

LA Wetland Education Coalition

Wetland News for February 2, 2005



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1. CNN Covers JASON Project: Students turn swamp into classroom

Monday, January 31, 2005

NEW ORLEANS, Louisiana (AP) -- Fourteen-year-old Kristen Magee knows all too well about Louisiana's disappearing wetlands. Her family's fishing camp had lots of land around it five years ago. Now there's almost none.

This week, she and 11 other students will appear in daily live satellite broadcasts to teach 1.7 million students around the world about Louisiana's wetlands loss and related topics.

Magee is a ninth-grader at Houma Junior High, an hour's drive from New Orleans. The others are from as far afield as New York, California and Mexico.

To read the remainder of the story, visit <http://www.cnn.com/2005/EDUCATION/01/31/swampy.school.ap/index.html>.

2. Wet, wild and disappearing

JAN 22, 2005, 10:53 AM CST

IN THE LOUISIANA WETLANDS We're out of the houseboat Wetland Wanderer before dawn, into a small, military-green motor-bateau.

C.C. Lockwood steers through the black water of Bay Wallace, into the wide Intracoastal Canal somewhere between Houma and Morgan City, La. A tug growls around the bend, pushing a six-barge tow and pulling a buoyant wake.

The bateau careens south into an arrow-straight channel an ever-widening oil service canal and runs up under a

clump of willow and red maple, on a mud flat on the spoil bank, facing east.

This is Big Sky country, south Louisiana-style.

Mr. Lockwood has been here many times, documenting sunrises over the broad, flat marsh panorama. He settles himself over his tripod as the eastern sky begins to turn a lemony pink and the fishermen zoom past, oblivious.

Soon, embers of sunrise glint through gunmetal clouds on the horizon and white chiffon fog trails across the marsh. To the left, a thick stand of cypress. To the right, a clump of spikey marsh grass just at the canal's edge.

Even an untrained eye can see the photographer's composition forming.

A flock of ibis glide past overhead in silhouette, their beaks cutting against the sky. Then a flock of ducks. Click, click, click, click, click. Mr. Lockwood's Nikon records the light turning from raspberry to too-bright orange-gold.

He and his wife have spent a year living aboard the houseboat as part of MarshMission, a project to document Louisiana's disappearing marshlands through art.

The loss of marshlands along Louisiana's coast is well-known a football field every 38 minutes, gone forever. But outside environmentalist circles, the problem has gone largely unnoticed because the affected areas are so sparsely populated.

Mr. Lockwood hopes the urgency scientists have been unable to coax about Louisiana's disappearing marshlands can be born from art.

He has teamed with Rhea Gary, a regional landscape painter, to translate with compelling images what environmentalists, geologists, natural resource

specialists, estuary experts and others know: that Louisiana's coastline is disappearing at a rate of 25 square miles per year and needs protection.

"We want to show the beauty, not the destruction," says Ms. Gary, "so people will know what we're losing."

In short, the artists are betting on the old adage that a picture is worth a thousand words.

The reasons why

It's no secret why the marshlands are disappearing. There's subsidence as river levees cause Mississippi River sediment to shoot over the Continental Shelf instead of rebuilding the land. There's saltwater intrusion and erosion due to the web of oil industry service canals cut through the wetlands. And there are the introduced species that crowd out native plants.

Scientists and engineers have identified some solutions, and some have already been put in place: sediment is diverted through man-made channels directly to the marsh; banks are stabilized by sustaining rock walls and zigzag wooden fences; marsh grass is protected and replanted; invasive species are eradicated.

Resources

For more information on the loss of the Louisiana wetlands:

- **MarshMission:** <<http://MarshMission.com>>
- **Louisiana Coastal Report:** <<http://www.lca.gov/index.htm>>
- **Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana:** <<http://www.crcl.org>>
- **America's Wetland:** <<http://www.americaswetland.com>>
- **Coast 2050:** <<http://www.coast2050.gov>>

But the losses continue to exceed the gains. A concerted program that targets the most effective projects would cost \$14 billion, according to government estimates. The only source for that kind of money is, of course, the federal government.

