



SOUTH CENTRAL CHAPTER



Spring 2005

Joint Meeting a Huge Success *by Darrin Dantin*

Nearly 200 people attended the South Central joint society meeting that was co-hosted with the South Atlantic Chapter and the Gulf Estuarine Research Society (Gulf Chapter of Estuarine Research Federation - ERF). The meeting was held at the Hilton Garden Inn and Conference Center on Pensacola Beach from March 30th to April 2nd. As a first-time gathering of these groups, the meeting was an complete success! Although initially scheduled for October, 2004, this meeting was rescheduled due to the unfortunate destruction brought to Pensacola Beach by Hurricane Ivan on September 16.

On Wednesday, technical workshops were held for Coastal Plant Identification (led by Richard Snyder of the University of West Florida, Pensacola), GPS Mapping for the Environmental Professional (led by Matt Stahman of SWCA, Houston, TX), and Seagrass Mapping (Larry Handley, USGS National Wetlands Research Center, Lafayette, LA).

Sessions and presentations

Our regional mini-conference officially began on Thursday morning with an opening address provided by William Benson, Director of the Gulf Ecology Division of the USEPA (Gulf Breeze, FL). Benson stressed the importance of the meeting theme, "Communication and Collaboration". One of his most important points addressed the shrinking resources and expanding objectives facing those who conduct estuary and wetlands research. The primary conclusion was that the need has come for research organizations and individuals to view each other more as "collaborators" rather than "competitors" as we seek to join efforts to pursue the lofty objectives of habitat protection and sustainability of our dwindling natural resources. Throughout the morning session, each chapter president gave their introductory remarks as each introduced the opening speakers.

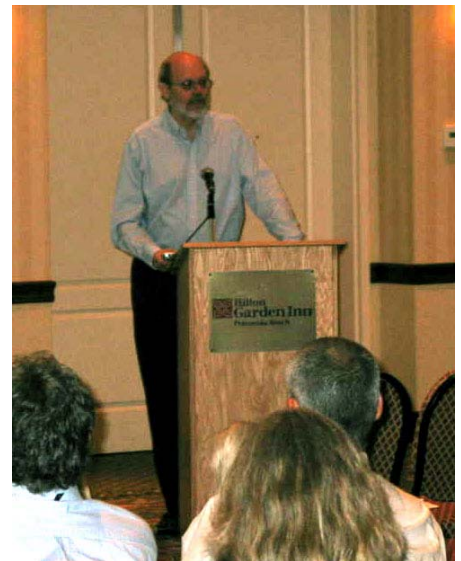
The plenary presentation was provided by Richard Condrey of Louisiana State University (Baton Rouge). Condrey provided a wonderful perspective on our event by illustrating to us the changes to the landscape of the northern coast of the Gulf of Mexico. By referencing the detailed accounts provided by the early French and Spanish explorers, Condrey presented an ecological history of the Gulf coast that helps us to better comprehend the incredible impact humans have had on coastal habitats. As follow-up to the perspectives provided by Condrey, Larry Handley and Jimmy Johnston (both of USGS-NWRC, Lafayette, LA) reported on the status and trends of seagrasses in the northern Gulf of Mexico. In conclusion of the opening session, Lawrence Rozas (NOAA Fisheries, Lafayette, LA) and Giancarlo Cicchitte

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Plenary Speaker Richard Condrey of Louisiana State University speaking on changes to the landscape of the northern coast of the Gulf of Mexico

More Photos to be posted to website soon

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(USEPA, Naragansett, RI) presented the approaches to habitat alteration research for estuaries being conducted by their respective agencies.

Over the next two days, approximately 125 presentations were given. Nearly 100 of these were oral presentations that were split between two concurrent sessions. Within the two sessions, the topics "habitat alteration" and "seagrass" each filled up a full day as special sessions. Within each, invited and contributed talks, and a panel discussions were included. Representatives of CEER-GOM (Consortium of Estuary Ecoindicator Research in the Gulf of Mexico) also organized a mini-session that included research projects supported by their program. In addition to the oral presentations another 25 were given as poster presentations.

