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# NNC NEWS

Volume 12

Northlake Nature Center – Mandeville, Louisiana

December 2005

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## By the Beaver Pond Katrina Edition

Larry Burch  
President NNC

The NNC site, programs, and operations took a severe blow from Hurricane Katrina as did much of southeast Louisiana. It was quite a sight the first time I visited the NNC preserve a couple of days after Katrina. Highway 190 was closed east of the entrance to the parking lot, covered with large pines. It would be almost a week before the Hwy 190 was opened to Lacombe. Most of the parking lot was blocked by fallen trees and limbs. There was a jumble of fallen trees across the board walk and trail leading from the lower parking lot. The walkways and trails were virtually unrecognizable unless you really knew they were supposed to be there. I could not take ten steps without climbing over one of the fallen ancient oak, beech, magnolia, or pines. Reaching the pavilion, I found the top of a large white oak on the roof along with a large pine tree. Amazingly enough, the pavilion roof held up under the onslaught with moderate damage. The old brick building was hit by several pines and a giant 40" red oak tree was across one end. Considering the size of the trees, the damage was surprisingly light. On my first visit, the boardwalk across the pond was still under about three feet of water. How bad did it flood? The flood waters appeared to have reached 12 to 18 inches deep on the floor of the pavilion, which means much of the site was under water from the hurricane tidal surge. Once the waters receded we were relieved to find the boardwalk across the pond was muddy but undamaged. The amphitheater was another story, totally destroyed by flooding and trees. Most trails were blocked by fallen trees. I started calling volunteers and bought a chainsaw.

The NNC site reopened December 1 after two months of cleanup from Katrina. Volunteers have been super in supporting the effort. Many other recreation/ conservation sites around the parish remain closed or inaccessible. An update on Northlake Nature Center trails accessibility is found in the newsletter.

Programs and activities have resumed including the 21st Century after school program, participation in the Three Rivers Art Festival with a children's activity booth, Eagle scout projects, and volunteer projects. This spring we plan to plant longleaf pine seedlings in the restoration project, offer The Great Louisiana BirdFest, programs, and volunteer activities.

## Great Louisiana BirdFest

It's a go,  
April 6 - 9, 2006



## Mark Your Calendar

2006 was planned as a special year for The Great Louisiana BirdFest because it is the 10<sup>th</sup> year of the event. The BirdFest committee has gone through many discussions on holding the event post Katrina. Do we make it smaller, cancel it for the year, delay the event, or an alternate plan? The committee decided to make the event smaller but hold it as planned during spring migration. There are still contingencies we may have to adjust as we go forward. We waited until late November to make the decision simply because we did not have enough information to decide immediately after Katrina. What were some of the challenges? Some of our birding trip sites were destroyed or inaccessible, several guide's homes were flooded or severely damaged, bus transportation companies would not commit, bus costs are unpredictable due to fuel costs and demand, and hotel rooms were destroyed and/or filled with emergency workers/ evacuees. Would anyone come?

We plan to offer a smaller event and are still looking for trip guides and assistants. We have identified good birding sites although the habitats have changed a bit since last year. The picture on hotels and transportation seems to be clearing and doesn't look too bad. If you can help guide a trip please call us since we need qualified guides.

### NNC WEBSITE & EMAIL

[Http://www.northlakenature.org](http://www.northlakenature.org)

Email: [info@northlakenature.org](mailto:info@northlakenature.org)

Phone: 985-626-1238

## Volunteers

Volunteers have been fantastic. Numerous groups and volunteers have stepped forward to help the NNC recover. The Nature Conservancy sponsored a volunteer workday to clear trails, Eagle Scout Charles Ginchard designed and rebuilt the amphitheater, an Americorp team will be working with us in January, volunteers will plant long leaf pines, and several groups want to perform service projects. Beau Baudouin and Ken Countryman volunteered many days for site restoration. Volunteers will pull BirdFest together and the NNC's Board of Directors support the operation. Last year the NNC logged several thousand volunteer hours and we are certain to exceed it this year. Thank You for your support.

## Membership

**Renew your membership.** Support your Nature Center. Funds from our membership drive help support the restoration of the NNC. A membership form is attached or you can renew through the website.

## Donations

The Northlake Nature Center needs your donations and support. If you would like to make a donation it may be to your advantage to have your check dated before the end of 2005. Some donations to qualified non-profits like the NNC that were hurt by Hurricane Katrina can receive special tax treatment. A donation in 2005 allows the donor a deduction regardless of whether you itemize deductions or not.