Groups like the Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana and the America's Wetland campaign argue that Louisiana's coastal loss is not just a Louisiana problem. Seventeen percent of the nation's oil and 25 percent of its natural gas comes from this area.

So does almost a third of the commercial fish and shellfish harvest in the lower 48 states. The investment in oil and gas infrastructure, deep-draft ports and the most active segment of the Intracoastal Canal are greatly threatened, as is the state's buffer against hurricanes and New Orleans going underwater.

Mr. Lockwood is on a first-name basis with many of the scientists who do the research and know the solutions. But he says most people aren't moved by the technical answers.

Coming to the coffee table

Mr. Lockwood and his wife, Sue, an elementary teacher, have made the Wetlands Wanderer their home while exploring the coastal wetlands.

Thirty of his photographs and 30 of Ms. Gary's paintings, the first segment of MarshMission, will be published by LSU Press next fall as a coffee table art book.

The images and an educational video also will be collected for a museum exhibit, first at the LSU Art Museum next October, then traveling nationally. And the artists will team up on as many speaking gigs as they can arrange.

Sue Lockwood's contribution during her year on the Wetland Wanderer was creating an ongoing coastal classroom and interactive correspondence via the Internet (www.MarshMission.com). She brought the wonders of the wetlands to 20 elementary school classes from across Louisiana, providing lesson plans, activities and a wetlands glossary "egg tooth a tough, horny piece of epidermis that a baby alligator uses to peck out of its shell."

Mark Davis, director of the Coalition to Save Coastal Louisiana, calls MarshMission a "terrific way of connecting people to our coast, so they can understand what a treasure it truly is."

"And ultimately why they need to help save it," Mr. Davis says.

Dr. Robert Twilley, director of the Wetland Biogeochemistry Institute, in LSU's Department of Oceanography and Coastal Science, says such projects are necessary because public access to wetlands is so limited.

He remembers the drought of 2000, which caused diebacks in the marsh. Georgia lost 100 acres; Louisiana lost 100,000 acres.

"But Georgia's was along I-95," Dr. Twilley said. "Thousands of people drove past every day and responded immediately."

Louisiana's marsh loss, meanwhile, went largely unnoticed. It became just another red dot in the smear of red and yellow loss indicators on the USGS Louisiana coastline map, 1932 to present, the Bible for people who keep track.

An artist's expression

Ms. Gary, a longtime professional artist, has been painting bold, abstract oils of the wetlands for a dozen years, ever since her son convinced her to visit the duck blind with him.

Her style has been called expressionist vivid colors, distorted images, and, by her own definition emotional and responsive.

In her paintings, red and maroon cypress trees and sweeps of marsh are delivered in vibrant strokes of orange, hot pink, lime green, azure, and banks of blue-

green and red willows and yellow water. The work is striking and dramatic, an artist's feelings about a swamp at sunset or a marsh vista on a hot May morning.

She's not particularly interested in details, doesn't need to know the name of the corn-yellow wildflowers nodding along the bank of an oil service canal or how to find an alligator's nest.

Ms. Gary said her paintings are an aesthetic response to the wetlands' beauty, something she felt long before a mutual friend connected her to C.C. Lockwood. "I've never understood people's complacency," she says.

Ms. Gary never spent a night on the houseboat during the project. Instead, she ventured to the coast, sometimes meeting the Lockwoods, sometimes driving around or puttering about in her own little bateau, rigged to hold an easel for her oil-on-paper sketches. But all of the 142 large oils she painted were created in her studio.

And, she adds, with a charming smile, "I really have learned a great deal about the science and the engineering."

In the moment

Mr. Lockwood, on the other hand, reads the landscape as if it came with directions.

Over a 30-year career as a nature photographer, he has learned to synthesize natural history, culture, geology, economic development and politics. His routine is to immerse himself in a place "to be out in it" in order to create visual commentary.

