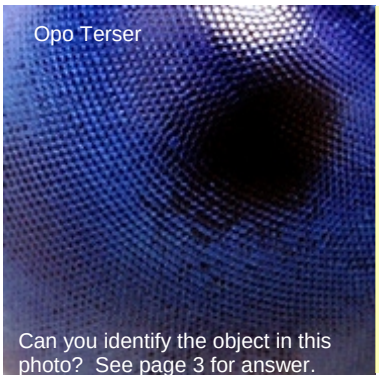
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Can you identify the object in this photo? See page 3 for answer.

LOUISIANA NATURAL AREAS REGISTRY

Quarterly Newsletter

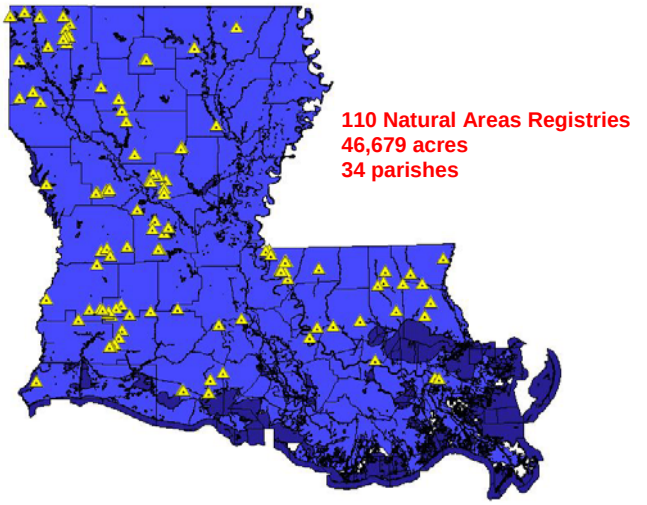
June 2009 Volume 6 Number 4 of 4

Working with landowners towards conservation of Louisiana's ecologically sensitive lands

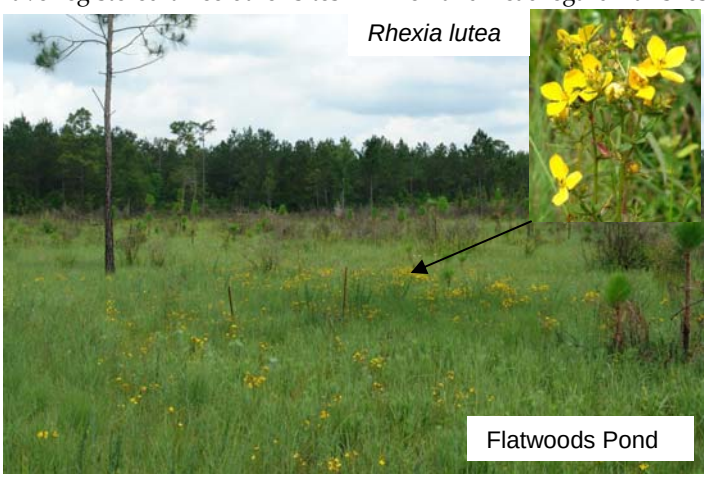
http//www.Louisiana.gov/experience/natural heritage/naturalareasregistry/

Natural Areas Update

New Registries: We have recognized two new landowners this quarter for registering their ecologically significant lands with the Natural Areas Registry Program that includes Wolf Creek and John G. "Jack" Smith Natural Areas. This brings our total number of registries to 110 for 46,689 acres being protected in 34 parishes by private landowners and publicly- owned agencies.



David and Mary Ann Daigle registered **Wolf Creek Natural Area** in Allen Parish that includes a good example of two Louisiana critically imperiled plant communities, Western Acidic Longleaf Pine Savannah and Flatwoods Pond. David and Mary have permanently protected the site as a mitigation bank and with a Clear Creek Servitude. They also recently registered the site with the Safe Harbor Program for red-cockaded woodpeckers. Four nesting box inserts have been installed on the site. The Daigles have registered three other sites in Allen and Beauregard Parishes



that are also longleaf pine communities. Western Acidic Longleaf Pine Savannahs are floristically rich, herb-dominated wetlands that are naturally sparsely stocked with PINUS PALUSTRIS (longleaf pine). Wet savannahs occupy the poorly drained and seasonally saturated/flooded depressional areas and low flats, while the non-wetland flatwoods occupy the better drained slight rises, low ridges and "pimple mounds" (only southwest Louisiana). Herbaceous vegetation of pine savannahs is very diverse. They are dominated by graminoids and are similar to vegetation that occurs on hillside bogs. Various additional species belonging to the lily family, sunflower family, and orchid family are prominent. Club-mosses and sphagnum moss are often abundant. Flatwoods Ponds are relatively small, natural depressional wetlands embedded within current or historic longleaf pine flatwoods / savannahs of western Louisiana. They are believed to occupy swales and depressions remaining from ancient Pleistocene stream channels, and are often linear in shape, although circular and elliptic ponds are common. Generally treeless, these ponds are vegetated by a variety of obligate and facultative wetland herbaceous species, mainly tall sedges and grasses. Historically, fire maintained this longleaf plant community by killing encroaching shrubs and trees and rejuvenating the herbaceous ground cover.