Challenge donation grant. The NNC has received an anonymous Challenge Grant donation that gives the NNC matching funds for funds donated to the NNC by its members and supporters.

## Material and Tool Donations needed.

The NNC needs material and tool donations.

- Treated lumber
- Hand tools
- Generator
- Chain saw
- Brush cutter
- Limb chipper
- BobCat loader
- Tractor
- Truck, dump truck
- Trailer



## NNC Website

NNC Web site. We are updating the website with Katrina pictures, the BirdFest 2006 schedule, volunteer opportunities, and the calendar. Check it out.

Please visit our website at [www.northlakenature.org](http://www.northlakenature.org).

## Trails Access – Open and Closed

If you are not familiar with the trail names you can find a site map on the NNC website.

- Open - **Boardwalk** to the pavilion and amphitheater.
- Open - **Eagle trail** loop.
- Open - **Castine loop trail** – west of the parking lot is open. We lost the ancient live oak in the center of this trail loop.
- Partly Open - **North loop trail** is open although there are still a few tree trunks across the path. Beavers have dammed up the stream across the trail on the south end of the pipeline right of way but you can bypass the wet area using the north extension of the Savanna trail.
- Partly Open - **South loop trail** is open on the southern half of the loop. You can use the mowed fire line to complete the loop.
- Closed - **Longleaf pine trail**
- Closed - **Savanna loop** (south of the north loop trail).
- Closed - **Clubhouse loop** – a small section of this trail closest to the highway has been reopened.

NNC maps are available on our website at:

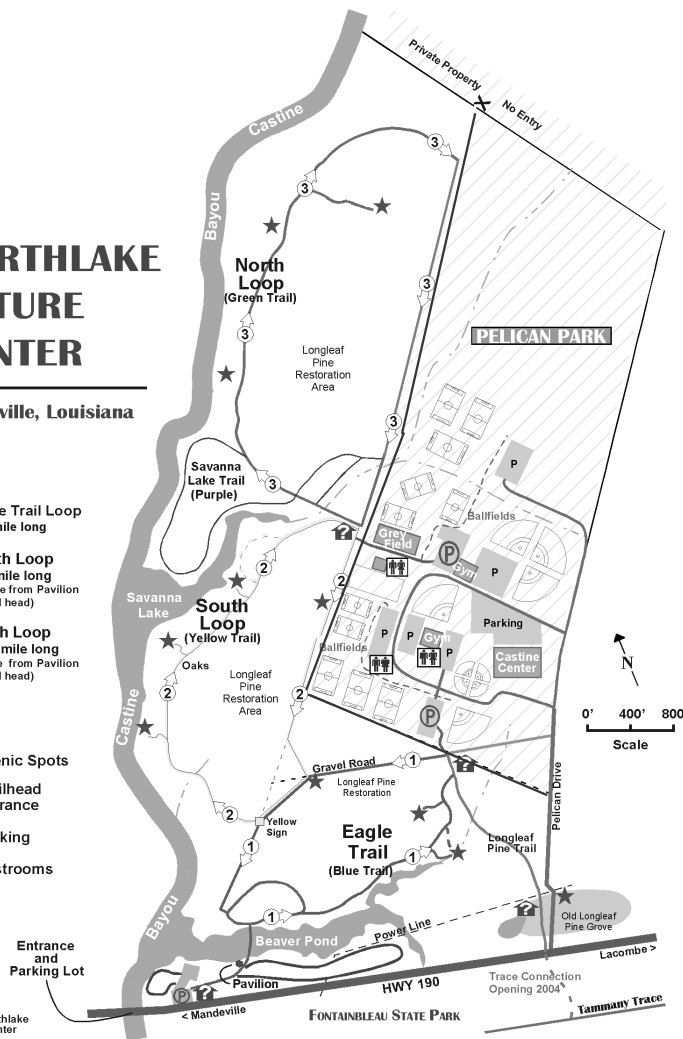
[www.northlakenature.org](http://www.northlakenature.org)  
(click on the map icon)

## NORTHLAKE NATURE CENTER

Mandeville, Louisiana

- ① Eagle Trail Loop  
.75 mile long
- ② South Loop  
1.2 mile long  
(.2 mile from Pavilion to trail head)
- ③ North Loop  
1.75 mile long  
(1 mile from Pavilion to trail head)

- ★ Scenic Spots
- 🏠 Trailhead Entrance
- P Parking
- 🚻 Restrooms



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## Long Leaf pine planting

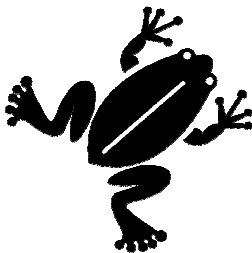
We plan to plant longleaf pine seedlings beginning the **Saturday January 29**. This year we will plant in areas devastated by Hurricane Katrina. Groups are welcome but we need to know the approximate number of participants. Please call the NNC office or Larry Burch at 985-778-3926.

