

NATURALIST NEWSLETTER

Louisiana Master Naturalist Greater New Orleans

General Meeting Highlights

By: Alanna Frick

Below you'll find highlights from the November General meeting. The next general meeting will be January 30, 2020 in Room 114 Miller Hall, Loyola University. Our speaker will be Dr. Craig Hood of Loyola University speaking about acoustic ecology. Dr. Hood is a member of the LMNGNO Advisory Council and a workshop presenter.

The Slate of Officers for 2020: Nomination for Officers

President: Janell Simpson
Vice President: Jerry Feddersen
Secretary: Joelle Finley
Treasurer: Rene Guas

Board Members wishing to continue (Seats expire in 2019)

Rusty Gaudé -2022
Tanee Janusz - 2022
Sue Ellen Lyons - 2022
Alahna Moore - 2022
Mary Mysing-Gubala - 2022
Ann Rogers - 2022
Bob Rogers -2022

Say Hello to Our New Certified Members!

Carolyn Monteith from the fall 2018 class, Angelle Arata from the spring 2019 class, and Chad Chauffe from the spring 2019 class. Congratulations y'all!

Mark your calendar for
the next meeting!
January 30th

Nominations for vacant Board Seats

Eugene Brill - 2021
Carol Rice - 2021
Kismet Collins - 2021

Outgoing Board Members

Bill Bouie - 2021
Chuck Gras - 2019
Brian Karr - 2021
Michael Massimi - 2021



Photo Credit: Alanna Frick

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Volunteer Events:

(Click event title for info)

November

- **13th** Nature Walk & titivation Northlake NC
- **16th** Oyster Shell Bagging
- **22nd, 23rd** Urban Swamp Planting
- **23rd** Day of Service Northlake Nature Center

December

- **14th** Second Saturdays at Sankofa

January

- **30th** Bring food to the General Meeting

Continuing Education Events:

(Click event title for info)

November

- **15th, 22nd** Bayou Trek
- **10th** Nature Stroll
- **10th, 17th** Breakfast with the Birds
- **16th** Purple Martin Conservation
- **29th** #Optoutside

December

- **8th** Nature Stroll

January

- **25th** Designing Plant Communities

Louisiana Children's Museum Naturalist Docent Project

By: Alanna Frick

The Louisiana Children's Museum (LCM) needs naturalists! We are in the beginning stages of creating a wonderful naturalist docent project at the beautiful new Children's Museum located in historic City Park. Full of amazing nature inspired experiences and exhibitry, LCM needs our help educating and encouraging the next generations of nature lovers and protectors. Do you love teaching kiddos? Enjoy the challenge of condensing information into fun analogies? Need an entertaining way to get those volunteer hours? Please contact Anne Butcher to find out more: butcher@tulane.edu.



Photo Credit: LCM

Becoming A Friend of LMNGNO

By: Alanna Frick & Dr. Janell Simpson

Do you know someone interested in becoming a friend of Louisiana Master Naturalist? Got a significant other or friend you drag to all of our events, but they don't have time or interest to certify? They can now join our Friends of Louisiana Master Naturalist category! Interested individuals who have not attended the LMNGNO Workshops can now officially be affiliated with the organization by paying yearly dues of \$25 via the PayPal menu on our webpage marked "Friends." This category of membership is invited to all general meetings and may serve on committees. They may participate in LMNGNO activities as space allows; however there are no requirements for volunteer service or continuing education.



The swamp is poppin!
Photo Credit: Matt May



Juvenile Bald Eagle, Kenner
Photo Credit: N. J. Stanley

Go to the "Certification" tab and scroll down to "Registration".

Then select "Friends of LMNGNO" from the drop down!



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Applicants who are selected for a course will be notified by email. Please watch your email for course assignment notifications and respond to emails about placement within a week of selection.

[CERTIFICATION FAQ](#)
[REGISTRATION](#)
[FALL 2019 WORKSHOPS](#)
[RESOURCES](#)

Registration

Tuition \$250.00 USD

Tuition \$250.00 USD

Membership Dues \$25.00 USD

Friends of LMNGNO \$25.00 USD

Late Membership Dues \$35.00 USD

Lifetime Membership Dues \$250.00 USD

Tuition & Payment

LMNGNO accepts payments by check, money order, and Pay Pal. **Please do not make a tuition payment until you are notified by email.**

Course Tuition is \$250. To pay dues electronically, select "tuition" in the drop down menu to the right. Please, inquire about scholarships by emailing akthomas@loyno.edu.



