

SCENIC RIVERS REVIEW

Louisiana Department of Wildlife & Fisheries, 2000 Quail Drive, Baton Rouge, LA 70808
www.wlf.louisiana.gov/scenic-rivers

Stream Spotlight:

Bayou LaCombe

By Kyle F. Balkum

Bayou Lacombe has been a Louisiana designated Natural and Scenic River since 1985. It slowly flows in a southerly direction through St. Tammany Parish draining an area of approximately 90 square miles. Before emptying into Lake Pontchartrain it meanders more than 25 miles through managed pine forests, pine flatwoods, mixed pine hardwood forests, cypress swamps and brackish marsh.



Bayou LaCombe, St. Tammany Parish

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This February, Chris Davis and I surveyed Bayou LaCombe with the aid of a 14' jon boat. After launching from the Main Street Boat Launch in Lacombe, we were able to navigate 14 miles of Bayou LaCombe from as far north as Krentel Road to the mouth of the bayou at Lake Pontchartrain. Although out of reach of our jon boat, one could enjoy even more of the wilderness and seclusion of the bayou's headwaters in a canoe or kayak (rental kayaks are available at a shop near the Main Street launch).



Bayou LaCombe below I-12 (Credit: Chris Davis)

Wildlife viewing was certainly a highlight of our trip. We observed wood ducks flushing into adjacent forests, brown pelicans cruising low over open marsh, great blue herons stalking the shallow shorelines or resting on dead tree perches,

Bayou LaCombe from page 1

anhingas drying their plumage, and red-tailed hawks scanning the understory below for prey. We were excited to watch a fish-eating Osprey perched beside its nest high atop a dead cypress tree that stood alone in the marsh. Of course, we also found several species of turtles and even an occasional water snake basking on fallen trees.



Osprey flying over Bayou LaCombe (Credit: Chris Davis)

Upstream of where the Tammany Trace trail crosses Bayou LaCombe it is common to see grand cypress trees towering over the bayou. Downstream of the trail, where the adjacent habitat transitions from forest to brackish marsh, scattered dead cypress remain along the bank, an indication that the bayou experienced less tidal exchange in the distant past.

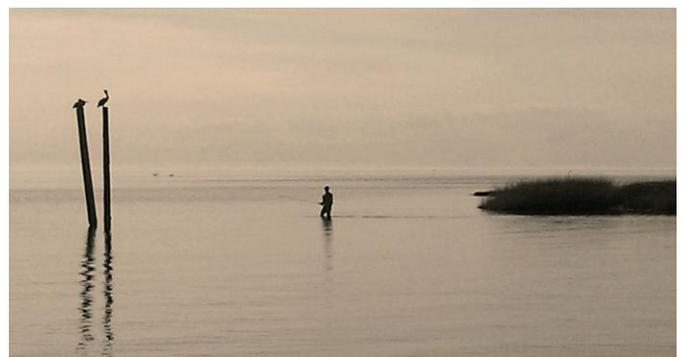
We were told that crabbing and fishing for bass, crappie, bream and croakers are popular with locals. Our local biologists confirmed that bass are indeed plentiful in the bayou. On this particular day in February, we idled past several fishermen hoping to land a trophy catch. Locals also indicated that in fall trout, redfish and flounder are taken near the mouth of the bayou. If you're looking to drop a line in the water without launching a boat, check out the public fishing pier off of Hwy 434 that provides ample room for anglers.



Bayou LaCombe from Hwy 190 (Credit: Gary Vitrano)

The final 4 miles of the bayou flows through Big Branch Marsh National Wildlife Refuge. The refuge not only protects and manages the valuable wetlands through which the bayou flows, but they also enhance the public's recreational opportunities by maintaining a public launch off of Hwy 434.

Our trip down Bayou LaCombe was scenic and peaceful. Even the more developed areas, like the three mile long stretch between Hwy 190 and the refuge boundary, are aesthetically pleasing, albeit lacking in wilderness quality or a sense of seclusion. We wholeheartedly recommend boating, canoeing, birding, fishing, wildlife observation, photography and just plain relaxing on scenic Bayou LaCombe.



Mouth of Bayou LaCombe (Credit: Shannon Villemarette)

If you have enjoyed time on a Scenic River and want to share your experience, please submit your story and pictures to us and it may be included in future issues of this newsletter.

Scenic Rivers Investigations

This winter the Scenic Rivers Program investigated alleged Scenic Rivers Act violations on the following streams:

- **Bayou Manchac**, Ascension Parish – reported clear cut
- **Comite River**, East Baton Rouge Parish – unpermitted gravel pit
- **Bayou Mancahc**, Ascension Parish – unpermitted discharge
- **Tangipahoa River**, Tangipahoa Parish – litter violation
- **Bayou Manchac**, East Baton Rouge Parish – unpermitted discharge
- **Bayou Manchac**, Ascension Parish – unpermitted bank stabilization
- **Bayou Cocodrie**, Evangeline Parish – unpermitted bank clearing
- **Bogue Chitto River**, Washington Parish – unpermitted bank stabilization

Webpage Improvements

In recent months we have significantly improved the content of the Scenic Rivers webpage. Improvements include:

- Ability of users to submit electronic comments
- Posting of permit applications to solicit public comments
- An interactive map displaying past permitted activities
- Best Management Practices (BMPs) for certain development activities.

We will continue to add additional content in the coming months. For instance, we intend to add a subscription feature that will allow users to sign-up to receive Scenic Rivers news. We also plan to add improved Scenic Rivers maps, frequently asked questions (FAQs) and the ability to download revised Management Plans and newsletters. So be

sure to visit us online at:

www.wlf.louisiana.gov/scenic-rivers



Scenic Rivers webpage

Upcoming Events

Public Hearings for the Bayou Teche Nomination as a Historic and Scenic River:

- March 22, 2013, 6:30 pm at the St. Mary Parish Library in Baldwin
- March 25, 2013, 6:30 pm at the Iberia Parish Library (Main Branch) in New Iberia
- March 26, 2013, 6:30 pm at the Arnaudville Civic Center in Arnaudville.

The public is invited to attend and provide comments to the Department.

Scenic Rivers Program Staff

Keith Cascio, Scenic Rivers Coordinator

kcascio@wlf.la.gov

Chris Davis, Senior Biologist

rcdavis@wlf.la.gov

Kyle F. Balkum, Biologist Program Manager

kbalkum@wlf.la.gov

Ian MacKinnon, Biologist

imackinnon@wlf.la.gov