Bernard Smith registered **John G. "Jack" Smith Natural Area** Bienville Parish that includes 309 acres of one state plant community type, the state and globally rare Shortleaf Pine/Oak-Hickory Forest. Also on the site are managed loblolly pine forests interspersed with rows of hardwoods, and ponds where migrating waterfowl take refuge. John G. "Jack" Smith Natural Area is named after the owner's great-grandfather who originally bought and protected this important ecological site. Patti Faulkner is showing an interesting sedge in this photos that only grows on wood called Cypress-knee sedge (*Carex decomposita*). It occurs on baldcypress (*Taxocium distichum*) in one of the ponds . A nice example of a small stream forest occurs on a 40-acre site that is north of Kepler Creek Lake. Shortleaf Pine/Oak-Hickory Forest was the most prevalent community on the landscape in the Upper

West Gulf Coastal plain. However, only 5 to 10 percent is thought to remain today and prescribed fire is an important tool to maintain the pine component. Louisiana Pine Snake (*Pituophis ruthveni*), a species of conservation concern may be present on the area because a large percentage of the area is inhabited with Baird's pocket gophers (*Geomys breviceps*), a major food source of these pine snakes. Baird's pocket gophers create the burrow systems in sandy well-drained soils where the pine snakes are most frequently found.

Visits to Natural Areas: Every year we visit those landowners and their Natural Areas who have requested it per comments from our annual survey questionnaire. We have been very busy this spring and early summer trying to do just that. So far, we have been able to visit 22 Natural Areas in 12 parishes. Patti Faulkner, Chris Reid, and I really appreciate the time taken out by Natural Areas Registry landowners who are able to walk through their sites with us and share their history, successes, and management needs. It is always a pleasure to visit landowners and give assistance where needed.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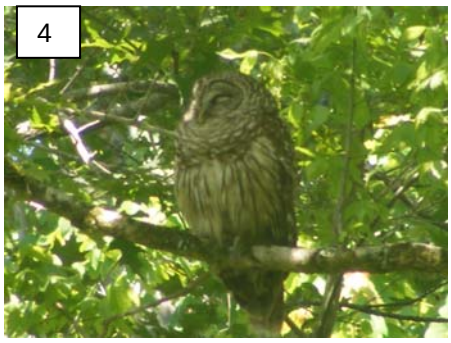
We would like to share some interesting sites with you that we have seen. Indigobush (*Amorpha fruticosa* - 1) seen on Copenhagen Natural Area, Calcareous Forest, in Caldwell Parish. An armadillo (2) rises up on its hind legs to check Judy Jones out just in time to get his picture taken in a bottomland hardwood forest of Woodland Trail and Park Bird Sanctuary Natural Area in Plaquemines Parish. Hunter McNeely (3) shows off his oak tree that looks like a hand with 5 fingers pointing straight up on his McNeely Hardwood Slope Natural Area in Grant Parish. A barred owl (4) roosts along a small water channel in the bottomland hardwood forests on Gray's Delacroix Hardwood Preserve in Orleans Parish.

3

Curt Sorrells (5) shows off one of his bigleaf magnolia flowers (*Magnolia macrophylla*) on his hardwood slope forest along Bogue Chitto River in Washington Parish in early April. Golden tickseed (*Coreopsis tinctoria* – 6) blooming in the saline prairie of Dickson Nature Preserve Natural Area in Desoto Parish during May. Waterfowl Rookery (7) with Roseatte spoonbills, snowy egrets, great egrets, and cattle egrets on ponds in may at Live Oak Gardens Natural Area in Iberville Parish. ♣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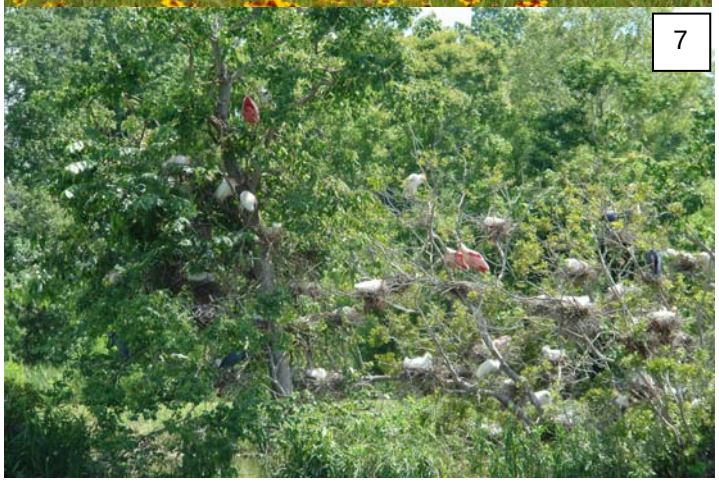
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Research Project Update
Insect Assemblages of Rare Saline Prairies

