



Louisiana Wildlife Federation

January - June
2023



January - June 2023

- 4 Edgar Veillon Conservation Leadership Corps
- 6 Excellence In Conservation
- 7 Memorial Gifts
- 8 Louisiana Legislature Approves Coastal Plans
- 9 Spanish Pass
- 10 Certified Wildlife Habitat
- 11 Business Alliance
- 12 Offshore Wind Energy
- 14 Carbon Sequestration, Class VI Wells
- 15 Lights Out For Migratory Birds
- 17 Louisiana Ornithological Society
- 18 2023 Legislature Report
- 20 WildlifeUnite 2023
- 21 Crawfishes In Louisiana

Since 1940, Louisiana Wildlife Federation has been the voice for Louisiana's wildlife and natural resources. Join us to protect Sportsman's Paradise for future generations.

Principles:

- Conserve Louisiana's natural resources with emphasis on wildlife and their habitat
- Advance sound, scientifically established resource management principles
- Engage outdoor enthusiasts through education and advocacy

This newsletter is printed biannually for members and supporters. Updates on LWF activities and events can be found on our website and social media pages:

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LWF is an affiliate organization of National Wildlife Federation and together we form a powerful network for wildlife conservation locally and nationally.



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Woodlands Conservancy

MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Mark Twain might or might not have said “History does not repeat itself, but it rhymes,” but he did most assuredly write the sentence, “No occurrence is sole and solitary, but is merely a repetition of a thing which has happened before, and perhaps often.” A quick glance at any Louisiana newspaper this or any week features stories affirming that statement and illustrating the best and worst of human nature as we try to work with each other and ethically use the resources of the world we share. Very frequently LWF resolutions and other positions caution against how shortsighted decisions might impact wildlife and wildlife habitat, and we often have to remind ourselves about hard-won conservation lessons learned by our predecessors. Most recently, we have worked with partners to consider the potential impacts on wildlife and wildlife habitat of energy technologies like offshore wind energy development, the expansion of LNG development, and emerging technologies like carbon sequestration. In every case, no matter how new the frontier is, at least a few analogues from the past exist.



LWF acknowledges the hard lessons of the past, supporting affiliates who view wildlife and habitat as a resource to be conserved for future generations, and helping to develop a new generation of conservation leaders who will work against our less noble human inclinations. When novel opportunities for improving conditions for wildlife appear or new threats affecting wildlife present themselves, LWF will continue to take a “long view” that is based on scientific management of natural resources. LWF has over 80 years’ worth of hard-fought conservation victories and will see many more with your help. Contact us to get involved. ■ - Zac Burson

NOTE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

In the legislative report I mention the failure of the legislature to provide funds for repairs to White Lake Conservation Management Area when there was excess funding this year. White Lake is not only important for duck habitat and is renowned for duck hunting, the area provides vital coastal restoration protection for southwest Louisiana, and serves as prominent habitat for the re-introduction of the endangered Whooping Crane population in Louisiana. White Lake depends on a complex network of levees, water control structures and shorelines to maintain a freshwater regime, including 24 miles of levee along the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway that has long been in bad shape. Maintaining or repairing levees and pumps gets expensive. Leasing some of the land for agriculture, selling duck hunts, and running lottery hunts for the public isn’t bringing in enough funds to keep up with maintenance of this valuable public property.



Repairs and maintenance projects require matching funds that now wait another year while our fingers are crossed a hurricane doesn’t compromise weak levees and inundate the area with salt water, which would be much more costly to address. LWF is working with other organizations to raise this need again. Some of our long-time members may recall that LWF was prominent in insisting the donation of White Lake to the state of Louisiana was managed publicly for citizens’ benefit. LWF is still looking after White Lake’s health and investment as the people’s property. ■ - Rebecca Triche



CELEBRATING THE 5TH YEAR OF THE EDGAR VAILLON CONSERVATION LEADERSHIP CORPS

The Edgar Veillon Conservation Leadership Corps (CLC) program is designed to inform and engage with college students about conservation policy and advocacy so that we may foster tomorrow's conservation leaders in Louisiana. The program allows students to broaden their knowledge of conservation and affords each participant the opportunity to meet and interact with conservation professionals from government agencies, nonprofits, and academia.

In this fifth year of the program, LWF recruited and selected college students from across the state. The following students successfully completed the program: Caroline Alleman, Leor Weber, William Woody, Caleb Theriot, Leila Avery, Ella Bollinger, Libby Brennan, Heather Brown, McKenna Chow, Elena Dilworth, Jana Guercio, Siarah Hall, Kaitlyn Johnson, Julia Jones, James Kelly, Rowan Lambert, and Samantha Rios.

Four sessions were held from January-April 2023. Each session included a meeting on Friday and a full day of meetings each Saturday. Sessions 2 and 4 were held on zoom. Session 1 took place at the LSU campus in Baton Rouge and Session 3 was hosted at Chicot State Park in Ville Platte.