The Corvid Chronicles Part II

By: Rebecca Stilling (Fall 2018)

Online I found lots of information about crow/human relations ranging from scientific research, to scholarly books, to everyday people sharing their fascination and encounters with corvids. Crows will befriend individual friendly humans and form long term relationships with them. Some lucky humans have even received gifts from crows it seems. Crows like shiny things and some humans have found small shiny objects deposited near a place they feed crows or on the windowsills. I was not that lucky. Crows also hold grudges against hostile humans and will harass said humans. A fairly recent article in Plos 1 cited how crows are able to distinguish individual humans, remember them for up to five years and pass this knowledge on to other crows, both their offspring and non-related crows. Over a period of five years a widening circle of crows reacted negatively to a single human they perceived as dangerous. Research by John Marzluff indicated crows could recognize individual human faces for up to 9.5 years. This skill is part of what has allowed crows to adapt so successfully to civilization and to live side by side with us in an urban ecology, where both hostile and friendly individual humans live and change dwellings.

Crows are also particularly well adapted to the urban ecology since they eat about anything, feasting on garbage, human offerings, insects, small rodents, and even fledglings of other birds. I've seen a crow in my neighborhood chased and harassed by a sparrow, no doubt defending its nest. Corvids very high intelligence and problem solving ability serves them well adaptively. They are called "Avian Einstein's". They appear to have enough reasoning ability to solve water displacement problems, can learn through the use of analogy, and can use tools. Their neuronal brain density is very high to help compensate for the small size of their brains and although they lack a prefrontal cortex they have highly developed a different region of the brain to handle many problem solving functions.

Throughout the winter I was surrounded by crows in my neighborhood, not just near my house. The trees were leafless and I saw crows everywhere on the bare branches resting and cawing ceaselessly. Evicted from their ersatz field by new construction they roamed the street and lawns. I never was sure where they roosted overnight for I'd read that they roosted in large flocks together.

My bold crow companion, mate and attendant crows continued to come calling throughout winter and into the early spring. My bold companion randomly rewarded my efforts by swooping down for the peanut right after I threw it, filling me with a surge of joy. But mostly they waited until I retreated to my alcove. I always cawed three times when I threw the nuts.

One day in early spring, I heard their distant cawing, ran out and cawed myself only to get no response. Disappointed I went back in to continue my workaday activities, only to be interrupted a short time later by raucous, very loud and insistent cawing in front of the house. Peanuts in hand, I opened the door and gasped to find my bold corvid companion and made two steps behind literally at my doorstep, demanding peanuts. Oh my gosh, I thought, next they'll be ringing the bell!

And the next day ... nothing. And nothing after that. That was it. They were gone.

I don't know what went wrong. I miss them. I've taken to carrying peanuts in my car in hopes of finding crows somewhere and beginning a new relationship.

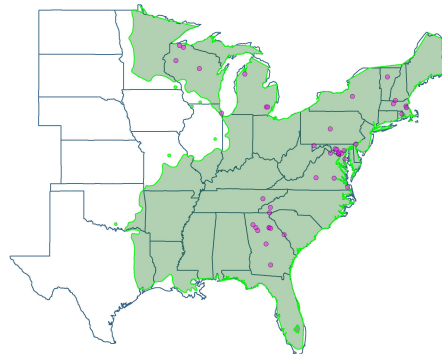
Maple Leaf Citizen Science Project 2020

By: Alanna Frick & Steve Gougherty

Steve Gougherty, a Biology PhD student at Boston University, is conducting research on leaf traits within species and the differences of nutrient concentrations within those leaves and he needs our help! He started a citizen science project with a goal to characterize how leaf traits within species vary throughout their geographic distributions.

He needs willing citizen scientists to collect red maple (*Acer rubrum*) leaves from a tree in their local areas. Submitting a collection when the leaves are green and again when the leaves turn in the fall will earn a certified master naturalist 1 hour of volunteer service. Samples will need to be sent to Boston University for processing and analysis and your hour will need to be logged in Track It Forward with an attached screenshot of your confirmation email.

For more information and to sign up as a citizen scientist for the 2020 project, individuals are invited to visit: sites.bu.edu/tasper/. Also, michigannatureguy.com/blog/2019/08/14/michigan-maples/ has a wonderful blog post on identifying mapples. While his focus is on maples in Michigan the information is still top notch! Finally, take a look at the map below to see the other areas partnering on this awesome project! If you have any questions please contact Steve Gougherty directly via email gougher@bu.edu.



Map of current collection areas by: Steve Gougherty

Photo by:
Erin
Richardson



Social Media Buzz



Gulf Coast Toad Cutie
Photo by: Alanna Frick



#rangerbecky at NOLA Bug Fest
Photo by: Becky Larkins



A Tattered Monarch, resting its wings
Photo by: Erin Richardson

Crosby Arboretum Field Excursion • September 21, 2019

From the Journal of Carol Rice

Our debut excursion to Crosby Arboretum in Picayune, Mississippi was a fine success. Our group of ten Master Naturalists was met by Patricia Drackett, Director, who guided our two-hour in-depth tour of the property. When the speaker has passion about the subject matter, the result is always good. Such is the case with Pat. Pat told us right at the start that she liked to talk about each plant (species). I put that word in parentheses because Pat talked about each one as if it were a pet. So much information. So many comparisons. So many avenues to explore. I wanted to call this little epistle The Magnificent Seven. I cannot decide which of the trees and shrubs to exclude...

