



Louisiana Natural Resource News

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Newsletter of the Louisiana Association of Professional Biologists Louisiana Chapter of The Wildlife Society

Wildlife Response to Mississippi River Flood

Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries staff from around the state worked throughout the month of May in response to activities associated with the high water levels of the Mississippi River. Levee systems were tested throughout the state as the river rose to record levels.

Office of Wildlife staff activities included monitoring of flood conditions and identifying areas where conflicts could occur as animals began to leave flood impacted areas. This began to happen as early as late April in areas in the northern portions of the state, as deer began to exit batture areas. Conflicts there were limited to crop depredation, deer crossing over the mainline levee into residential areas, and elevated vehicle collisions in places.

In early May, it became evident this event would necessitate the opening of the Morganza Spillway for the first time in over 30 years. Given the vast acreage of the Atchafalaya Basin and the absence of flooding of this scale for many years, staff were assigned to assist with monitoring flood impacts, identify areas where animals began to stage, and prepare for and address any conflicts that could occur as wildlife evacuated the basin at these points.

The manner in which wildlife impacted by the flood left the interior of the basin could be characterized as "orderly," for the most part. Among the most important issues that were addressed were slowing traffic on US 190 and I-10 to a safer rate of speed as flood waters from the spillway reached these areas (to minimize wildlife collisions), and attempts to remove Louisiana black bears from a railroad to prevent collision with rail traffic.

Efforts have begun to attempt to quantify the effects of this flood event on native wildlife populations. It will no doubt be the focus of many in our profession, and an item of interest to many more for the foreseeable future.



Deer in the rising waters of the Atchafalaya Basin.



Alive and well, but exhausted from the swim, a whitetail deer content to hide in short vegetation.



Two deer survey the high ground of the foot of a protection levee.

LAPB Past President Named Professional Conservationist of the Year**www.lawildlifefed.org**

Michael Carloss, Director of Coastal and Non-game Resources Division of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) was awarded the honor of Professional Conservationist of the Year at the Louisiana Wildlife Federation's 2011 Annual Convention. Accomplishments leading to this honor included serving as a lead agency representative and coordinator of LDWF's response to the Gulf Oil Spill.

Mike and his staff's duties included early response coordination, initial prioritization of important wildlife areas for protection, establishment of protocol for clean-up efforts in and around colonial nesting waterbird colonies, and he was involved in the capture, rescue, and subsequent release of many impacted wildlife. Mike continues to be involved with recovery and restoration plans associated with areas impacted by this disaster.

He has made a significant contribution to Coastal Operations of the Office of Wildlife, but continues to work with other divisions of LDWF and partner agencies to insure that protection and restoration is moving forward in these critical habitats.

Congratulations to Mike on receiving this honor, as well as being named Office of Wildlife Employee of the Year for Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries.



The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) is pleased to announce the "Support Endangered Species" Louisiana license plate that will be made available for purchase through the Louisiana Office of Motor Vehicles. The plate features a Whooping crane in a Louisiana marsh scene.

Interested individuals may contact Carrie Salyers at csalyers@wlf.la.gov.



Mike Carloss (Center) poses with Sec. Robert Barham (LDWF, Left) and Craig Thompson (Right) Chairman of National Wildlife Federation



LAPB Fall Symposium Dates Set

Dates for the 2011 LAPB Fall Symposium have been set for August 11 and 12. Once again we will be meeting at the NOAA Estuarine Habitats and Coastal Fisheries center in Lafayette. Oral presentations on recent natural resources research relevant to Louisiana will be given by university students from across the state on Thursday morning and continue through Thursday afternoon. These presentations will be 15 to 20 minutes in length, depending on the number of abstracts received. The LAPB Fall Business Meeting will be held August 11 at the conclusion of the day's speakers.

Membership should be reminded that LAPB honors outstanding publications in Wildlife, Fisheries, General Conservation, and Popular categories. Eligible publications must have been published in 2010 or 2011 and at least one author must be an LAPB member. Recipients will be announced at the LAPB Fall Symposium. Deadline for submission is 20 July 2011, and should be sent to Kim Tolson at tolson@ulm.edu.

Thursday night is the organization's social and dinner that is highlighted by the presentation of student and publication awards.

Friday morning begins with poster presentations from university students and professional biologists. Many members of LAPB are engaged in research and professional development. We encourage you to participate with a poster presentation on Friday morning. All posters should be no larger than 42" x 42". Boards for mounting will be provided. We would like for all posters to be displayed on Thursday with the dedicated poster session and judging to take place on Friday morning.

A special **Focus Session** will follow the poster session on Friday morning. The special session will focus on **Restoration Ecology in Louisiana** and should be of interest to all attendees as it covers both terrestrial and aquatic habitats and recent advances within the field of natural resource conservation and management.

Registration is at the door and costs \$25.00 for regular annual membership (\$10.00 for student annual membership), \$10.00 for the Symposium, plus an additional fee for the social and dinner. Mark the dates of August 11 and 12 on your calendar and make plans to join us in Lafayette for two days of professional development. A tentative symposium schedule is listed below. For more information please contact Aaron Pierce, LAPB President-Elect at (985)493-2628 or aaron.pierce@nicholls.edu.