This year, the students heard from 13 speakers from the following organizations, agencies, and institutions: Louisiana Coastal Protection & Restoration Authority

(CPRA), Louisiana Wildlife Federation, Louisiana SeaGrant, The Water Institute, Pontchartrain Conservancy, National Audubon Society, U.S. Geological Survey, Chicot State Park, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Kisatchie National Forest. Past EV-CLC students provided updates on their experiences and how it has benefited them.



Students were eager to stay connected to our presenters, one another, and LWF. We continue to share engagement opportunities such as participating in public meetings, contacting decision-makers on conservation issues (which some students have already done), as well as other opportunities for their professional and personal development related to conservation.

LWF provided a \$200 scholarship check to each student along with a certificate of achievement and letter of commendation for successfully completing the program.

Thanks to the Stuller Family Foundation for its continued support of this program. In addition, LWF thanks our Conservation Education Committee for their volunteer time and guidance as well as all of the guest speakers for sharing their expertise. ■





LOUISIANA WILDLIFE FEDERATION CELEBRATES EXCELLENCE IN CONSERVATION

Louisiana Wildlife Federation (LWF) celebrated exceptional contributions to natural resources conservation and education at the 57th Annual Conservation Achievement Awards Banquet on June 9. Six individuals and one organization were recognized for their dedication to conservation of Louisiana's wildlife and environment, leaving a lasting impact on the state's ecological future.

The distinguished awardees included Charles Allen, Ph. D., of Pitkin, who was named Conservationist of the Year for his significant work in botany and authoring 11 books, contributing to the preservation of Louisiana's unique flora. Lisa Lewis of Pineville received the title of Professional Conservationist of the Year for her commendable leadership in restoring the longleaf ecosystem in the heavily damaged Kisatchie National Forest area. Jane Patterson from Ponchatoula was honored as Volunteer Conservationist of the Year for her pivotal role in establishing a new wildlife sanctuary in Ascension Parish.



John Dillon of Athens was recognized as Conservation Educator of the Year for inspiring students' interest in the outdoors through the establishment of the Minden High School Nature Club. State Representative Jerome "Zee" Zeringue of Houma earned the Elected Official Conservationist of the Year award for advocating and passing legislation supporting Louisiana's conservation efforts, including the creation of the Louisiana Outdoors Forever program. Kelby Ouchley of Rocky Branch was named Conservation Communicator of the Year

for his work “Bayou D’Arbonne Swamp: A Naturalist’s Memoir of a Place.” Finally, the Acadiana Native Plant Project received the Conservation Organization of the Year award for its achievements in promoting native plants and addressing environmental challenges in the Acadiana region.

Rebecca Triche, Executive Director of LWF, expressed admiration for the awardees, recognizing their exceptional contributions to conservation and education in the state. The Conservation Achievement Awards, represented by unique wildlife statuettes, were jointly presented by LWF and the National Wildlife Federation. The event also acknowledged the 2019 award recipients, highlighting the ongoing commitment of individuals and organizations to conservation efforts at local and national levels. Be on the lookout for news of the 58th Annual Conservation Achievement Awards and be sure to nominate your favorite conservationist. If you have any questions or are interested in sponsorship, please contact Nicole Falkenheiner at nicole@lawildlifefed.org. ■

Special thank you to this year’s sponsors:

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MEMORIAL GIFTS (JANUARY - JUNE 2023)

- In memory of William “Bill” Herke by Donald Grover
- In memory of Maxine (M. J.) Blanchard by Tom Richard
- In memory of William “Bill” Herke by Sandra Stedman





Photo credit: CPRA

LOUISIANA LEGISLATURE UNANIMOUSLY APPROVES COASTAL PLANS

by Stacy Ortego

Louisiana's 2023 Coastal Master Plan and Fiscal Year 2024 Annual Plan passed unanimously in the Louisiana Legislature.

The Coastal Master Plan serves as the state's \$50 billion, 50-year guiding document for planning coastal restoration and protection projects and, by law, must be updated every six years in order to incorporate the most recent science and environmental conditions.

The plan calls for 77 projects that can preserve, protect, and restore the vibrancy and the characteristics of the coast we call home and depend on. The projects identified in the master plan will restore and maintain over 300 square miles of Louisiana's coastal wetlands and reduce expected annual damage by up to \$15 billion compared to a future without action.

To accomplish this, \$25 billion would fund 65 restoration projects, including marsh creation, diversions, landbridges, ridge restorations, and hydrologic restoration projects. Twelve structural risk reduction projects, including new levees and improving existing structures to withstand greater storm surges would reduce flood damage by an estimated \$7.7 billion.

The plan also allocates \$11.2 billion to nonstructural risk reduction activities, such as residential elevations, commercial floodproofing, and voluntary acquisition of properties. Programmatic restoration efforts and small-scale strategies, such as bank stabilization and barrier island maintenance, would receive \$2.5 billion.

The Annual Plan, which is required by law to be updated each year, details projected revenues and expenditures and forecasts projects that will be undertaken by the state and its partners for the upcoming three years.

