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# NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 1992

volume 10, number 2

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## A LETTER FROM OUR PRESIDENT, JOHN MAYRONNE

It's been hectic this spring, but at last summer is almost here. I hope you were able to attend either the BOGS, BIRDS, AND GEMS FESTIVAL or the CAJUN PRAIRIE SPRING WILDFLOWER FESTIVAL. There were great times to be had by all.

LNPS has been supporting House Bill 1950 this session. It would create the WILD LOUISIANA STAMP and charge a fee for the recreational use of state lands. It is an effort to provide a more permanent solution to funding our Natural Heritage Program.

We do need help from our Baton Rouge members by having someone attend legislative hearings on our behalf, even if only to fill out a card showing our support for an important issue. There are attempts being made by similarly minded organizations, such as the Audubon Society and the Sierra Club, to inform us of issues that may be of interest to our group, but YES, we need your help! It's hard for a few people to do all that is needed, particularly when it's more than an hour from home base. If you can help, call me at (504) 892-5424.

Have a good summer, I'm looking forward to seeing you at our fall meeting.

## DUES REMINDER

Don't forget that membership dues for 1992 were due by the first of the year, January 1, 1992! Members who did not paid their dues by April 1, 1992 have been sent a LNPS brochure and have been dropped from the roster. Please send your dues (PLEASE NOTE THAT DUES HAVE INCREASED) to the address below. If you know someone who is interested in joining the LNPS, give them the following address. Make checks payable to the LNPS:

LNPS  
Rt. 1, Box 195  
Saline, Louisiana 71070

The dues schedule is as follows: Student=\$5.00, Senior Citizen=\$5.00, Individual=\$10.00, Family=\$15.00, Organization=\$25.00, Sustaining=\$50.00, Corporate=\$100.00.

### DEADLINES FOR NEXT 4 NEWSLETTERS:

Don't forget! In an effort to better coordinate the distribution of information concerning field trips as well as other dated information the newsletter uses the following deadline policy. Any information received after the deadline will be included in the next newsletter. Deadlines for the next four newsletters are as follows:

Fall Newsletter:	September 1, 1992
Winter Newsletter:	December 1, 1992
Spring Newsletter:	March 1, 1993
Summer Newsletter:	June 1, 1993

The editor's address is:

David Heikamp  
717 Giuffrias  
Metairie, La. 70001  
Ph (504) 831-2342

### PRAIRIE CHRONICLES OF MOREHOUSE PARISH by Beth Erwin

Note: Rector Hopgood is the owner of Rector's prairie. Soil information comes from the "Soil Survey of Morehouse Parish, La.", USDA, Soil Conservation Service. September, 1985.

Wednesday, March 11, 1992: I visited Rector's prairie site for the first time this year around 8:00 AM. I had a couple of friends along. We found Viola pedata, Bird's Foot Violet, in bloom. It turned out to be a parish record. Houstonia caerulea, a bluet with large, ice-blue flowers with yellow centers was blooming on the eastern slope. Temperatures had dipped near freezing that morning and they were nodding. There were lots of specimens of a white Allium in bloom. Over in the woods, on the northeastern side, Aesculus pavia, Red Buckeye, was beginning to flower. Some of the reddest buckeye blooms I have ever seen were along the edge of the woods. At the base of the hill, on the same side of the prairie, there was a plum tree in full bloom. I went over to look at it and found some Corydalis blooming in a rather sandy spot. Part of the prairie was not mowed last fall, and in that area poppy mallow foliage, Callirhoe papaver, was evident, as well as a yet unidentified lily.

The Morehouse Parish soil survey identifies the soil on this site as Udalfs-Bussy association, 5 to 30 percent slopes. Bussy silt loam is a common soil "up the hill". The city of Bastrop sits on Bussy silt loam. There are pockets of prairie species all over town. The Udalfs are so variable in type that no one profile fits them all, ranging from sand to clay. This probably accounts for the tremendous variety of plants on Rector's prairie. I have not stumbled across another area of this soil type that has remained significantly cleared and unaltered. Naturally, I am still looking!

