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## **"A PRAIRIE CHICKEN IN EVERY PLOT"**

**VOLUME 24, July 2005**

### **PRESIDENT'S CORNER:**

Hello once again! Well summer is definitely here and it is hot, but it's never too hot to get out and enjoy the prairie. If you don't have a chance to get out to Eunice and see the prairie individually, there's good news, we have our meeting in August. So come out, enjoy the prairie, and visit with everyone the weekend of August 26-28<sup>th</sup>.

Now for a little business talk. As many of you know, from the discussion at the last meeting, we have decided to sell the rights to the seeds at the Eunice prairie. This will hopefully bring in some extra money very easily, meaning we will not have to collect and process the seeds. As you all know, it is a lot of work to collect the seeds, not to mention the processing and storage of the seeds. As of now we are still working out the kinks with the idea of allowing someone or some agency to come and collect the seeds for their own use. Also as was discussed at the last meeting, we have reached an agreement with the USFWS for the Society to take over management of the Duralde Prairie. This agreement basically states that we, the Society, will be able to make recommendations on the management and upkeep of the Duralde Prairie, with the assistance of the USFWS. We will not be able to make any profit from the Duralde Prairie, but we can use the area and seeds collected from the Duralde Prairie for other prairie projects, research projects and etc. at the Duralde Prairie. I believe this is a great addition for the CPHPS, and hopefully will give our Society more publicity. Also, with the Eunice prairie, we are still in the processing and organizing stage of getting to work on the parking lot construction. As you all know, this process takes time. We are trying not to drag our feet, but with our own busy work and personal schedules, we are doing our best. We will have an update on these and any other old and new business issues at our next meeting. Speaking of meetings, our meeting has been set the weekend of August 26-28<sup>th</sup>. So put this on your calendar and make plans now to attend. As usual, we will have our typical tours of the local prairies and our business meeting, with a guest speaker. The speaker for the upcoming meeting will be one of our own society members and past presidents, Marc Pastorek. He will be speaking on "Meadow Making." This will for sure be an outstanding presentation that I know you all will want to hear and be a part of. I am excited and looking forward to the meeting in August and hope to see each and every one of you in August.

Until then...

Sara Thames  
President, CPHPS

# **The Duralde Prairie Restoration Project, Cajun Prairie on a Federal Refuge**

By : Charles Allena and Vicky Grafe; from Proceedings of the 3rd Eastern Native Grass Symposium

## **Background**

The landscape image for Louisiana in many people's minds, is often that of a swamp or marsh so it usually comes as a surprise to many people that there is (or more correctly, was) a well developed prairie (some estimates up to 2.5 million acres) in Louisiana (Allen and Vidrine 1989 ; Allen et al 2000). Much of southwestern Louisiana inland from the marsh, south of the pine savannah region, and between the Atchafalaya and Sabine rivers was historically a distinct grassland. Early names given to the region include Attakapas Country and the Great Southwestern Prairie but a more fitting name is Cajun Prairie since most of the early European settlers were Cajuns. This prairie was developed in an area that receives more than 50 inches of rainfall per year; forests usually develop in areas with more than 30 inches of rainfall per year. Plausible explanations for the prairie development in this area include: (1) a hard clay pan layer 12-15 inches below the soil surface that would retard the growth of tree roots; (2) fires that would kill woody plants but not harm the herbaceous perennials including grasses; (3) grazing animals including bison that once roamed this area; (4) winds that would uproot trees especially during heavy rains that might accompany a hurricane; and (5) lack of the proper mycorrhize for the development of tree to root relationships.

Today, most of the prairie has been destroyed and replaced by cultivated crops, in particular rice. A few remnant prairies remain mostly along railroad rights-of-way. Most of these remnants were never tilled or have not been tilled since the railroad acquired the land ca 150 years ago. The remnants are all very narrow, mostly less than 30 m wide, and the longest unbroken strips are approximately 800 m long. The estimated total area of intact Cajun Prairie today is 100 acres (Allen and Vidrine 1989). This ecosystem is ranked G2 (imperiled globally because of rarity or because of some factor(s) making it vulnerable to extirpation) by the Nature Conservancy (Grossman et al. 1994), and in Louisiana it is ranked S1 (critically imperiled in state because of extreme rarity or because of some factor(s) making it especially vulnerable to extirpation from the state) by the Natural Heritage Program (Smith 1995).

## **Methods**

In February 1993, the title to a 334 acre FmHa easement tract was transferred to the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service. This tract is located in Evangeline Parish between Eunice and Mamou, Louisiana. Vickie Grafe, manager of the Lacassine Wildlife Refuge, worked with a number of individuals and organizations in developing a plan for prairie restoration at the site. The site was an abandoned agricultural area that was now covered with thousands of Chinese Tallow Trees (*Sapium sebiferum*). The Tallow Trees were uprooted with bull dozers, wind rowed, and burned. The area was disked and the levees removed.