The FY24 Annual Plan projects revenues and expenditures of \$1.62 billion, which will be used to fund 147 projects across our coast. The plan outlines 21 dredging projects, which will utilize 77.3 million cubic yards of sediment to nourish over 14,500 acres of land across coastal Louisiana in the coming year. ■

SPANISH PASS: LOUISIANA'S NEWEST SIX MILES OF LAND

by Stacy Ortego

In May, LWF joined state and local officials for a ribbon cutting event to commemorate the completion of the Spanish Pass Increment of the Barataria Basin Ridge and Marsh Creation Project.

The project is one of several large-scale restoration projects that will benefit thousands of acres of marsh in the Barataria Basin and was a priority of the state's 2017 master plan. It is currently the largest marsh creation project to date, both in acres built and volume dredged.

Prior to the project, the land we stood on was open water and is now nearly 2,000 acres of restored marsh and ridge. Plaquemines Parish was ground zero for the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. The project is located approximately 50 miles from where the disaster struck in 2010.

The \$100 million project, funded with oil spill settlement dollars, began in September 2021 and built approximately 1,700 acres of habitat across six miles of ridge just west of Venice. In all, nearly 11 million cubic yards of sediment were pumped from the Mississippi River to build this latest stretch of Louisiana – an amount that, he said, would have taken over 2,500 dump trucks each day. That's enough material to fill the Superdome two and a half times.

Since 2007, over 19,000 acres of wetlands in the Barataria Basin have been restored. Additional restoration plans are laid out in the 2023 Coastal Master Plan, which identifies 13 projects totaling over \$6.5 billion for the Barataria Basin. Once implemented, those projects would restore and maintain over 300 square miles of Louisiana's coastal wetlands and reduce expected annual damage of up to \$15 billion.

Although natural vegetation is already populating some areas of the project, the ridge habitat has also been planted with woody stemmed species of trees and shrubs to mimic natural ridges. Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program (BTNEP) cultivated plants for this project at their plant production facility on the campus of Nicholls State University.

"When I first started at CPRA, we were building restoration projects that were creating about 300-400 acres of land. Today, we are building projects that are creating 1,800-2,000 acres of land per project. This is what progress looks like," said CPRA Chairman Chip Kline. ■

Photo credit: CPRA





Photo credit: Jennifer Strom

CERTIFIED WILDLIFE HABITAT

The Certified Wildlife Habitat Program, initiated by the National Wildlife Federation (NWF), is a groundbreaking initiative aimed at encouraging individuals, schools, businesses, and communities to create and maintain sustainable habitats for wildlife. By transforming gardens, yards, and public spaces into havens for native plants and animals, participants contribute to the preservation of biodiversity and support local ecosystems. The program offers a straightforward and flexible process for certification, requiring participants to fulfill specific criteria related to providing essential elements for wildlife including food sources, water, cover, and places for raising young. Once certified, participants receive recognition for their efforts that include complimentary one year membership to Louisiana Wildlife Federation, a subscription to Wildlife Magazine, and a substantial metal sign for your garden to let everyone know about your commitment to wildlife habitats.

Participants in the Certified Wildlife Habitat Program play a pivotal role in creating a healthier and more sustainable environment for wildlife and people alike. Beyond the benefits to wildlife populations, certified habitats provide educational opportunities, promote community engagement, and enhance the overall beauty of the community. Additionally, by adopting



sustainable practices and reducing the use of chemicals, certified habitats contribute to safeguarding the health of our natural environment, especially our pollinators. Whether in urban settings or rural landscapes, the Certified Wildlife Habitat Program empowers individuals and communities to take meaningful action in protecting our state's precious wildlife and fostering a deeper connection with nature. This year alone, the Louisiana Wildlife Federation has added 46 new Certified Wildlife Habitats to the state. For more information on becoming certified or hearing more information, contact Nicole Falkenheiner at nicole@lawildlifefed.org. ■



BUSINESS ALLIANCE

The Louisiana Wildlife Federation invites you to join hands in preserving our state's precious natural resources, a cause that aligns seamlessly with the interests of businesses operating in Louisiana. Embracing the beauty and abundance of our outdoor opportunities enhances the appeal of Louisiana as a vibrant place to live and work, thereby bolstering our collective economic prosperity. By forging a partnership between the LWF and Louisiana's visionary business leaders, we can strengthen the vital link between our economy and the protection of our invaluable natural assets. Your organization can play a crucial role in shaping a brighter future for our beloved Sportsman's Paradise, ensuring its pristine allure for generations to come.