Crosby Arboretum is beautifully maintained. The plants and trees and bushes all had the usual fallish scruffy look that one would expect in late September after several dry days. They were devoid of flowers. And it seemed as if all the birds had already flown south for the winter. The wide walkways are made of natural material – pebbles and gravel covered with crushed stone that made a sweep-able hard surface. I am sure it drains very well. I was told the arboretum was sneaker accessible. For much it, it was even wheelchair accessible! Perfect for a leisurely stroll without having to watch only your step.

The goal of our tour was to compare habitats in an upland savannah setting with our much wetter swamp and estuary setting. Salt water intrusion has killed off most of our cypress forest along the coast. It was nice to see what they may have looked like. The first surprise for me was that savannahs can be wet. I have always associated the word with our prairie lands, the savannahs of Africa, and the steppes of Asia. Those are all relatively dry. The common denominator is grass. Wet savannahs, called tropical savannahs, are also described as bogs. They too have grasses. The dominant feature is two distinct seasons, wet and dry. I was expecting an upland area to be dryer all the time. Silly me.

We chose Crosby because of its stands of Long Leaf pine, *Pinus palustris*. The second surprise was the other two – *Pinus elliotii* and *Pinus taeda*. Those are Slash and Loblolly pines for those of us who do not chat in Latin. Pat pointed them all out and told us how to sort them out. The three line their savannah, also known as the Pitcher Plant Bog. All three species are yellow pine (three needles per bundle) and can exceed heights of well over 100'. Long Leaf needles are the longest, reaching lengths of 16". Loblollies are the shortest - a mere 8".

Pat told us to look at branching patterns to tell them apart from distance. The open canopy savannah allowed us to see them clearly from across the bog. The Slash pine is shaped more like a deciduous tree. Its trunk is thicker than the two others and a bit shorter. Its branches are sturdy and subdivide in V-shapes into smaller and smaller appendages as deciduous trees do. The branches head to the sky gradually. The Loblolly has a tall straight-as-an-arrow trunk with insubstantial branches that all off as the tree grows. The branches grow at nearly right angles to the trunk. The Long Leaf is the tallest. It may grow to 150'. Its branches grow at a more acute angle from the trunk (maybe 65° to 70°) and curve upward at the ends. Pat called those curves "elbows". Thus endeth the lesson about three pines.

So many comparisons to make.

Two cypress species: Bald Cypress, *Taxodium distichum distichum*, and its friend and neighbor Pond Cypress, *Taxodium distichum imbricatum*. The two were standing side by side in a small shallow pond open to the sky. The compound leaves were the easiest way for me to tell the difference – but only if they are standing right next to each other. The Bald Cypress needles were shorter, by about $\frac{1}{3}$, and darker. Those are not huge differences to discern. The Pond Cypress leaves were a beautiful yellow-green, and even softer than the Bald Cypress leaves. Both are deciduous. Both have fluted trunks and cinnamon colored bark. Both set out knees. It will take a sharp eye to distinguish between them.

Crosby Arboretum Field Excursion • September 21, 2019 Continued...

From the Journal of Carol Rice

Two berry bushes: I was familiar with both of them from growing up along the coast in Massachusetts. Southern Bayberry, *Myrica Pennsylvanica*, (Southern? Hmm.) or *Myrica cerifa*, and Wintergreen, *Gaultheria procumbens*.

Bayberry is bayberry. The waxy blue berries are tight on the branches even after the plant dies. It is sturdy enough to survive in salt air and salt water spray, and to endure the heat of the southern climes. (Pollen Library.com believes it does not grow in Louisiana/Mississippi areas. Hmm. "The semi-evergreen bayberry [*M. pennsylvanica* & *M. cerifera*], native from Newfoundland to Maryland, has the waxy berries used to make bayberry candles.") I do not know how to tell them apart.

Pat broke up a leaf off the Wintergreen so we could smell the minty aroma. It was faint, but the leaf was quite dry. She did that with many laves along the way. I asked if the berries were what were used to flavor Teaberry gum. I thought I had heard that as a kid in New England. (Yes, I looked it up.) She did not know, but said that both the leaves and berries were used to make a medicinal tea.

She also pointed out witch hazel, *Hamamelis virginiana*, another plant used for medicinal purposes and bay laurel, *Laurus nobilis*, an herb used for cooking.

While walking through Crosby, I felt as if I were missing everything. Pat was just so full of information, and so eager to share it. At the bog, she was apologetic about the sparsity of the yellow pitcher plants, *Sarracenia flava*, the arboretum is famous for. There were more than enough for picture taking. Beautiful, yet treacherous for hungry insects. The flowers look as if they come from another planet – definitely otherworldly. Fascinating.

Pat Brackett made all of Crosby Arboretum fascinating. She made us all stop and smell, not roses, but many plants – out of bloom. If you just take the time...



Photos by: Carol Rice