Thursday, August 11th

- 8:00 AM Registration begins
- 8:30 AM – 11:30 AM Student Oral Presentations (Sessions 1 & 2)
- 11:30 AM – 1:00 PM Lunch on your own
- 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM Student Oral Presentations (Sessions 3 & 4)
- 3:15 PM – 4:00 PM LAPB Fall Business Meeting
- 4:30 PM – 7:30 PM Evening Social, Student Oral Presentation and Publication Awards and Supper

Friday, August 12th

- 8:00 AM – 9:45 AM Poster Session, Students and Professionals
- 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM Professional Focus Session

Federal, State, and Parish Agencies Partner for Marsh Restoration

Cassidy Lejeune and Michael Carloss—LDWF

Several personnel with LDWF's Coastal Operations Program (Office of Wildlife-Coastal and Nongame Resources Division) participated in annual smooth cordgrass planting (*Spartina alterniflora*) at Marsh Island Refuge on the 21st and 22nd of June 2011. The grasses were planted as part of the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), Soil and Water Conservation District Vegetative Planting Program. The program is a cooperative effort between NRCS, Louisiana Department of Natural Resources, and Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry that focuses on the restoration and conservation of coastal wetlands. The Iberia Parish Sheriff's Department provided inmate labor to assist with planting of the grass plugs at the refuge.

The 2011 vegetation planting project consisted of planting over 9,000 smooth cordgrass plugs within marsh creation components of the East Marsh Island Marsh Creation CWP-PRA (Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection, and Restoration Act) Project. Two areas were planted to help stabilize sediment and establish colonies of vegetation in an open pond near East Point and along a filled oil/gas location canal near Lake Hawkins. The location canal was backfilled due to the threat of erosion causing a breach and potentially a channel along the eastern shore of the refuge.

The marsh creation project, which is also known as TV-21, was constructed due to substantial areas of interior emergent marsh converting to open water, primarily because of Hurricane Lili (2002). The marsh creation project targeted areas with the greatest historical land loss and within close proximity to East Cote Blanche Bay which was a borrow site for sediment. It was designed to re-create or nourish approximately 1,100 acres of brackish marsh habitat in the open water lakes and ponds that resulted from scour associated with recent storms. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and NRCS, working through LDNR and Office of Coastal Protection and Restoration (OCPR), engineered and designed the project. The project was initiated in March 2010 and completed in November 2010 at a cost of 20.1 million dollars.



Photo 1: Inmates loading plants onto LDWF barge boat to be transported



Photos 2-3: LDWF staff (Michael Carloss, left and Cassidy Lejeune, right) assisting with planting near filled location canal at Marsh Island Refuge

Whooping Crane Re-Introduction Moves Forward

Carrie Salyers-LDWF

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries reintroduced 10 juvenile whooping cranes into Southwestern Louisiana on February 16, 2011. The birds were released into the state owned marshes of White Lake Wetlands Conservation Area (WLWCA) Located in Vermilion Parish.

Upon their arrival in February, the birds were placed in a small, netted acclimation pen within a larger 1.5-acre pen located on the WLWCA. The birds remained in the netted acclimation pen for approximately one month to allow proper transition to their new locale and to allow researchers and biologists the opportunity to ensure that all of the birds were healthy and well acclimated to their surroundings. While contained within the acclimation pen, each bird was fitted with a unique leg band combination and satellite transmitter.

The White Lake cranes were released from the netted acclimation pen on March 14, 2011. Biologists conduct daily monitoring activities of the birds as well as continue supplemental feeding activities. The birds have continued to utilize the larger pen and actively fly in and out of the pen at their own discretion, roosting at night as they continue to acclimate to the marshes.

Future plans for this project include re-introductions of additional juvenile birds once or twice a year for the next two years. At that point, the project will be evaluated to determine the number of birds to be released in future years.



Whooping crane enclosure



Color-banded crane wading in marsh



Adult whooping crane in flight

LAPB Scholarship Deadline Approaches

The Louisiana Association of Professional Biologists continues to offer a scholarship opportunity for college students entering the conservation field. Details of the program are listed below. Take note of the **July 31** deadline.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:

The Scholarship is a competitive scholarship that awards \$500.00 annually to a student(s) pursuing or planning to pursue college studies in the following curriculums: Wildlife or Fisheries Management, Forestry, Wetland Science, Marine Biology, or other closely related field.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS:

Applicant must:

- Be a Louisiana resident.
- Be enrolled as a full time undergraduate or graduate student in a Louisiana Public College or University in one of the curriculums stated above.
- Have graduated from an accredited high school or must have completed the 12th grade level of a home study program.
- Submit two reference letters, one of which must be from a recent school teacher or counselor.
- Submit a brief statement/essay with application (less than 250 words) discussing your career goals.
- Complete an application and **provide all required information by July 31st**.
- Incoming freshmen may be given preference.

Based on the available funding and the quality of applicants, more than one recipient may be chosen in any given year.

Recipient(s) will be announced on the first day of the annual LAPB Fall Symposium.

Applications may be downloaded at <http://www.labiologists.org>

Contact Tony Vidrine at tvidrine@wlf.la.gov for more information.

Who We Are

The Louisiana Association of Professional Biologists is a diverse group of natural resource specialists including, but not limited to, foresters, botanists, wildlife biologists, wetland scientists, fisheries biologists, and students who are dedicated to the economically sound and science-based protection, management, and use of Louisiana's natural resources through peer-reviewed research, mentoring, ecologically sound habitat management, and informed public policy.

We're On The Web!!!

www.labiologists.org

Questions, Comments, or Suggestions?

Contact Any Member of Our Executive Board

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