If you own a business or know a business that might be interested in joining our Business Alliance, please contact Nicole Falkenhainer at 225-344-6707 or nicole@lawildlifefed.org. For more information visit lawildlifefed.org. ■

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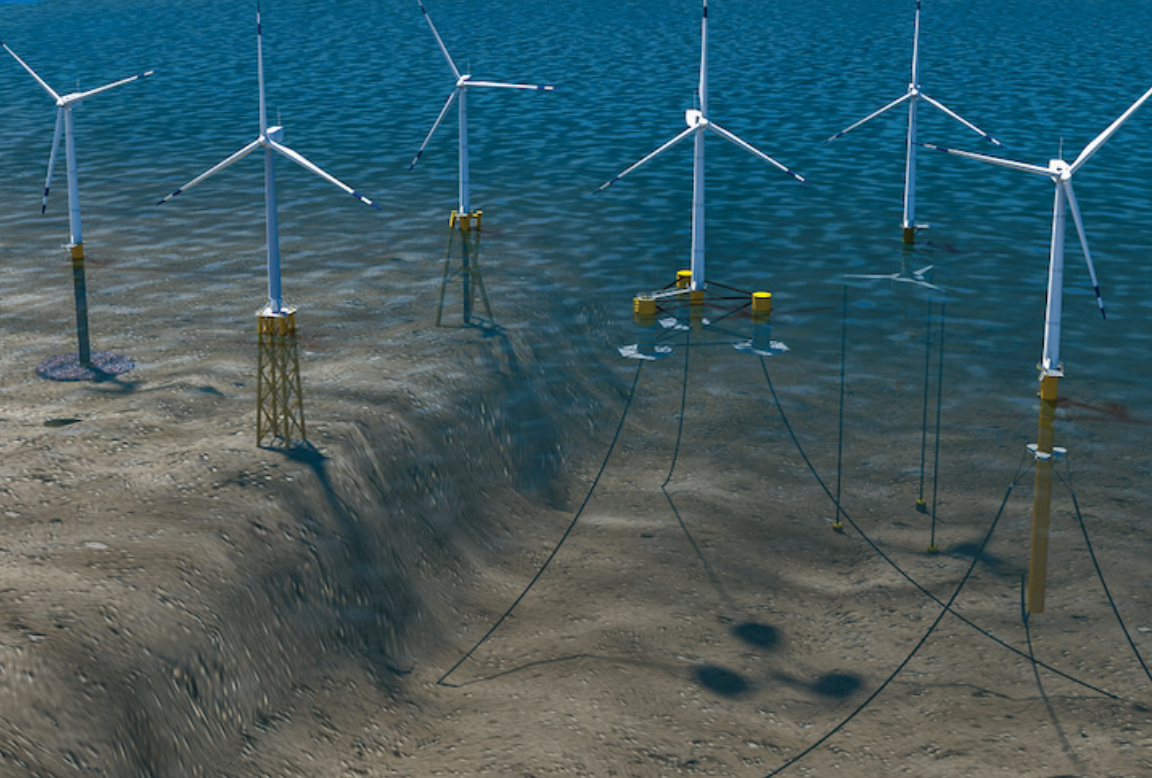


YOUR BANK FOR ALL SEASONS

As a member of Louisiana Wildlife Federation, you can become a member of Essential.



NCUA



LWF POSITION ON OFFSHORE WIND ENERGY IN THE GULF OF MEXICO

by Stacy Ortego

In 2020, Governor Edwards created the Climate Initiatives Task Force to ‘develop policies to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions that are driving up global temperatures, increasing sea level and other risks that threaten our health and safety, quality of life, economic growth, and vital habitats and ecosystems’ and charged the Task Force with making recommendations to reach net zero emissions by 2050. Louisiana’s first Climate Action Plan was approved in 2022 and included offshore wind energy production in the Gulf.

This plan fits into the nation’s larger goals to generate 30 gigawatts of offshore wind capacity by 2030. Last year, the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) finalized the first two Wind Energy Areas (WEA) for development in the Gulf of Mexico, located off the coasts of Galveston and Lake Charles.

LWF has been paying attention to the issue and discussing environmental concerns related to this activity, with particular focus on migratory birds. In February 2023, LWF’s board of directors passed a resolution related to this emerging industry in Gulf of Mexico waters (lawildlifefed.org/resolutions).

While Louisiana is still years away from having turbines in federal waters, it’s important to be involved early in the process to ensure that wind projects are sited, developed, operated, and decommissioned responsibly.

In February 2023, BOEM published a Proposed Sale Notice (PSN) in the Federal Register. The PSN described proposed areas that could be available for leasing, proposed conditions and stipulations of a lease, bidding credits that could be available to qualified bidders, proposed auction format and procedures, and the process for issuing a lease.

LWF signed on to a comment letter with other organizations and submitted those comments to BOEM as part of the public comment period for the PSN. Read those comments online at lawildlifefed.org/policy-center.

LWF's board of directors have approved a resolution urging that plans for all phases of offshore wind energy development in the Gulf of Mexico are done so responsibly by following the mitigation hierarchy to first avoid, then minimize and mitigate impacts from development. Additionally, this development should be guided by the best available scientific and technological data and remain adaptable as additional knowledge becomes available.

While LWF recognizes the use of offshore wind to meet the state and the nation's emissions reduction goals, LWF insists on strict standards, parameters, and barriers to entry for developers to meet these standards. Just as importantly, LWF also urges the development of this industry to include meaningful engagement with state and local governments and stakeholders from the outset.