Week of March 23, 1992: Terry and I found the lily in bloom. Boy, were we excited! It is a Nemastylis, or Celestial Lily. There were more Bird's Foot Violets and Red Buckeyes in flower. A particularly striking colony of it had a lot of Bird's Foot Violet mixed in with it. It is on a steep slope, which enhances the view. Blue-Eyed Grass abounds in every shade of blue to white. Phlox pilosa is beginning to flower. The next day we came back with

the camera to take pictures of the Celestial Lily and stumbled upon lots of Wild Hyacinth, Camassia scilloides . Needless to say, we were floating pretty high this week.

Saturday, April 6, 1992: Dr. Charles Allen and his daughter, Dawn, came up to see Rector's prairie. It was still cool, and the Celestial Lilies refused to open while we were there. After looking at what was flowering, we drove to town to look at some other sites. We also drove over to Mer Rouge to see the cotton fields that are on the former prairie there.

Saturday, April 11, 1992: Terry, Ben, Elizabeth and I visited the prairie. Rector had moved the road so it no longer went through the Celestial Lily population. They were still in flower and had set a good many seed pods. There were more of the pale peach phlox open than we had found earlier. I'll get some flagging and mark them so I can take some cuttings after they bloom. The Bird's Foot Violet was still blooming. There were a number of plants of Asclepias tuberosa up. We did not cover the whole prairie that day. The phlox still had not peaked.

Sunday, April 26, 1992: The most significant find today, since we hadn't seen it there before, was Spigelia marilandica , Indian Pink. There were about six plants on the north-facing slope above the pond that were quite open. When I find things for the first time, I flag them so I can tell Rector about them and he can easily spot them. Fortunately we don't have problems with deer grazing on the wildflowers. There is ample evidence of their presence, but ample grazing too.

There was a Coreopsis near the center of the prairie, I'm unsure what species it was. There is a Coreopsis grandiflora in the parish, and there is a population of Coreopsis on Cooper Lake Road before you get to Rector's place. I have always assumed it was Coreopsis grandiflora , but now I am not so sure.

The phlox has peaked and there are a few Celestial Lilies still in bloom and a good many Buckeyes, too. One or two Echinacea pallida , or Pale Coneflowers are in flower, with many more to come. Shrankia, or Sensitive Briar, was covered with buds. Prunellas were in flower everywhere, as well as some pretty grasses.

Saturday, May 2, 1992: Terry and I and the children were joined by Dr. Thomas for an hour or so on the prairie this morning. We found some specimens of pink Prunella. I flagged them for future propagation. There were a lot more Indian Pinks, especially along the edges of the woods. Dr. Thomas said the Coreopsis was Coreopsis lanceolata . The Sensitive Briar was beginning to flower. There were some Lespedezas in flower that I have yet to learn. Rosa caroliniana flowers were abundant, though not as many as last week. There were still lots of Red Buckeye blooms and many had set fruit. The phlox were still in flower, somewhat. The Pale Coneflower was further along. There were no Celestial Lilies in flower today. The grasses and sedges were particularly nice, especially the Agrostis species. Briza minor , Little Quaking Grass, as well as Aira, a hairgrass, are abundant. Dr. Thomas showed us the Petalostemon candidum , White Prairie Clover. It was not flowering yet. We looked hard for Silene virginica , Fire-Pink. He had found it earlier in the week further north in the parish on Udalf-Bussy soils, in association with Indian Pinks. The Threadleaf Evening Primrose with its tiny yellow flowers, was abundant. There were a few plants of Coenothus americanus , New Jersey Tea, about to bloom.

Rector's prairie is curious to me as much for what it lacks in species as for what is present. The Psoraleas that are on other prairie sites, along with the Sundews, Aletris , Rudbeckia grandiflora , Oenothera pilosella , Phlox caroliniana , and Dwarf Willow are absent. On the other hand, Prairie Clover, Celestial Lily, Bird's Foot Violet, and Camassia are not known from

any other site in the parish. The genetic diversity among individual species is one of the first things I noticed. Take Phlox pilosa for instance. Each isolated population in the parish has its own set of characteristics, such as petal shape, depth of color, and markings on the flowers. The phlox on Rector's prairie comes in every shade of pink and purple with some nearly blue. There is a lot of variation in petal shapes and markings and bloom times. I noticed a lot of variation among the Pale Coneflowers in intensity of color, length, and drop of ray florets last year. There were some true white flowers last year, also.