## So what has Katrina's devastation done to habitats & animals?

Interestingly we are seeing more animals around the NNC site. A pair of beavers are back along with more deer, squirrels and birds. A pair of eagles have been spotted along with several red cockaded woodpeckers. The animals probably are moving around more because of habitat disturbance.

### The impact on habitat was more varied.

- In the long leaf pine restoration areas relatively little damage was done, since most pines were under 30 feet tall. Some pines were bent over and broken, but these areas should come back quickly. The hardwoods in the restoration areas were often broken and destroyed.
- The old-growth historic longleaf pine areas were hit fairly hard with around 20% of the longleaf lost and much of the intermixed hardwood and loblolly pine down. In a way the storm restored some of the old longleaf area to a more natural environment, since it should be an open savanna with little hardwood or other pine species. We really didn't want to lose any 150+ year old longleaf pines because so little of this habitat remains.
- The mature loblolly pine areas were beaten up pretty badly with 10% to 40% of the pines blown down. One area near Hwy 190 had around 75% blow down. A significant part of the mature pine areas in Fontainebleau State Park to the south of the Northlake Nature Center across Hwy 190 had 50% to 80% blow of pine and hardwood probably in part because the area was deeply flooded by the storm surge from the lake.
- The gum/cypress swamp along the ponds and Bayou Castine suffered some blow down but not to the extent we initially feared. It will recover rapidly.
- The old growth pine-hardwood climax forest around the pavilion was hit hard with many of the old pine, oak, beech, and magnolia blown down. While we still have the same habitat type and this area will remain a magnificent area, it has been changed for our lifetimes. Many of these trees were over 150 years old.



## Urban Forestry and Forest Management

Trees are a popular topic of conversation these days, not always in a positive sense. As people get over hurricane clean up, many will want to replant trees and plants in their yards. This is the time to carefully consider species and locations of trees in your yard. Some trees are more resistant to wind damage. We plan to post on the NNC website lists of trees that are more wind resistant as well as guidelines for planting. Trees should not be planted within 10 feet of a home or structure. Trees that will grow tall should not be planted under power lines. When planting a tree, it is important to prepare the planting hole properly and stake the tree if it is a large planting. You may have trees that need to be pruned after the storm, or in some cases an arborist may be needed to prune or even remove a damaged tree. The NNC has a brochure available concerning storms and trees. Email if you want a copy.

Speaking of pruning trees, you will notice logging operations if you go past Fontainebleau State Park. Unfortunately over the years little forest management was done in the park, and some areas were overly dense with mature pine trees. When Hurricane Katrina visited the area, much of the mature pine forest was destroyed, in part due to management practices that left the forest weakened. Logging was done to salvage some timber value, reduce fire hazard in larger wooded tracts, reduce safety hazards in public areas, and reduce the possibility of pine beetle infestation. Pine beetles can infest severely damaged pines but there needs to be a balance struck in removing trees to prevent beetle infestation. It does little good in our urban forest to remove by clear cutting all the pine trees in the name of preventing an infestation. If all the pines are cut they are gone! In nature's way, Katrina thinned the forest so it can now become a more healthy forest. Mandeville's urban forest will need to be monitored for health for the next few years to control damage from the storm, whether it is natural dieback from damage or from insect infestations.

## Programs & Activities

The Northlake Nature Center is offering programming for schools and other groups. A variety of topics is available. We encourage you to visit our website for a complete list. The programs offered can be on-site or brought to you. All programs that are at the NNC include a nature walk, where children and adults can experience the beauty of nature. If interested please call (985) 626-1238.

**Workdays & Projects**-There are a lot of site maintenance projects including building foot bridges, putting interpretive signs up, sweeping walks, and more. Please call if you or your group is interested in helping.

January 29  
April 6-9

**Longleaf pine planting**  
**The Great Louisiana BirdFest**

Please call for more information