Although federal projects are still years away from being out in the Gulf, what could be coming sooner are projects in state waters, which follows a completely separate permitting process. In June, LWF signed onto a letter with other groups expressing serious concerns to the Department of Natural Resources. We have serious concerns about whether offshore wind in state waters can meet the criteria of responsible development, particularly under the current permitting regime, which lacks a robust environmental analysis and comprehensive siting process.

In our federal advocacy, we have stressed that the unique characteristics of nearshore waters in general, in combination with the ecological importance and sensitivity of Louisiana's coastal habitat specifically, underscore the importance of making environmentally-informed siting decisions. The Gulf's nearshore and coastal waters (<20 nautical miles) contain the most biologically productive areas.

During the federal comment process for siting offshore wind in the Gulf of Mexico, in which the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) solicits stakeholder and expert input to help inform its siting decisions, we cautioned against permitting offshore wind turbines within 20 nautical miles from shore.

Whether the project is located in state waters or federal waters, each location and project require thorough analysis and scrutiny. Ultimately, projects will be evaluated based on whether or not they can be responsibly developed at a particular location, meaning, in part, whether or not the risks offshore wind poses to wildlife and habitat can be sufficiently avoided, minimized, and mitigated to reduce significant adverse impacts.

Louisiana's wetlands and coastal waters create a productive and vital ecosystem that supports numerous species of marine mammals, sea turtles, birds, fish, invertebrates, and habitats. Our evaluation of projects in state waters will use a science-based approach to assess the unique characteristics of the Louisiana Coastal Zone to help advise the state in its siting decisions. LWF will continue to work with partners in evaluating siting decisions at both the federal and state level. ■

LWF'S POSITION ON CARBON SEQUESTRATION, CLASS VI WELLS

By Rebecca Triche, Executive Director

Impact on wildlife and the habitat they depend on is a primary reason LWF takes a position. The site of a proposed project is what usually draws the attention of LWF members. Discussions around proposed projects for carbon capture, utilization, and storage (CCUS) in Louisiana grabbed LWF leaders and members for a closer look.

LWF supports CCUS to reduce CO₂ emissions but not sited in Lake Maurepas. Please read the full position and background information at lawildlifefed.org/resolutions.

LWF does acknowledge that CCUS is an effective process when properly regulated and monitored and can help advance the federal and state goals of reducing carbon emissions in the short term as the world transitions to more renewable energy production.

However, LWF opposes a CCUS project sited in Lake Maurepas due to its unique ecologically important estuarine system. Concerns about the negative impact in Lake Maurepas (it's not a lake but an estuary) are that adequate mitigation of damage cannot be guaranteed; scenic value and recreational use would be greatly diminished; lifecycle of shrimp, crab and fish for both recreational and commercial fishing that would be disrupted by seismic testing and over-dredging the water bottoms for deepening transport channels; continued impacts on the water bottom from project construction, pipelines, and subsequent monitoring that would diminish water quality and the disrupt the benthic zone, which diminishes wildlife habitat and the food chain in estuaries.

LWF also commented on the US EPA granting the State of Louisiana primary responsibility – or primacy – to approve permits for Class VI wells. Only two have been permitted in the U.S.

With certain qualifications related to the State's ability to deploy an effective, expanded Underground Injection Control Program (UIC) to administer, implement, and enforce the federal Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) as it relates to Class VI injection wells, then, LWF supports the State of Louisiana's application for primacy.

First and foremost, LWF shares the belief that a state's UIC program must meet strict safeguards when considering a Class VI well permit application to ensure protection of the public's drinking water. However, Louisiana's past experience with industrial development, including abandoned oil and gas wells and coastal damage from energy development and pipeline activities, gives rise to concerns that the State may not adequately administer and enforce the UIC program's laws and regulations, particularly as they relate to holding applicants accountable for the impact of their drilling.

LWF comments include concerns for environmental justice; siting; public input and engagement; staffing; application transparency; and evaluating Louisiana's performance as a permitter. ■

LIGHTS OUT LOUISIANA

Turn off your lights every
night from 11PM - 6AM



SAVE THE BIRDS

MIGRATION:

August 15 - November 15

LIGHTS OUT FOR MIGRATORY BIRDS

By Charles Williams, LWF Board member

LWF has a large contingent of birders among its members, including several affiliate Audubon Society chapters and independent birding clubs. Several years ago we formed an Avian Conservation Committee to discuss and address the status of non-game birds that spend their winters in Central America, South America, and the Caribbean, and return in the Spring to nest and raise young here or further north, then go back south in the Fall. Our incoming migration across the Gulf and up the coast of Texas is concentrated mainly in April and May, while the fall reverse migration is a little more spread out, encompassing the last week or two of August, September, October, and early November.

