP.org or 1-800-259-0869