

Around the Bayou



A SOUTH LOUISIANA FAMILY PICNIC FOR 600 You are hosting an event for over 600 people from Louisiana and surrounding states and you are looking for the perfect place that mixes fun, convenience, a unique Louisiana experience and great Louisiana food what do you do? The Louisiana Organ Procurement Agency recently hosted such an event and they chose the best attraction around, Alligator Bayou. For the third year in a row, on Saturday, April 2, our friends at Alligator Bayou hosted the 2005 Annual LOPA Family Picnic.

GATORS GONE A COURTIN' The gators are starting to show signs of breeding. We've seen some "courting" going on, and so we're going to start looking for nesting. The new gators are looking like they're starting to feel at home. Hannibal (in the original pit) has been watching the fence for interlopers and visiting with the females. We're crossing our fingers and waiting to see what happens!! Our new walkway has proven to be a great way to see the gators up close! Guests love being within a few feet, but safely out of reach of the gators.



COME STAY THE NIGHT Spring has sprung, and with the mild weather and explosion of life makes this a great time to visit the swamp. We've been seeing pelicans, the bald eagles, the Mississippi kites are back and we even saw a swallow-tailed kite on the tour. The gators are out in droves. The barred owls are calling at night. Romance is in the air!! And our Cajun Cottages are a perfect location to experience all of this and more.

ENVIROMENTAL IMPACT: AN ECOSYSTEM AT RISK



-Most wetlands in the United States are suffering from the impacts of urban sprawl and commercial development. The statistics are staggering. In America some estimates conclude that as much as 54% of the wetlands existing in colonial times, more than 100 million acres, have been destroyed. In addition to the endangered coastal wetlands, bottom land

Being lost with the habitats are the organisms that depend on them. By 1991, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service had placed more than 600 plants and animals on the protective list of endangered and threatened species. Fifty to 100 species are added to the list every year. This bigger picture underlines the importance of preserving and restoring the coastal wetlands and bottomland

The Spanish Lake Basin is not a stranger to the national statistics. The Basin has had a history of land use that has severely impacted its wetland ecosystem. Due to population and industrial expansion in the Greater Baton Rouge area, the outskirts of the city are being developed. The

Spanish Lake Basin is now ringed with a metro population of over 600,000 people and development is continuing. Developed areas surrounding the Basin include residential subdivisions, golf courses, two correctional facilities, an abandoned oil and gas field, pipelines, industries along the Mississippi River, waste mounds from area industries, and, to the north, Greater Baton Rouge. Each of these areas may contribute many types of pollution to the Basin, potentially endangering the lives and safety of wildlife and people. (CONT.)

From The Bayou



We have been really busy with tours and parties this spring - THANK YOU!! School field trips, corporate events, and swamp tours are in full swing. We have to admit that the school trips are some of the most rewarding - seeing the wide eyes, open mind and innocent curiosity of a first grader on our boat in the swamp with an alligator is without compare.

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EVERYTHING IS CONNECTED!

Everyone contributes to the pollution produced by the development and habitation of an area. Typically, new developments cut down trees and replace porous soil with impervious surfaces (i.e. cement, rooftops). The action of storm water racing over these surfaces and acquiring their pollutants (such as motor oil and other automobile chemicals, litter, and industrial chemicals) is called storm water runoff and is a significant contributor to water pollution. Storm water runoff, combined with poorly treated and untreated sewage contributes to urban runoff in the Basin. Urban runoff combined with agricultural runoff (animal waste, chemicals of agriculture

The history of the Spanish Lake Basin illustrates the truth of two basic environmental tenets "everything is connected to everything else" and "nothing goes away"; especially water pollution! Basically, Spanish Lake is affected by everything and everybody around it! Due to the hydrology of the Spanish Lake Basin, water polluted from development will drain to the lowest point, Spanish Lake, where it is likely to stay and concentrate. This pollution, combined with the deforestation accompanying development, can stress wildlife. With confined, polluted habitats, some species cannot survive and may become extinct, like the Carolina Parakeet.

So -If everyone contributes to the problem, then everyone can help to solve the problem. The health of the environment is an issue where anyone can participate and make a difference. In Chapter 7, students will be able to explore what is being done to help save the Spanish Lake Basin and how they can become a part of that effort.



THE MAGNIFICENT BALD CYPRESS: STILL AT RISK One of the wonders of swamps in the Southeastern United States, including Cypress Flats in the Spanish Lake Basin, is the Bald Cypress. Technically, the Bald Cypress is not a hardwood tree, but it shares many characteristics with hardwoods. As a key component in the low

Two major foes plague the development of the Bald Cypress. First, the nutria, an exotic pest, eats young plants. The nutria was introduced to southern Louisiana about a century ago. Upon escaping into the wetlands, the rodents began to systematically decimate the young cypress population. If the cypress escapes the nutria, the tree may have to face saltwater intrusion, an issue plaguing the wetlands of the Lake Pontchartrain Basin. Cypress trees are not salt tolerant and entire cypress forests in the Lake Pontchartrain Basin have died due to intrusion. Given these factors, one can begin to understand why there have been few successful cypress crops in southeastern Louisiana for several decades. Not only are the new crops facing challenges, the old stands are still in danger.

Old growth bald cypress once covered the Lower Mississippi River Valley. During a 40 year period around the turn of the twentieth century, virtually all of Louisiana's virgin cypress forests were cut and sold. The majority of old Louisiana homes and buildings were constructed of this outstanding wood. Second growth bald cypresses were seeded as loggers floated the old growth trees out of the forest. They are being harvested today, but are not nearly as durable or rot resistant as resinsaturated virgin wood. "Sinker Cypress" logs, which sank because of their cypressine resin content, were either lost by loggers or collapsed on their own as shorelines eroded. Now being recovered, the sunken logs are used as a fine building material even today. "Peccky Cypress" is another type of cypress used in decorative finishes. Hollows created by a wood eating fungus immune to the tree's resin distinguish it.

At Alligator Bayou, school groups and citizens wanting to restore the great cypress forests that are still at risk are planting cypress seedlings using cones harvested from Bluff Swamp.