These neo-tropical migrants include a wide variety of species that are eagerly sought out by birders—warblers, finches, thrushes, flycatchers, swallows, and sparrows. Destinations on our Louisiana coast, particularly Grand Isle and Cameron Parish, and all the way down the Texas Gulf coast are popular spots for birders to converge in the Spring and Fall. Many of these birders have noticed declining numbers of many species. A study published in 2019 concluded that our North American bird populations collectively have fallen by 29% since 1970! The reasons for this shocking statistic are many, and vary by species, but a significant factor is mortality from bird collisions with buildings. These collisions occur during the night when birds become disoriented by our heavily lighted urban areas with bright lights and reflective glass. The lighting coupled with certain weather conditions, especially wind speed and direction and periods of fog and low cloud cover, can create episodes of large bird kills in addition to the “routine” daily kills of a few birds here and there. In one well-documented case in 2017, a single office building in Galveston, Texas, killed over 400 birds in a single night.

In the big picture of the 29% decline in bird populations, building collisions are estimated to cause between 385 million and a billion bird deaths each year, and are believed to be the third largest cause of bird population declines, behind only habitat loss (inclusive of climate change) and predation by cats. The problem is not confined to large, well-lit office and industrial buildings.

My personal residence in a wooded suburban neighborhood in Baton Rouge (Greenwell Springs) has killed several birds in the past ten years, most recently a wood thrush which is one of the species that has been most drastically affected by population decline, estimated at 60% during the period when the more general decline was half that. This species is one that the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service has categorized as being “of conservation concern,” meaning that this species with its incredibly melodious song could be in danger of falling into endangered status if the trend is not reversed.

The bird deaths in Texas prompted several conservation organizations to organize a “Lights Out Texas” campaign designed to darken the landscape during the spring and fall migrations in order to reduce bird deaths. Laura Bush, a lifelong birder, was honorary chair of this project which now engages hundreds of Texas birders in the spring and fall, seeking to identify problematical structures in cities and to ask owners/managers to modify their lighting. Other American cities that straddle major migration routes are also initiating campaigns to lower or turn off lights to help stem the carnage, with public buildings leading the way to save both birds’ lives and the wasted energy of excessive night lighting. Campaigns to observe “lights out” generally encourage buildings to darken between 11 pm and 6 am. LWF has initiated an effort to create awareness of this problem in Louisiana.

Individuals have a role to play in reducing bird deaths from building collisions. At your home keep exterior lights off or in a downwardly directly position as much as possible from 11 pm to daylight. Turn off interior lights that are behind large windows near vegetation, water sources, or bird feeders (or just close your blinds or curtains). During the day, use of decals of birds of prey can also be helpful if placed on or hanging in front of large windows that have killed birds. If you work in an office building, observe the nighttime lighting of the building and if it appears excessive, talk to the building manager, or ask your boss to do so. In many cases, you’ll find that the excessive lighting is either inadvertent or just a bad habit from the days when energy wasn’t as precious as it now is.

So, now back to the question of the efficacy of individual action. My house has killed at least five birds in the past ten years, including that wood thrush that’s a species on the conservation concern list. There are currently about 125,000 owner-occupied housing units in EBR Parish, and if my house’s kill rate of .5 birds per year is assumed for all such units in the parish, the annual death toll at single-family residences before conservation measures is 62,500 individual birds! At our house we have taken steps toward elimination of this source of bird population decline and we urge others to do so.

Yes, a bird here... a bird there... a small effort by everyone can slow or maybe even turn around the decline in our migratory birds. We ask our members and all Louisiana property owners to join us in a collective effort by embracing “lights out.”

For those who wish to delve further into this topic, I recommend the following sources:

1. LWF’s resolution recommending “lights out to save migrating birds” adopted earlier this year. See “Our Positions” tab at lawildlifefed.org/resolutions.

2. Summer 2023 issue of National Wildlife, published by the National Wildlife Federation, contains an article “Needing the Night” about the problem of light pollution. In addition to the impact on migrating birds, light pollution has adverse effects on many species including monarch butterflies, bats, sea turtles, and fireflies.

3. Former First Lady Laura Bush’s op-ed piece in the Dallas Morning News of March 14, 2021. Mrs. Bush grew up in Midland, Texas, and has been a birder all her life. She was the initial honorary chair of the Texas Lights Out program.

4. September 2019 article from the online Science that identified the full scope of the avian decline problem, quantifying the North American decline at three billion birds (29%) since 1970.

5. The USFWS’s Birds of Conservation Concern 2021, a report on species that have suffered disproportionate declines and could fall into “threatened” or even “endangered” status if the trend is not reversed. ■

LOUISIANA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY PRESIDENT’S AWARD PRESENTED TO LWF

Louisiana Ornithological Society (LOS) presented a President’s Award for 2023 to LWF at their Spring Meeting in Hackberry. LWF is honored to be recognized for decades of commitment to habitat conservation and enhancing Louisiana’s resources for birds and other wildlife.

Rebecca Triche, LWF executive director, and Charles Pfeifer, LWF board member, accepted the award on behalf of LWF, which was presented by Marty Guidry, Chairperson of LOS Awards Committee. Thank you, LOS. ■





2023 LOUISIANA LEGISLATURE REPORT TO MEMBERS

by Rebecca Triche, LWF Executive Director

LWF monitors the state legislature on behalf of our members for issues involving wildlife management, environmental quality, and outdoor recreation. LWF does not take a position on all of the bills we track. This year LWF offered bill tracking on the website and you can view selected bills at lawildlifefed.org/lwf-legislature. You can also search for all bills from the fiscal-only session of 2023 at legis.la.gov.

