



# LEEC

LOUISIANA ENVIRONMENTAL  
EDUCATION COMMISSION

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*A Weekly Compilation of Environmental Education News from Across Louisiana*

## LEEC NEWS

### RESTORATION, RENEWAL AND HOPE

On December 11, 2013, I had the good fortune to witness the arrival of 10 juvenile whooping cranes to their new home in southwestern Louisiana. This was the fourth group of young cranes to be reintroduced to their historical habitat since the effort to restore Louisiana's whooping crane population began in 2010.

Adult whooping cranes are large, beautiful birds — standing about 5 feet tall when fully mature, with snowy white plumage all over and a distinctive red cap outlined in black. These 6-month-old juvenile birds, however, were still mottled in color and, like the young of many species (including our own), a bit gawky. But much like our own offspring, despite their testy nature and ungraceful appearance, there is something endearing about these awkward youngsters. Even among the veteran biologists who've spent entire careers managing our wildlife populations, there was palpable excitement, hopefulness, and more than a little joy at seeing them installed in their temporary habitat in the expansive marsh of White Lake Wildlife Refuge.

Excitement and hopefulness came with good reason too, for among the wildlife professionals there were individuals who have been part of the decades-long and immensely successful restoration of wild turkeys, white-tailed deer, alligators and brown pelicans — and the more recent and ongoing efforts to restore Louisiana black bears — to their native habitats around the state.



Young cranes get accustomed to their temporary home while a crane-suited biologist looks on.

Cranes are delivered in boxes to reduce stress during travel.



I watched as the biologists received the birds — flown from a federal research and incubation facility, and tucked individually into large cardboard boxes for transport aboard the delivery aircraft — and transferred them to the truck and trailer that would take them to White Lake. There, we boarded boats that took us and the birds to a temporary enclosure, separated from potential predators by thick netting. The birds will adjust to their new surroundings there, aided by biologists disguised in shapeless white suits with crane-puppet hands, operating soundlessly to discourage imprinting on humans. Then finally, when deemed fit to survive alone, they'll be released into the marsh to thrive and reproduce.

Throughout the process, it was only natural for me to

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reflect on our goals and missions, as the Louisiana Environmental Education Commission, and the larger environmental education community we serve.

I spent most of my career informing the public about the programs and activities going on in the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries. This fall, after a brief time away from the LDWF, I took my current position, Assistant Environmental Education Coordinator, in which I aid the Louisiana Environmental Education Commission with fulfilling its vision.



A young crane plucks a crawfish from the water.

In many ways what I do now is similar to what I did before, but with an important difference: the emphasis now is on education.

Most of you, the readers of this newsletter, are

educators, and many of you work directly with young people every day. Often lost in the day-to-day duties of lesson plans and testing schedules is the excitement and hopefulness that lies at the heart of your chosen profession, the desire you have to shape the lives of young people and guide them to success.

In my brief tenure with the LEEC I have had the pleasure to work with groups of youngsters from the ages of 9 to 18 while they learned the basics of watershed ecology and the effects of marine debris on our coast. I've seen artwork, and read essays and poetry by students extolling the virtues of Louisiana's natural places, and I've met many teachers responsible for instilling a sense of wonder at the marvels of our natural world and the responsibility we have to protect it.

I have great hope that the lessons we've learned over the past century, lessons about preserving our natural places and judiciously using the resources with which our environment provides us, have taken root and will flourish in the generation of young people now in our care.

Like that small cohort of cranes discovering their ancestral wetlands, we trust that the instruction we provide will prosper in them, ensuring enjoyment of our natural world for generations to come.

*Happy New Year,  
Thomas Gresham  
Assistant Environmental Education Coordinator  
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries*

## EDUCATION NEWS

### **AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS ISSUES POLICY STATEMENT ON CHILDREN AND MEDIA**

From TV to smart phones to social media, the lives of U.S. children and families are dominated by 24/7 media exposure. Despite this, many children and teens have few rules around their media use.

Excessive media use has been associated with obesity, lack of sleep, school problems, aggression and other behavior issues. A recent study shows that the average 8- to 10-year-old spends nearly 8 hours a day with different media, and older children and teens spend more than 11 hours per day. About 75 percent of 12- to 17-year-olds own cell phones, and nearly all teenagers use text messaging.

#### **WHAT'S GOING ON?**

Is something exciting happening in environmental education that we haven't covered? Do you have a program or project that you'd like to share? Let us know. Email Thomas Gresham at [tgresham@wlf.la.gov](mailto:tgresham@wlf.la.gov) or call 225-765-0124.

Find out more at on the Pediatrics journal website at <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/132/5/958.full> .

## RESOURCES

### **BIOMIMICRY EDUCATION NETWORK**

The Biomimicry Education Network (BEN) is a global community of teachers who are integrating biomimicry into K-12 classrooms, university courses, and informal learning environments of all kinds. This website and blog support BEN members by providing curriculum and resource downloads, a platform to connect with colleagues, and news and information on the cutting edge of biomimicry thinking and education. Whether you work with youth, university, or informal student groups, you'll find a host of resources on this site to help you bring biomimicry into your teaching practice. See <http://ben.biomimicry.net> .

### **EVEREST EDUCATION EXPEDITION**

In Spring 2012, a team of athletes and scientists embarked upon an historic expedition to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the first successful American ascent of Mount Everest. Concurrently, geologists from Montana State University conducted extensive scientific work on the mountain and shared the science of the Himalaya with students and the public.

Discover Everest facts, a multimedia library, teacher resources and more at <http://www.montana.edu/everest/index.htm>

### **SCIENCE SCENE, FREE SCIENCE EDUCATION MAGAZINE**

Science Scene is a free quarterly magazine designed to inspire science educators to move students beyond the book and into the field. Each quarterly issue features relevant environmental topics, and is presented in a format that expresses a strong scientific method, interwoven with STEM and Next Generation Science Standards foundations.

Sign up at <http://www.forestry-suppliers.com/edu/ScienceSceneforEducators.htm> .

### **BIG CATS EDUCATION**

The National Geographic Education site features an extensive collection of information about big cat ecology, including case studies, a video library, K-12 activities and teaching resources. Find out more at <http://education.nationalgeographic.com/education/collections/big-cats> .



Photo by Paul Mannix, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

## GRANTS

### **CAPTAIN PLANET FOUNDATION GRANTS AVAILABLE**

The Captain Planet Foundation awards grants according to its mission: To give the next generation of environmental stewards an active understanding and love for the natural world in which they live. Our unique program of funding and supporting hands-on environmental projects is designed to encourage innovative initiatives that inspire and empower children and youth around the world as they work individually and collectively creating environmental solutions in their homes, schools and communities.

To learn more or apply, visit <http://captainplanetfoundation.org/apply-for-grants/>

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