In January 1995, volunteers and Lacassine Wildlife personnel transplanted several truck loads of Cajun Prairie plants onto the site. The Cajun Prairie plants were obtained from a nearby remnant strip. A centrally located 90 acre portion of the tract was redisked in the spring of 1995. Using an airplane, seeds were sown on the 90 acres on May 2 and 9. The seeds included 270 lbs of Eastern Gamma Grass (*Tripsacum dactyloides*), 61 lbs of Aldous Little Bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*), 171 lbs of Kaw Big Bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii*), 109 lbs of Cheyenne Indiangrass (*Sorghastrum nutans*), and 54 lbs of Alamo Switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum*). Seeds were collected from remnants and sown into parts of the 90 acre plot in January 1996.

In August 1998, seeds that were harvested from Attwater Prairie Chicken NWR in Texas were spread across the remaining acreage (244 acres). Also, in 1998 an experiment was begun to test the best time of year to plant seeds. Seeds were harvested from remnants and divided into four equal lots. One lot was planted in December 1998, February 1999, and May 1999 with two lots being planted in February on two different sites. The results indicate that December was slightly better than February and both December and February were much better than May. In the dormant seasons of 1998-99, 1999-2000, and 2000-2001, transplants were dug from remnants and transplanted into the Duralde prairie. In November 2000, seeds of 50 selected Cajun Prairie forbs were planted in monocultural plots; these seeds came from different remnants and are being planted together to test for increased seed production.

## Management

The Duralde Cajun Prairie site has been controlled burned during December to February annually since the inception in 1996. Tallow trees (*Sapium sebiferum*) are the major problem. It is interesting that tallow tree is known locally as Chicken Tree. The major control of this pest on the restored areas has been the use of approved herbicides. Very few tallows can be seen across the 334 acre tract. This pest has been kept under control but all involved recognize that it continues to be a problem and a constant vigil is maintained.

## Results and Conclusions

The areas on the refuge where transplanting has occurred are close to being 100% restored back to Cajun Prairie. The seeded areas are taking much longer, perhaps as much as ten or even more years to become restored to Cajun Prairie. More than 100 species of native Cajun Prairie plant species now call this site home. A number of native grasses are well established on the site. In the 90 acre tract, the dominant grasses are eastern gamma and switch grass while in the 244 acre tract the dominant grass is little bluestem. The amount of the other grasses is low but small clumps can be found scattered across both the entire refuge. Some of the more conspicuous forbs that are established include several species of button snakeroot (*Eryngium yuccifolium*), hairy sunflower (*Helianthus mollis*), and sweet goldenrod (*Solidago odora*). The Duralde Cajun Prairie is the only Cajun Prairie Restoration Project on Federally owned land. These 334 acres could serve as refugium for Cajun Prairie plants and animals if all remaining remnants are destroyed.

## References

- ALLEN, C. M., and M. F. VIDRINE. 1989. Wildflowers of the Cajun Prairie. Louisiana Conservationist 41:20-25.
- ALLEN, C. M., M. F. VIDRINE, B. BORSARI, AND L. ALLAIN. 2000. Vascular Flora of the Cajun Prairie of Southwestern Louisiana. In Proceedings of the 17<sup>th</sup> North American Prairie Conference. Seeds for the Future; Roots of the Past. Neil P. Bernstein and Laura J. Ostrander (eds.). North Iowa Area Community College, Mason City, Iowa.
- GROSSMAN, D. H., K. L. GOODWIN, and C. L. REUFF. 1994. Rare plant communities of the conterminous United States. The Nature Conservancy, Arlington, Virginia.
- SMITH, L. M. 1995. State rare plant communities in Louisiana. La. Nat. Heritage, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

## UPCOMING EVENTS 2005-2006

**July 20-23:** Cullowhee Native Plant Conference (<http://nativeplants.wcu.edu/>)

**July 29-July 30:** Carolina Lily and Yellow Fringed Orchid Viewing Charles Allen [native@camtel.net](mailto:native@camtel.net) 337-328-2252.