The hottest topic became the many bills filed to restrict carbon sequestration in Lake Maurepas and other areas of the state. LWF adopted a position generally in support of the benefits of carbon sequestration to reduce carbon emissions overall. But LWF does not support projects in Lake Maurepas due to concerns about it being an estuary and other habitat and wildlife impacts. The bill HB571 (now Act 378) by Rep. Clay Schexnayder, Speaker of the House, was the only one to pass. It added more requirements about notifications of proposed projects at local levels, added increased environmental analysis to

the permit application, sharing lease funds with parishes affected if a project is built on state lands, increased funding paid into a trust fund, and increased the operator's responsibility from 10 years to 50 years after cessation of injection of carbon in a well. The bill addressed "cradle to grave" concerns about Class VI wells to not leave future citizens of Louisiana with the responsibility for problems that may occur. (Louisiana has enough orphaned oil and gas wells.)

The Department of Natural Resources was renamed the "Department of Energy and Natural Resources" and that says something about the focus right now.

The six-year update to the state's Coastal Master Plan passed the legislature unanimously. The annual plan for spending on coastal restoration was again one of the highest spending years planned for the coast so far.

Bills seeking to dedicate funding from alternative energy development in the coastal zone to coastal restoration did not make it through the process this year.

The legislature established the Louisiana Office of Resilience.

Rep Hodges's bill to exempt Amite River and Blind River from scenic rivers protection did not pass out of committee. LWF testified as did other organizations that this was not necessary to accomplish the purposes it was seeking to address.

Rep Mincey's bill requesting a study of use of deer dogs in Lake Maurepas passed. Look for that report in 2024.

A bill requesting the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries to study the feasibility of allowing a black bear hunting season passed. Look for that report in 2024.

Two bills on menhaden management did not get heard in committee.

Rep Polly Thomas' bill to urge Louisiana state agencies to prioritize native plant species in landscaping state properties passed.

Rep Mandy Landry's bill to establish a tax credit for restaurants that recycle oyster shells passed.

Senator Hewitt's bill to re-establish the Lower Pearl River Basin Task Force passed, which will help as projects in the upper parts of Pearl River are being proposed that could have serious impacts downriver.

Senator Robert Mills' bill SB 90 sought to require an entity to enter a cooperative agreement when withdrawing running surface waters and establish a fair market value for it. The laws about this are lax at best but this bill did not pass out of committee. Keep watching for more water management laws – it's important for the future of the resource.

The White Lake Wetlands Conservation Area did not get badly needed funding for repairs despite excess and surplus dollars in the state's coffers. It was all politics.

LWF asks members and followers to speak up on important issues and when you do, it is noticed by lawmakers! If you're not already receiving our e-mail alerts (weekly at most), you can sign up at the website: lawildlifefed.org. ■

WILDLIFEUNITE 2023: LWF ATTENDS NWF ANNUAL MEETING IN LAKE TAHOE



This June, LWF board members Marty Floyd and Jonny Fryar, and Coastal Policy Manager Stacy Ortego joined the National Wildlife Federation (NWF) and their state affiliates for their annual meeting. WildlifeUnite is the annual gathering of wildlife conservation leaders from across the nation to develop skills, share information and set strategy.

NWF's national conservation policies are set by their affiliates through resolutions, which are deliberated and voted on by affiliate delegates. LWF's Marty Floyd and Jonny Fryar serve as LWF's delegate and alternate delegate, respectively. Both serve

on a committee, which considers related resolutions. Marty chaired the Wildlife Protection Committee. Jonny served on the Climate and Energy Committee.

In total, eight resolutions were considered and approved. Three of those resolutions focused on clean energy, calling for responsible development of offshore wind and solar energy while limiting harms and impacts from a clean energy transition and deepening collaboration with Tribal partners and impacted communities. Resolutions also called for a holistic approach to sustainability in the clean energy supply chain.

Other resolution topics included protecting and enhancing revenue from hunting and fishing taxes for the restoration and conservation of fish and wildlife resources, environmental justice, reaffirmation of NWF's commitment to collaborating with tribes, increasing research and funding of biological control against invasive insects and weeds in Hawaii, and support for the designation of the Pacific Remote Islands as a National Marine Sanctuary.

In a learning session centered on tribal partnerships, Marty discussed LWF's work with the Tunica-Biloxi Tribe of Louisiana. "We were able to provide the NWF affiliates with copies of the Tunica Coloring Book of Animals and mentioned the upcoming Biloxi Coloring Book. I also talked about our work helping to provide feathers for the tribe's religious ceremonies and being a liaison with NRCS for establishment of native river cane (for basketry work) and other native plants."

