



Bayou Bartholomew Alliance NEWSLETTER



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BBA Partners with The Nature Conservancy, expands into Louisiana

Recently, the Bayou Bartholomew Alliance Board voted unanimously to expand its efforts to include the portion of the watershed south of the border into Louisiana and to develop a partnership with The Nature Conservancy which recognizes the importance of the watershed's biodiversity. The Nature Conservancy has agreed to assist the Alliance with newsletter printing and mailing costs.

A Bird's Eye View of The Nature Conservancy

The Nature Conservancy is the world's most successful nonprofit conservation organization, but you may have never heard of it. Its international mission is to protect the diversity of plants and animals by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive. For over 50 years, TNC has quietly worked with businesses and communities to preserve over 92 million acres of land and water worldwide.

The Louisiana Chapter of The Nature Conservancy was founded in 1987, and in the last 15 years, has placed more than a quarter of a million acres of Louisiana land and water into some form of conservation program, 63,000 acres of which are in the greater New Orleans area. Some local accomplishments include:

- Developing blueprints for conservation of the Mississippi Alluvial Plain.
- Protecting forest and restoring previously cleared lands on Grand Isle
- Protecting one of the largest bald cypress in the world on historic Cat Island, which is also home to one of the densest strands of virgin bald cypress in the state. Cat Island also boasts one of the last large tracts of unlevelled bottomland hardwood forest that is still influenced by seasonal flooding of the Mississippi River.

How They Do It

The Nature Conservancy uses a variety of methods to protect the state's rich diversity of ecosystems.

Sometimes the group buys land in order to protect it from development. Since its inception it has acquired management interest in more than 91,000 acres and currently owns over 20,000 acres around the state.

Other times it acquires the land and sells it to a state or federal government agency that protects and manages the land. In 1990, for instance, TNC helped the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries buy a 1,799-acre tract of land to add to the Point aux Chenes Wildlife



Carolyn Nichols, Karen Jenkins and Jason Phillips tour the Bayou Bartholomew through Pine Bluff

The Nature Conservancy

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Management Area in Lafource Parish for \$766,000. Tommy Prickett, the department's administrator of wildlife, says the land was "ripe for development," so it was fortunate that TNC was able to come up with the money for the purchase, buy the land, and then hold it until Wildlife and Fisheries could buy it in turn. TNC also has cooperative projects with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Baton Rouge Audubon Society and Louisiana State University.

The organization also partners with companies and developers to encourage them to maintain and restore the native flora and fauna on their land and to mitigate any damage they do when they develop wetlands.

New Revamped Website

On February 2, 2001, The Nature Conservancy of Louisiana, with help from Explore Interactive, launched www.louisiananature.org, an interactive website. The site highlighted the organization and the importance of preserving wild Louisiana for the future. Visitors could learn about the six ecoregions of the state and how the Conservancy used fire to manage property. Additionally, information about preserves around the state, an events calendar, opportunities to become a member online and an online form to volunteer with the Conservancy were simply a click away.

February 22, 2002, a little over a year later, marks an update to The Nature Conservancy of Louisiana's initial website. The updated site will offer users easier navigation through the site and will include the same interactive information from the first site. TNC is hoping more members will use the updated site to get involved, volunteer and receive current news about TNC's work.

Log on today to learn more about The Nature Conservancy of Louisiana at www.louisiananature.org.



Moving Logs

The Bayou Bartholomew Alliance received a \$5,000 minigrant from the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission's Stream Team Program recently. Funds were to be used to test ways of moving logs and opening pathways through logjams for small boats and canoes. Logs were not removed from the stream, but anchored out of the main channel. Several volunteers and state agency personnel worked three days to move logs and open the stream channel above and below the Cane Creek State Park boat ramp on the Bartholomew.

A similar effort will be made at Parkdale on August 9 and 10 (Friday and Saturday). Anyone wishing to volunteer should contact Bill Layher, BBA Coordinator.

HELP NEEDED!

Lincoln County Conservation District

Equipment for Rent!

The Lincoln County Conservation District has recently purchased equipment to be used in the Bayou Bartholomew Watershed to reduce non-point source pollution. The EPA 319 grant money was provided through the Arkansas Soil and Water Conservation Commission.

The equipment purchased that will be available for landowners to rent includes:

1. **A 10' Great Plains No-Till Drill with a small seed box attachment.** This piece of equipment can be used to implement no-till practices in row-crop or pastureland areas. The benefits include protecting the soil from erosion, increasing the soil-organic matter, improving the precipitation-storage efficiency and providing fuel and tractor-life savings of 25 to 50%. It can also be used to overseed winter pastures without disturbing the grazing by not having to disturb the ground to prepare a seedbed.
2. **An 8' AerWay Pasture Aerator.** The pasture aerator is designed to open the soil to air, light, water and nutrients with little surface disruption, minimizing runoff and soil erosion. The benefits achieved by using this equipment include reducing compaction in the feeder root zone and regenerating soil for maximum production. It improves nutrient incorporation and fertilizer utilization when used while applying commercial or animal fertilizers.
3. **A Bell Sprayer Tank System with a 14' Boom and hand sprayer attachment.** This piece of equipment is fitted on a trailer with a 150 gallon tank and is operated by a power take off (PTO) pump attached to a tractor. This system can be used by landowners to spray pastures for weeds to improve grazing efficiency. With the spray wand, it can be used to spray fencerows and around sheds and other buildings to get rid of unwanted weeds.