**August 13:** LNPS Summer Hike; Tracey Banowetz, [Banowetz@bellsouth.net](mailto:Banowetz@bellsouth.net) 225-655-4028.

**August 26-28:** Cajun Prairie Meeting Charles Allen see above or Sara Thames, [asthames@hotmail.com](mailto:asthames@hotmail.com)

**Sept 10:** Butterfly Festival, Haynesville, Loice K. Lacy [lkacy@magnolia-net.com](mailto:lkacy@magnolia-net.com)

**Sept 10:** Hummingbird Festival, 6:00 AM to 5:00 PM; Mizell's Farms, 83215 Hwy. 25, Folsom, La. 70437 [mizellfarms@yahoo.com](mailto:mizellfarms@yahoo.com), 985-796-9309

**Sept 24:** Butterfly Festival, Folsom, 7:00 AM to 5:00 PM Mizell's Farms See above.

**Sept 30-Oct 1:** Butterflies over Allen Acres Charles Allen See Above.

**Oct 15:** Friends of the Louisiana State Arboretum, Jim Foret, [possumforet@hotmail.com](mailto:possumforet@hotmail.com)

**Oct. 20-23:** Texas Native Plant Society Fall Symposium, Trans-Pecos Region  
<http://www.npsot.org/events/FallSymposium/Symposium2005.htm>

## 2006

**Feb 10-12** Louisiana Native Plant Society, Tracey Banowetz, See Above.

**May 22-27** Lone Star Regional Native Plant Conference 3, Nacogdoches, TX. Contact Peter Loos [cyrilla@inu.net](mailto:cyrilla@inu.net)

## **SUMMER 2005 MEETING**

**Marc, Meadow Making, Mississippi, Midday, Monarda, Manfreda, Methodical,  
Masterful, Man it's goina be hot.**

### **Friday Aug 26, 2005.**

**3 pm:** Tours, trash pickup, and seed gathering at the Eunice sites (See directions below)

**6:30 PM:** Meet at L'Acadie Inn and caravan to food plus music, networking, slides, etc

### **Saturday Aug 27, 2005.**

**800 AM:** Tour of Eunice Restored Prairies; meet at the corners of Martin Luther King and East Magnolia and enjoy the best restored prairie in the United States. This site is north of U.S. 190 and east of La 13. For those of you coming from the north on La 13, turn left (east) at the first paved road (East Magnolia) to the east after you cross the railroad tracks in Eunice. Go a couple of blocks and the prairie is on your left. For those coming from the east on U.S. 190 turn right (north) at the first red/green traffic light and follow Martin Luther King Drive for a couple of blocks and the prairie is on your left. For those coming from the west on U.S. 190, follow U.S. 190 through Eunice and after crossing a railroad track, go to the next red/green traffic light and turn left onto Martin Luther King Drive (See above). For those coming from the south on La 13, when you reach the stop sign, turn right onto Maple Ave. Follow Maple for about 3-4 blocks and at the 2nd four-way stop sign, turn left onto Martin Luther King Drive. Follow this street across U.S. 190 and see above.

**11 AM till 12 Noon,** "Meadow Making" by Marc Pastorek at Jean Lafitte Center in downtown Eunice.

**12 noon-1230 PM :** Cajun Prairie Habitat Preservation Society meeting.

**1230-230 PM :** Lunch on your own but a tradition is to dine at Matilda's on the east side of Eunice.

**230 PM-6 PM:** Acadia Power Partners Prairie, Frey Remnant, and Malcolm's Prairie. WE will meet at the newly installed Acadia Power Partners (Cleco) Prairie at 3 pm. Take La 13 south out of Eunice, and after crossing a bridge, go one mile and turn right into the power plant. The restored prairie will be inside the first fence you see. Then we will caravan to the Frey remnant. Get back on La 13 and turn right south and then turn right at the next double intersection onto La 370. La 370 will make several sharp curves and you will cross a bridge. After crossing the bridge, turn right at the next intersection onto La 368. Follow La 368 for about 0.5 mile and turn left onto Parish Road 7-37. Parish Road 7-37 will take a sharp left and then straighten out and run parallel to an old railroad bed. The Frey Prairie is located along this strip.

**7 pm** till. Caravan to Seafood or other? Plus networking at the L'Acadie Inn.

### **Sunday Aug 28, 2005.**

**800 AM:** Tour and inventory of Duralde Prairie. Directions: Take La 13 north out of Eunice and after crossing a bridge, go about 1.5 miles and turn left onto La 374. Follow La 374 west and it will take a sharp right then a sharp left. After straightening out from the sharp left, go about 0.5 miles and turn left at the first double intersection. You will be turning left onto a gravel road that is Parish Road 6-29S. Parish Road 6-29S is about 2 miles from La 13. Follow Parish Road 6-29S and it will take a sharp right and then will start a sharp left but you will not turn at the left but drive straight into the Duralde Prairie

We will use the L'Acadie Inn as the headquarters for this meeting. To reserve a room, call Kelly or Lance Pitre at 337-457-5211 or 337-457-4719. Other motels in Eunice include: Best Western 337-457-2800; Howards Inn 337-457-2066; La Parisienne 337-457-4274 and the new one Day's Inn 337-457-3040