It was a great opportunity to meet with other affiliates across the country – and seeing Ranger Rick is always fun! ■





CRAWFISHES IN LOUISIANA

Jay V. Huner, Louisiana Ecrevisse, Boyce, LA

We harvest and consume millions of pounds of crawfish from over a quarter of a million acres of ponds and natural swamps and marshes. The dominant species is the red swamp crawfish, *Procambarus clarkii*, with lesser volumes of the white river crawfish, *Procambarus zonangulus*. Most readers would be surprised, however, to learn that at least 34 other species of crawfish have been recorded in our state. In all likelihood, at least 6 more species probably occur here (and maybe more).

Are there many different species of crawfish, you ask? In fact, around 400 species have been identified in North America. The State of Georgia is home to around 100 species and is considered, therefore, the epicenter of crawfish speciation for the family Cambaridae. Australia is home to over 100 species belonging to the family Parastacidae. Some of those species can grow to weights exceeding 10 pounds. Europe is home to only four native crawfish species of the third crawfish family Astacidae.

All crawfish species construct burrows where they retreat during dry periods and lay and incubate their eggs. The late Dr. Horton H. Hobbs, Jr. was the foremost crawfish taxonomist in North America and categorized crawfishes according to the kinds of burrows they constructed.

Some crawfishes are associated with permanent water bodies – lakes, ponds, rivers, and streams. These make very simple burrows. Other crawfishes are associated with temporary water bodies ranging from seasonally flooded swamps and marshes to wet meadows. Burrows range in complexity from

simple tubes 3-7 feet in depth to highly complex multi-tunnel labyrinths that can extend 20-30 feet in depth to permanent ground water.

Crawfishes dwelling in various forms of temporary water bodies are classified as tertiary, secondary, and primary burrowers. Tertiary burrows are the simplest and primary burrows are the most complex.

When a crawfish constructs a burrow, it brings mud pellets to the surface and arranges them in a circle around the opening. These pellets eventually form a chimney/turret. Depending on the length of a burrow and the size of the crawfish, a chimney might be as tall as a foot or more and ten inches across. There may be so many crawfish in a colony of secondary and primary burrowers that whole fields can be covered with hundreds of chimneys!

It never ceases to amaze me that many people, even native Louisianians, don't know what constructed the chimneys that seem to appear magically, overnight in wet meadows (including yards) especially in early spring when the crawfish become active with the advent of warm rains.

Crawfish are semi-aquatic in that they can survive out of water as long as their gill chambers, located between their body walls and the outer, hard carapace is wet. Atmospheric oxygen moves into water in the cavity and then into the gills. Carbon dioxide moves the other direction. Yes, there is water in burrows but it has very little dissolved oxygen in it. Decomposing organic matter in the soil uses most of the oxygen leaving too little to support a crawfish in its burrow. Even stale air in a burrow is full of oxygen – around 21 %.

Clay shrinks when it dries and swells when it is wetted. During wet periods, the clay around a burrow shrinks and its resident(s) has to remove the swollen clay and dispose of it on the surface in the form of chimney. So, you ask, what happened to the old chimneys where the new ones appear? They were washed away long ago by rain, simple as that. Sun dried crawfish chimneys are formidable, especially to lawn mower blades. However, they are not fired like the clay used to make clay objects. As a result, they readily melt away when rain falls or an area is flooded.

Crawfish have to keep their burrows sealed during dry weather to sustain the water in them. They will plug them at the surface and line the inner surfaces with wet clay identical ceramic “slip” to seal them.

All identified species have a two-word scientific name – a genus name and a specific name. In his book “Crawfishes of Louisiana” (2009, LSU Press, Baton Rouge) Jerry G. Walls identifies the following Louisiana genera *Orconectes* (5 species), *Faxonella* (3 species), *Cambarus* (2 species), *Procambarus* (19 species), *Fallicambarus* (4 species), and *Cambarellus* (2 species). [Cambarellus species crawfishes are dwarfs, rarely growing more than an inch in size.]

If you take the time to look carefully at crawfish caught in different environments, you'll see that they vary in colors, claw shapes, and abdomen (tail) sizes. The Lowland Painted Crawfish is a common species in permanent waterbodies in the northern part of Louisiana. It has broad claws and a substantial tail, something needed for rapidly swimming backward away from predators. Color is basically light gray with black spotting and red and blue



Photo Credit: R. David Breithaupt

highlights. The Painted Devil Crawfish is a primary burrower rarely seen in open water. It has broad claws but a very reduced abdomen as it doesn't have to rush away backwards in a burrow from predators. Color is basically blue with bright orange highlights on the carapace and a single orange line extending across the middle of the carapace down the length of the tail.

Young crawfishes are generally greenish, gray in color, often with spots and stripes. In muddy water, they are much lighter than they are in dark, clear water. Claw shapes can vary from slender to broad depending on species. Adult colors, like dark red for Red Swamp Crawfish, don't appear until crawfish mature and stop molting-shedding their shells. ■

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of life. He is merely a strand of it.
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he does to himself.”**

*~ Chief Seattle, Chief
of the Suquamish and
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