GATOR GAZETTE

Brought to you by your friends at www.alligatorbayou.com

JUNE/JULY 2004

Vol. 1 No. 1

Around the Bayou

A Very Special Visit - On Saturday, May 29, 2004, the folks at Alligator Bayou hosted a special visit from the children of Cancer Services of Greater Baton Rouge.

Thirty guests from Cancer Services came for a morning full of entertainment and fun out in the swamps.

The children are part of two programs of Cancer Services of Greater Baton Rouge: Candlelighters and Kids Kare.

Candlelighters is a chapter of a national organization for children with cancer and their siblings. The name Candlelighters comes for the Chinese proverb, *"It is better to light one candle than to curse the darkness."*

Kids Kare is a program that began at Cancer Services in 1999 to help parents help their children cope with cancer in the family. Kids Kare serves any family with a child between the ages of four and sixteen who has a parent diagnosed with cancer.

"We had a fantastic time at Alligator Bayou." said Program Director Susan Moreland, "Jim and Frank have entertained and hosted our Candlelighters and our Kids Kare families before. Everyone there makes us feel so welcome, and they go out of their way to make sure the kids have a great time."

The morning consisted of a visit to the Turtle Exhibit with lots of alligator snapping turtles, snakes, fish and a few curious bullfrogs. Next was a wonderful swamp tour aboard the Alligator Queen which delighted the children and their families.

"It's such a nice break for the families to get away and have some fun and take their minds off all the difficulties of dealing with such a devastating illness. The kids always love coming and getting to see all the different critters and especially the baby alligator," added Moreland.

Alligator Bayou tours opened in 1997, when business partners and residents of Bluff Swamp, Frank Bonifay and Jim Ragland, discovered a desperate need in preserving the natural beauty that exists today at Bluff Swamp and surrounding wetland areas from the devastating effects of nearby development. This mission of Alligator Bayou Tours, www.alligatorbayou.com, is to educate local citizens, school children, and visitors about the wetlands and the cultural history of the Spanish Lake Basin.

Go online to read about ALLIGATOR BAYOU SUMMER TOURS

NATURE SCULPTS THE WETLANDS

The Geology & Hydrology of the Spanish Lake Basin

THE LAY OF THE LAND: GEOLOGIC TIMELINE

Geologic and hydrologic forces shaped the Spanish Lake Basin, a "bowl" of soil and water sculpted by rivers weathering and eroding the land over tens of thousands of years. Beginning 100,000 years ago, river systems built up a high terrace in the area of the Spanish Lake Basin and carved the valley that later became the Basin. Later, the salty waters of the Gulf of Mexico entered the valley and, as sea levels dropped, it filled with sediment again.

Approximately 4,800 years ago, the Mississippi River changed course, moving eastward from Bayou Teche in the Atchafalaya Basin to a channel running alongside the bluffs of Baton Rouge. From Baton Rouge, the river flowed down its present course past New Orleans into the Gulf of Mexico. Gradually,

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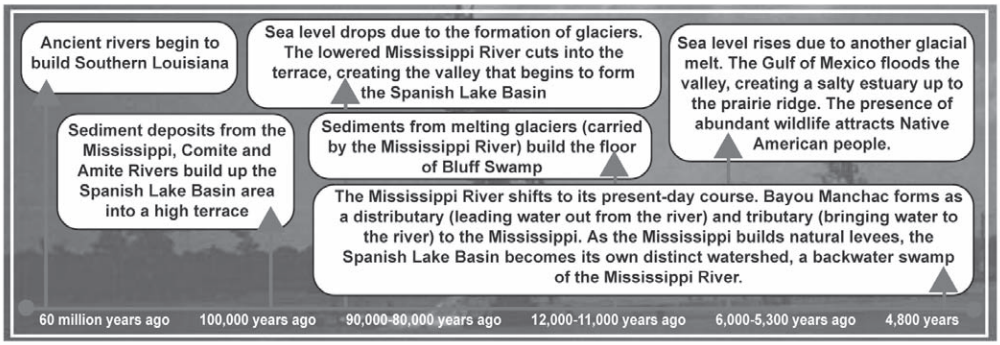
From The Bayou

Here we are - Dezins has gotten us to a second newsletter!! We're thrilled- with the great response we got from the first newsletter, and we're excited about all the works in progress. The turtle exhibit has really blossomed. We're getting new "drop offs" now - a new 40# alligator snapper, numerous cooters, snakes and fish. Some of our neighbors have also brought us some bullfrogs. Now we're hoping for some baby snakes and turtles.

ADDITIONAL ONLINE E-NEWSLETTER FEATURES:

- •MEET MORE OF THE STAFF
- •EDUCATIONAL TOURS
- •GATOR FUN
  - -Visitor Photos
  - -New Swamp Wallpaper
  - -Gator Quiz

FOR OUR FULL NEWSLETTER AND TO SUBSCRIBE TO THE GATOR GAZETTE...
Please visit us online at www.alligatorbayou.com/gatorgazette



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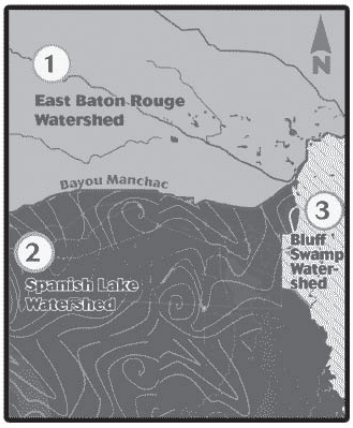
the modern river channel built up a natural levee on the western side of this valley. With this development, the valley was surrounded by a near circular ridge and became a distinct geologic formation: a wetland basin, or "bowl," extending from the east bank of the Mississippi River below Baton Rouge, along the high terrace, and back to the river's natural levee. An ecological masterpiece of open lakes, cypress tupelo swamp, bottomland hardwood forests, and distributary ridges was formed.

The Spanish Lake Basin was named for the scenic, mile wide lake near its center. For thousands of years, the Basin was a backwater swamp of the Mississippi River. In recent decades, however, hydrologic modifications (such as draining and filling wetlands and leveeing and channeling waterbodies) and urban development have reshaped and altered the natural processes of the Spanish Lake Basin.

RISING AND FALLING WATERS



The Spanish Lake Basin is different from many basins in having a flood drain cycle that is governed by three separate hydrologic systems. Together, these systems comprise a huge collecting basin, which receives the stormwater runoff of three Louisiana parishes: East Baton Rouge, Ascension, and Iberville.

1) Extends north from Bayou Manchac (East Baton Rouge Parish). For thousands of years, Bayou Manchac was a distributary and tributary. It carried Mississippi River floodwaters into the Lake Pontchartrain Basin, and when that basin's waters were high, the bayou reversed its flow and emptied into the Spanish Lake Basin! (Hydrologists find this two way movement of bayous quite irregular for a waterway.) However, Bayou Manchac has flowed only one way, into the Lake Pontchartrain Basin, since levees were built along the Mississippi River in 1826. Today, as rain rolls off impervious surfaces such as patios. parking lots.

2) The western side of the Spanish Lake Basin (Iberville parish) includes the habitats of hardwood forests, cypress tupelo swamps, bayous, and open lakes. This hydrologic system, bordered on the east by a manmade levee, covers most of the Basin and drains into Bayou Manchac.

3) The Bluff Swamp hydrologic system (Ascension Parish). This system is buffered from the open waters of Cypress Flats by a manmade levee. The swamn's thick vegetation absorbs some stormwater