Social Gatherings

To enhance opportunities for communication and collaboration, three evening events were held during the meeting. On the Wednesday, a welcoming reception was held



Wednesday night gathering at the Irish Pub

for early arrivers at a nearby friendly Irish Pub. Poster presenters were able to report and discuss their findings with others at a social was held at the conference center on Thursday evening, just after the chapter meetings. On Friday afternoon and despite the incredible storm that brought 70 mph winds and 14" of rain that flooded the Pensacola area earlier that day, an "Island Fish Fry" was held with great success at the hotel conference center.

Thanks and Appreciation

SWS-SC would like to thank our sponsors and volunteer organizers who helped make this event such a great success! Although there are too many to mention, we would like to give specific recognition to the key organizers for this event. From our chapter, they included Darrin Dantin (USEPA Gulf Breeze, FL), Scott Jecker (Whitenton Group, Inc., San Marcos, TX) and Ron Boustany (USDA-NRCS, Lafayette, LA). Mark Peterson (Gulf Coast Research Lab, Ocean Springs, MS), Christopher Onuf (USGS-NWRC, Corpus Christi, TX), and Michael Murrell (USEPA Gulf Breeze, FL) were the key organizers from GERS. Steve Miller (St. Johns River Water Mgmt. District, Palatka, FL) provided key assistance from our sister chapter from the South Atlantic. Non-affiliated volunteer assistance was also provided by Jeanne Scott, Lisa Smith,

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Student Awards *by Ron Boustany*

Ten students representing various universities in our chapter region competed for the \$600 stipend to go towards attendance at the 2005 SWS Annual Meeting in Charleston, South Carolina to present their work and represent the chapter. First place was awarded to Jason Bried of Mississippi State University. Second and third place were awarded to Robbie Kroger of the University of Mississippi, and Rachel Butzler of Texas A&M University. The title of Jason's presentation was "Conservation umbrella potential of plants and dragonflies in wetlands". Congratulations Jason! All of the students did an excellent job and the Chapter is grateful to them and their sponsoring professors for taking part in this highlight event of our annual chapter meetings.

2005 Chapter Elections

South Central Chapter members may now vote online at:
<http://www.sws.org/regional/southcentral/vote>.

Log on using your last name and membership ID number, which is located on your address label. You can read the biography each candidate, then vote for the candidates of your choice.

Candidates

FOR PRESIDENT ELECT

(vote for one)

Andy Nyman

Gary Pritts

FOR EXECUTIVE BOARD

(vote for two)

Lisa Gandy

Gary Hahn

Ken Krauss

Anthony Lobred

John Madsen

Sonja Oswald

Ballots **must** be received by midnight 1 June 2005, so cast your vote today.

In the Spotlight Tom Foti *by Elizabeth O. Murray*

It has been an exciting spring in the world of Arkansas wetlands. Tom Foti, founding member of the Arkansas Multi-Agency Wetland Planning Team, has been honored with the **National Wetlands Award** (<http://www2.eli.org/nwa/nwaprogram.htm>) in the field of "State, Tribal, and Local Program Development." He is one of seven wetland educators, scientists, and conservationists to be honored this year in the Capital Hill reception on May 18 in Washington DC.

Although Tom is best known for his work on ecology in the state in general, and specifically for increasing our understanding and conservation of rare habitats and species throughout the state, so much of his work has been on wetland ecosystems, that when you omit all the terrestrial work, there is a career's-worth of accomplishments just in the wetland field alone. It is for this lifetime of wetland achievement that Tom is being honored.

In his early career, Tom worked with the Arkansas Ecology Center during the time when the Cache River was a battleground of the Corps of Engineers and the state conservation community. The fight was fierce, and there were several good people involved on the side opposing the channelization of the Cache. In the end, they changed the face of the state. The Cache River bottoms are now a Ramsar Convention Wetland of International Importance: our Everglades. And recently, the significance of their conservation has increased.