He started in 1972, a young man with energy and vision, living in a canoe in the Atchafalaya Basin for a week at a time. He was armed with a single camera, a tent and bedroll, and cans of tuna. This produced the first of his 10 books, a film, and speaking engagements by which a shy young man rallied concern for the endangerment of the country's largest river basin swamp.

Since then, as a naturalist and environmentalist, Mr. Lockwood has immersed himself in such places as the Gulf Coast, the Grand Canyon, the Mississippi River and the Yucatan Peninsula.

Today, at 55, his blond beard graying and his perpetually mussed blond hair thinning slightly, Mr. Lockwood is a man of energy and perspective. And he has come full circle: The Atchafalaya Basin swamp is a part of MarshMission.

The Lockwoods estimate that they covered 2,500 miles in the Jamestown houseboat, plus an additional 3,000 miles in the bateau.

Occasionally, they returned home to Baton Rouge to do laundry, catch up on paperwork, and drop off some of the 400 rolls of 36-exposure slide film shot so far, not including innumerable digital images.

The Lockwoods' year "being out in it" took them from the Sabine River to the Pearl River, inland to bays and lakes,

and offshore to the barrier islands. They witnessed sunrises and sunsets and weathered chill and heat and winds that blew the boxy white boat way off course, including a dramatic run to escape Hurricane Ivan in September.

And they faced the nightly gray veil of mosquitoes, which, they learned from a couple of rough Cajun fishermen who departed unceremoniously from their bayou porch, is called "the drop."

Mr. Lockwood is driven, in part, by what he saw here in the 1970s. Back then, he shot aerial photographs of Barataria Bay. "But when I try to match up those aerials with ones from today," he groans, "it's almost impossible."

Much of what used to be land is now open water. "And it's happening so fast it's scaring me."

Mary Ann Sternberg is a freelance writer and author based in Baton Rouge, LA

<http://www.dallasnews.com/sharedcontent/dws/dn/opinion/sundayreader/stories/012305dnedimarsh.842dd.html>

3. Georgia Adopt-A-Stream Program has great classroom wetland activities

The Georgia Adopt-a-Stream website has great activities on biological and chemical testing of a stream, wetland delineation(sp?), lakes and ponds, school activities (grade appropriate), on campus activities if you don't have access to a creek or wetlands, etc....

Visit <http://www.riversalive.org/aas.htm>.

4. Flower Garden Banks has great activity to show Gulf of Mexico watershed

The Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary has a watershed activity that is used to demonstrate what a large part of the U.S. drains into the Gulf of Mexico. It's designed for a level lower than high school, but might serve as an opening activity. Contact Kelly Drinnen, Education Specialist, Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary, 4700 Avenue U, M/A Building, Galveston, TX 77551. Ph) 409-766-3572. Email: <kelly.drinnen@noaa.gov> or visit <http://flowergarden.noaa.gov>.

5. The Earth Scientist (NESTA) requests K-12 earth science activities to publish

I am the new editor of The Earth Scientist, the journal of the National Earth Science Teachers Association. I would like to encourage teachers to submit original classroom activities on K-12 Earth

science topics to me for consideration for the journal. You can view the issue I just completed at <http://www.nestanet.org/journal.html> (download the pdf by right-clicking and choosing "save target as"). The issue has a page explaining journal article submission guidelines.

I also encourage you to join NESTA. Membership is only \$15 per year (or \$40 for three years) and you receive four copies of the journal, four newsletters, and special sessions at national meetings. A membership application is available on-line at <http://www.nestanet.org/member.html>.