Thursday, May 14, 1992: Newlyn McInnis and Latimore Smith spent the day in the parish. Rector's prairie site was covered. The cone flowers were in full bloom. There were not nearly as many as last year. However, judging from the number of seedlings present, 1993 may be a repeat of 1991. The site was very dry. Some plants were showing signs of stress. The Poppy Mallows were beginning to flower. There were still a fair amount of phlox flowering. Asclepias tuberosa was beginning to show color in a couple of areas. I collected a few seed of the Camassia. The White Prairie Clover was still not showing color. Indian Pink and New Jersey Tea were still blooming. As we crossed the pond dam, a critter groaned and moved out into the water. Rector said later that it was a beaver. It seems that they were tunneling under the dam.

Friday, May 22, 1992: Today I led a group of 22 sixth-graders from St. Joseph Catholic School here in Bastrop on a field trip to Rector's prairie. It is always a pleasure to introduce children to plants, especially natives. Who would think that one little Carolina Rose bloom could smell so good! The color of a Poppy Mallow bloom is so intense. Anything as orange as a Butterfly Weed ought to be good to eat. Isn't it neat that sedge stems have three sides, and just look at all those butterflies, dragonflies, and those enormous bumblebees. I think that every Sensitive Briar on the hillside was touched to make the leaves close up.

It had rained the night before and it was very muddy in some spots. The Rattlesnake Master, Eryngium yuccafolium, was beginning to flower. There is a lot of Rudbeckia hirta, Black-Eyed Susan, in flower. We even found one of the mutant "wide" ones. The Ruellias, or Wild Petunias, were in flower, often several open on each stem. One of the children who has a relative in LDWF informed me that Handy Brake, at the base of the hill, is the destination for any alligators with social/behavioral problems - from a human standpoint. Occasionally one will take a stand on a bayou bridge in the parish, claiming it for his own. I can only wonder at the long-term effects of these dominant, trouble-making 'gators on the gene pool of the average, mild-mannered Handy Brake 'gator!

#### GRASSES OF LOUISIANA, 2nd EDITION NOW AVAILABLE

The Cajun Prairie Habitat Preservation Society and the Herbarium at Northeast Louisiana University recently announced that "Grasses of Louisiana", 2nd Edition by Dr. Charles M. Allen is now available. This upgraded version contains keys and descriptions to more than 380 grass taxa growing without cultivation in Louisiana. The documented distribution by parishes for each taxon is presented in a checklist. Almost all taxa are illustrated with more than 370 illustrations.

The cost of this book is \$40. Make your check payable to the Cajun Prairie Habitat Preservation Society and mail it to:

Cajun Prairie Habitat Preservation Society  
P.O. Box 172  
Eunice, La. 70535

### LONG LIVE THE BOGS

by Gene Naccari

I walked down the trail to that small pine woods bog that I can't resist visiting, the one that's ever changing and offering new blooming species of bog wildflowers every few weeks. I couldn't wait to see the current offerings in bloom. And I wondered if anyone else cared.

It's just a small bog, as bogs go, but etched in my mind, in calendar-like order, are memories of the bog plant species that can be expected to be blooming on the day that I make my pilgrimage to the bog. And I wondered if anyone else cared.

This bog was destined to be seen, shared, and admired by only a very few because of its remote location, more than 2,000 feet from a gravel road. There a very small but constantly flowing stream of water trickles into an opening in the forest. The water is believed to come from a deep-flowing well a long distance away near where a home, a long time ago, once stood. I have never checked this out, but the small stream's flow and runoff of rainfall from higher pine woods have saturated the soil in this opening in the pine woods with very acidic water. These conditions created the bog. Some of the water continues out of the bog in the form of a small, dark-water brook. The brook winds through a swamp made dark by the dense shade of trees. We like to call it the "Black Swamp". I love the bog and "Black Swamp", but I wonder if anyone else cares.

Depending on the time of the year, you can expect to see in growth or bloom bog plants such as the rare Yellow Fringed Orchid, Habenaria ciliaris, Catesby or Pine Lily, Lilium catesbaei, and the Flame Flower, Macranthera flammea. You can also expect to see more common bog plants such as Meadow Beauty, Rhexia alifanus, Pipewort, Eriocaulon decangulare, Stokes Aster, Stokesia laevis, Yellow Polygala, Polygala ramosa, Yellow-Eyed Grass, Xyris iridifolia, Indian Plantain, Cacalia plantaginea, Yellow Pitcher Plant, Sarracenia alata, Summer or Swamp Azalea, Rhododendron serrulatum, and several more. I don't mean to imply that this is the state's best bog, but it is interesting and rewarding to visit. But all is not well in "paradise". The rare plants mentioned above and even the very existence of the bogs are threatened in most parts of Louisiana. The ecological balance of an acidic, pine woods bog is very delicate, and even a slight change in the land, such as development of one of the properties, could wipe out the bog. So I worry each year that it may be their last, and wonder if anyone else cares.