A Honda Rancher 4x4 ATV has been purchased to assist District and NRCS employees in working on non-point source pollution areas.



The Conservation District also has a **poultry litter spreader** that is available to rent. Lincoln and Jefferson County jointly own a **15' John Deere no-till drill** that is also available to rent. If anyone is interested in renting any of the equipment, you can contact the Lincoln County Conservation District in Star City, Arkansas at 870-628-4542 ext 3.

You can contact the Bayou Bartholomew Alliance by writing, calling, or e-mailing:

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Proponents of the Boeuf-Tensas Regional Irrigation Water Project Tour Bayou Bartholomew

Recently, members of the Boeuf –Tensas Regional Irrigation Water Distribution District, Corps of Engineers (COE), The Nature Conservancy, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and others were given a tour of a portion of the Bayou Bartholomew. All were impressed at the beauty of this unchannelized natural bayou stream. The BBA is working with the COE and the irrigation district in an effort to prevent negative impacts from the irrigation project and perhaps, to identify positive ones.



Tour participants saw many types of wildlife including this red phase screech owl. (See article on page 5)

Please help us update our mailing list. You need not contribute or donate money to stay on the list. Thanks!

Send to: Bayou Bartholomew Alliance, 7233 Camden Cutoff Rd, Pine Bluff, AR, 71603

YES, I WANT TO HELP!

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

CHECK ONE

Enclosed is a donation to help fund the conservation and restoration work on the Bayou Bartholomew in the amount of

\$5; \$10; \$20; other _____.

Creature Close-up

Denizens of the Night

I remember I was twelve years old. I had donned my mukluks and parka, leaving the house at three a.m. to run my trap line as I did every morning from late October through January. The full moon cast eerie shadows in front of me as I proceeded along the banks of Quimby Creek in north-central Kansas. About four miles from home, rounding a creek bend through knee-deep snow I was greeted by a blood-curdling scream. Taken totally by surprise and reacting instinctively to my unknown assailant, I fired the old Winchester I carried into the frozen landscape ahead of me. Undaunted, the menacing creature screamed again, and again, and again. I turned abruptly, 180 degrees, and high-tailed the four miles home in record time.

Arriving at the house, my grandmother and dad listened attentively as I relayed my near death experience. Upon finishing, my dad, who had an eighth grade education and owned a small sawmill, burst into laughter and spilled his coffee on the kitchen table where they had been waiting breakfast on me. I soon learned my mountain lion (as I was convinced it was) was really a great horned owl, one of several owl species that also occur along the Bayou Bartholomew. Other common owls along the Bayou include the barred owl and the screech owl.

Each of these owls has fourteen neck vertebrae (humans only have seven), which enable them to rotate their heads almost completely around their bodies. Owls require this type of movement because their eyes are fixed in a permanent forward gaze. In order to see their entire surroundings, they must rotate their heads. Even the smallest owl has eyes as large as a grown man's. However, owl eyes have 100 times greater light gathering power than any human eye. Owls swallow their prey whole, ejecting the undigestible parts in pellets.

The great horned owl, or *Bubo virginianus*, is one of the largest owls. It is easily as large as our biggest hawks. It has wide-set horned tufts, a white throat, and dark barring on its underparts. It may also have spots on its breast. The great horned owl's color varies, primarily based on latitude, pale gray in the high Arctic but browner to the south. It is very adaptable when choosing housing, you can find this owl anywhere from the forest's edge to the inner cities. It feeds on grown rabbits and will nest in trees, caves, or on the ground, usually producing 2-3 white eggs.



Great Horned Owl

The barred owl, or *Strix varia*, also produces 2-3 white eggs. It nests in a tree cavity or in an old hawk's nest. The barred owl lives in woodlands or wooded river bottoms. While it is chiefly nocturnal, it is the most likely of owls to be heard during the day. It is identified from its puffy round head, large brown eyes and unusual markings. It is barred cross-wise on its puffy chest and lengthwise on its belly. It is also often spotted with white on its back and is hornless.

The screech owl is extremely abundant. There are three species of screech owl, however, only one is present here, the eastern screech owl (*Otus asio*). It is small with yellow eyes and a usually pale bill, has prominent ear tufts when raised, but when flattened has a round-headed appearance. Its underparts are marked with bars and streaks and heavy black streaks occur on its upper breast. One of the most interesting things about the eastern screech owl is that it comes in two forms, or color phases. The red phase predominates in the south and the gray in the north. However, both forms can be found here. It lives in a variety of habitats including woodlots, forests, swamps, orchards, parks and suburban gardens. The screech owl is strictly nocturnal and nests in tree cavities or old woodpecker holes, producing 4-5 white eggs.

So, as you can see, while the owls of the Bayou Bartholomew are a fascinating bunch that have many interesting characteristics, there really is no reason to run when you hear one of their blood curdling, heart stopping screams – unless, that is, you are the size of rabbit!

BBA Website

The BBA has a website!

Visit the website at www.accessarkansas.org/bba/

Maps, pictures, teaching modules for science classes, past newsletters, and upcoming events are all posted. We hope to expand the materials at the site. Please let us know your thoughts and ideas. Drop in! We'd love to hear from you.



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