Best wishes,
Michael J. Smith
Editor, The Earth Scientist
Earth Science Teacher, Newark, Delaware

6. Historical Significant Event Imagery (NOAA)

This site has hundreds of selected satellite images capturing some of the more important weather and environmental events over the last 30 years. In addition to pictures of hurricanes, tornadoes, and other severe storms, there is a satellite imagery of the recent Indonesian tsunami. Visit <http://www5.ncdc.noaa.gov/cgi-bin/hsei/hsei.pl?directive=welcome>

7. SUPERCOURSE TSUNAMI (University of Pittsburgh)

The purpose of this PowerPoint lecture is to synthesize the best possible scholarly information on the South Asia tsunami disaster and make it available to educators. This presentation represents the efforts of four disaster experts from Iran, Russia and the United States. Visit <http://www.pitt.edu/~super1/lecture/lec18091/index.htm>

8. ARMADA Project- Research and Mentoring Experiences for Teachers

Application deadline is February 14, 2005

Submit an application to the ARMADA Project that provides K-12 teachers an opportunity to actively participate in ocean, polar, and environmental science research and peer mentoring.

Selected Master Teachers (with five or more years teaching experience) are paired with leading

scientists and participate in shipboard, field, or laboratory research with all expenses paid. Research experiences will take place during the summer, although there may be opportunities during the school year. Upon completion of their research experience, Master Teachers develop ways to bring the fruits of their research experiences, including scientific data, methodologies, and technology into their classrooms. They share their experiences by mentoring new teachers in their school district and by presenting their results at the National Science Teachers Association National Conventions.

The ARMADA Project has involved teachers in research experiences all over the world. Past experiences include taking part in the largest North Pacific humpback whale study in the waters off the coast of Alaska, investigating the impacts of global change in the Arctic Ocean, tracking juvenile bull sharks in the Indian River Lagoon, studying the impact of human activity on dusky dolphins in New Zealand, assisting with testing new technologies used in deep water excavation of ancient shipwrecks in the Black Sea, water circulation studies in the Norwegian Sea, and a variety of ecosystem monitoring projects in the Bay of Fundy, Narragansett Bay, Gulf of Maine, Stellwagen Bank, Western Shelf of Florida, and Block Island Sound. More information on past research experiences can be found on the ARMADA Project website.

For more information about teacher qualifications, responsibilities, and to download an application (**deadline is February 14, 2005**) see the ARMADA Project website www.armadaproject.org or contact Andrea Kecskes at 401-874-6211 or armada@gso.uri.edu.

The ARMADA Project is funded by the National Science Foundation and administered by the University of Rhode Island's Office of Marine Programs.

9. Thibodaux Daily Comet runs series on the JASON Project

Log on to read a 3-day series in the Thibodaux Daily Comet about the JASON Disappearing Wetlands Expedition. The series ran January 26 – 28! Visit <http://www.dailycomet.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20050127/NEWS/501270313/1013>

10. LAWEC-L LISTSERVE INFORMATION

- **Description of this listserve:** A listserve serving educators interested in LA wetlands.
- **To send a message of your own to the listserv:** email LAWEC-L@LISTSERV.LSU.EDU and type your message into the body of the email. The message will be distributed to ALL PARTICIPANTS subscribing to the listserve. As a participant, you are welcome to send messages to educators subscribing to the LA Wetland Education Consortium listserve. We ask that participants focus their emails on educational opportunities and materials *directly related to wetland education*.
- **To UNSUBSCRIBE from this listserve:** email LAWEC-L@LISTSERV.LSU.EDU and enclose the following single line in the body of the email
unsubscribe LAWEC-L
- **To SUBSCRIBE to this listserv:** email LISTSERV@LISTSERV.LSU.EDU, with only the following line listed in the body of the email:
subscribe lawec-l YourFirstName YourLastName

For example:

subscribe lawec-l John Doe

NOTE: You should not put anything in the subject line and should remove any automatic signatures from the email, otherwise the signup process will not work. You will get a return message indicating that you have been subscribed to the listserve along with information on other listserve operations you can perform (such as unsubscribe, etc.). If you have trouble, email Dr. Pam Blanchard at <pamb@lsu.edu>.

Please do not reply to the entire list unless you want everyone to read your message!