For the past year, graduate student, Mindy Mayon has been collecting insects on the saline prairies of the Fort & Weyerhaeuser Saline Prairies Natural Areas. Mindy and her advisor, Dr. Janice Bossart of SE Louisiana University in Hammond, installed pitfall traps and flight-intercept traps (Mindy and trap shown above) along several transects within three saline prairie complexes (North, Middle and South prairies). The transects were set up so that various microhabitats within the natural area sites would be sampled including: forest, forest-prairie transition zone, saline prairie, and salt slicks. Processing of samples from the pitfall traps and flight-intercept traps is ongoing in cooperation with the Louisiana State Arthropod Museum. An estimated 7,000 to 9,000 arthropod specimens were collected in total. Approximately 30% of the eight sampling collections have been processed. Preliminary data so far have revealed 166 species collected from 50 families and 11 orders with the large majority being Coleoptera (beetles). Most specimens are from one of three families, Staphylinidae, Scarabaeidae, and Carabaidae with more scarabs having been collected. Numerous specimens of the scarab beetle, *Ataenius robustus*, have been collected from the prairie sites. **These specimens are the first recorded in the Louisiana State Arthopod Museum collection and may be the first of this species found in Louisiana.** Photo of scarab beetle below, Ataenius robustus Horn, 1871, that is approximately 0.157 inches long.

On another interesting note, the preliminary data indicate that arthropod species diversity was lowest on the prairies surrounded by managed pine plantation (North complex), and highest on the prairies within the more natural forest site (South complex) on the Fort Natural Area. Although fewer specimens were collected on the South prairie (Fort Natural Area), it actually had the higher numbers of different types of species collected.

Dr. Bossart and Ms. Mayon recently reported their initial findings at three meetings: in poster form at the Louisiana Academy of Sciences meeting in February, 2009 at SE University; as an oral presentation at the Entomological Society of America Southeastern Branch meeting in Montgomery, AL (March, 2009); and as an oral presentation for the LA Dept. of Wildlife & Fisheries in Baton Rouge (May 2009).

Photo from the front page is a closeup of an eye of the male **Blue-ringed Dancer (*Argia sedula*)**, a damselfly in the family Coenagrionidae of the Order Odonata for Dragonflies and Damselflies. Blue-ringed Dancer adults can be seen from April 17 through September 25 at stream sites in eastern Louisiana. Males are usually more brightly colored than the females, which tend to be grayish or greenish. The female lays her eggs in water while the male is still grasping her by the neck. Using her egg-laying apparatus, she makes slits in the stems of aquatic plants and inserts small batches of eggs. The aquatic nymphs climb onto vegetation as they hunt for food. Nymphs are slender, with three narrow gill filaments. Damselflies usually sit and wait for suitable prey and are not strong fliers like dragonflies. The Odonata are known to be ancient insects and the earliest fossils discovered in Europe were formed in sediments approximately 325 million years ago.

References:

Bill Mauffray, October 27 1997. Bulletin of American Odona=I=ology, Volume 5 Number 1, The Dragonflies and Damselflies (Odonata) of Louisiana. Page 8 of Pp 30 at www.odonatacentral.org/index.php/Issue Action.getFile/issue_id/122/volume_id/33

USGS Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center at http://www.npwrc.usgs.gov/resource/distr/insects/dfly/la/toc.htm

Introduction to the Odonata, Dragonflies and Damselflies at http://www.ucmp.berkeley.edu/arthropoda/uniramia/odonatoida.html ♣

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Newsletter editor / publisher

Previous Newsletter, March 2009, Vol. 6, No 3 of 4.
We covered the Bottomland Hardwood Forest plant community, Bronze frog, and Eastern Spotted Skunk.

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