The bog site, an opening of about 2 to 3 acres in a pine woods forest, straddles the corner where four separately-owned, large acreage properties meet. You wonder how this open, clear area was formed. Could it have been a happy accident, a place in the woods where a lightning fire once raged, clearing the land of trees? On the high side of this bog pine, Dogwood, Cornus florida, Horse Sugar, Symplocos tinctoria, various hollies and huckleberries, and many other shrubs fight for sun and air space. On the downflow, swamp side can be found Tupelos, Nyssa aquatica and Nyssa sylvatica, Tulip-tree, Liriodendron tulipifera, plus various other trees and shrubs. The fire that may have destroyed the heavy forest growth in this low spot was probably an opportunity for bog plants to establish themselves. So a natural "disaster" probably gave us this special place of beauty. The heavily

saturated, very acidic and oxygen-poor soil supported bog plants rather than other types of growth. But the tree and tall shrub growth is gradually coming back, shading the bog plants. Eventually, the taller growth will displace the bog plants. That would be a great loss, but you wonder if anyone else cares.

On this particular visit to the bog, my memory told me that I could expect to see Yellow Fringed Orchids in bloom. The subtle changes in the length of day, as we move from the summer solstice to shorter days and longer nights, would have triggered the blooming of these increasingly rare plants. There they were, only a few of them, scattered in one location of about 1,000 square feet. I just had to take a photograph. As I fumbled setting up my camera, a beautiful swallowtail butterfly collected nectar from the orchid blooms. The swallowtail alighted on the very orchid bloom on which I was focusing. The orchid inflorescence was flanked by a bloom of Meadow Beauty and a Pipewort. It figured to be a great picture, but my luck changed - the swallowtail flew away before I could snap the picture! Still, it was a great visual treat. I wondered if anyone else would care.

As I treated myself to the sight of the Yellow Fringed Orchids, I was also aware of the many tall-growing plant species invading the area. These young trees and shrubs will one day shade out and out-compete these rare orchids. I wondered: will the orchids be able to survive in this hostile setting much longer? I hoped that they would be there to see in bloom next late July or early August. Yet I wonder if anyone else cares.

As I photographed the orchid, I could see in the background the first blooms of a Flame Flower plant. But there were less individual plants of this rare species this year than last. Could it be the unusually heavy rains that flooded the area this year? Could the high water have then floated the seeds to less hospitable areas, areas where no decent Flame Flower would or could grow? Or did water lay over the bog area so long that the seeds or sprouting plants rotted? I recalled the many blooming Flame Flowers of the previous year and all the hummingbirds which flocked to this beautiful nectar feast. I wish the Flame Flower was not so inconsistent in seeding - plentiful in this bog one year and scarce the next. I worry that they won't show up one of these years. But I wonder if anyone else cares.

Thirty feet away the rare and beautiful Catesby or Pine Lily bloomed last September. What a treat it was to see the beautiful bloom of this solitary plant, but the increasing size of a nearby Summer or Swamp Azalea worries me. Will this azalea shade out this rare plant, so that the lily will disappear and make a September visit to the bog less exciting? Or could the two plants enjoy a symbiotic relationship? I hope the Catesby Lily blooms again, but I wonder if anyone else cares.

Pine woods bogs were meant by nature to be there indefinitely, whether humans come to enjoy them or not. But once humans enjoy the bogs, they don't want them to disappear. That is, you want the bog to stay unless you are a human property owner who thinks of the bog as a place where it is hard to grow trees or crops. Then the bog would be in trouble, if the bog was ditched or the small stream's flow was diverted. I hope this doesn't happen, but this is an area in which human rights of ownership overshadow anyone's desire to preserve the environment. I hope that such conflicts of interest can be avoided. One possible step forward would be for more of us to understand what a very special habitat the bog is, worthy of being enjoyed. So let's give the bog a chance to survive and encourage other people to do the same. Let's hope there are people out there who care...