Tom hasn't sat on his laurels since then. His three-decade career has had a great impact on the wetlands of Arkansas. Mr. Foti conducted the first inventory of natural areas in Arkansas, which resulted in his publication of "The Natural Divisions of Arkansas" in *The Natural Area Plan*, and the creation of the Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission (ANHC).

Since joining the ANHC in 1985, Tom has identified and protected natural communities of the state, including many uncommon wetlands. He co-founded the Arkansas Multi-Agency Wetland Planning Team, along with representatives of other state agencies with mandates involving wetlands. He has guided much of the research and project development of that team. He coauthored the hydrogeomorphic (HGM) classification of Arkansas wetlands and the five regional guidebooks for HGM assessment in Arkansas.

When all five are published, Arkansas will be the first state in the nation to have HGM models for all major forested wetland types in the state. He has worked with the Environmental Protection Agency to improve and subdivide Arkansas's ecoregions, and with NatureServe to refine the U.S. National Vegetation Classification to better reflect wetland diversity in the state. Because of Tom's involvement in a broad range of projects, a consistency is emerging in the way that the state and its partners describe, restore, and

manage wetlands within the greater context of their ecological systems, ecoregions, and the state as a whole.

Finally, Tom also is a highly productive author whose works range from technical research papers to popular works for general audiences, including schoolchildren. Those of us who have the privilege to know and work with him consistently learn new things about the state and its rich natural heritage. Yoda jokes aside, Arkansas would be a poorer place without Tom's excellent public service.

Which brings me to the other exciting news, which everyone already knows. The long-thought-to-be-extinct Ivory-Billed Woodpecker has been rediscovered the Big Woods of Arkansas: the Cache River bottoms, battleground of the 70's and hope for the future of this majestic bird. We who live here find it amusing to hear the national news refer to the area as remote; it is halfway between Little Rock and Memphis, and Interstate 40 cuts right across it. But the heart of it *is* remote. Even in the summer, it is only accessible via boat, and one must brave mosquitoes and cottonmouths to enjoy its primeval beauty. That the bird has made this area its home is a tribute to all of those who have worked to conserve and understand our diverse and beautiful wetlands. Now perhaps the rest of the country will know what we already understand. Arkansas is full of incredibly important, beautiful, unique, inspiring wetlands...and people who care about them.

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and Cecilia Kahn of the USEPA's Gulf Ecology Division in Gulf Breeze, FL.

This incredible amount of support received for this regional meeting also justifies the need for continued communication and collaboration between our wetland and estuary scientists. Our sponsors were: Center for Environmental Diagnostics and Bioremediation (CEDB), University of

West Florida (Pensacola), Paul Dubow (Jacksonville, FL), Estuaries Section of the American Fisheries Society (AFS), NOAA Fisheries, Southeast Fisheries Science Center (Panama City, FL), Gulf Coast Geospatial Center (GCGC) of the Gulf Coast Research Lab (Ocean Springs, MS), SWCA Environmental Consultants (Houston, TX), Texas Parks and Wildlife (Austin, TX), USEPA, Gulf Ecology Division (Gulf Breeze, FL), USGS National Wetlands Research Center (Lafayette, LA), and the

Whitenton Group, Inc. (San Marcos, TX). Tampa Bay Estuary Program (St. Petersburg, FL), Coastal Bends and Bays NEP (Corpus Christi, TX), and the Sarasota Bay NEP (Sarasota, FL). Special thanks goes to Allison Brooks of Western Data System in Houston, TX for supplying all the GPS equipment for our GPS workshop.

All in all, the joint-society meeting was a huge success and we look forward to co-hosting similar gatherings in the future.

A Word from the President.....

The South Central Chapter is one of the largest (by area) Chapter in our society. Our eight-state chapter comprises a vast diversity of wetland types and physiographic regions. The Chapter is very dynamic and we are experiencing large growth, continued promotion of wetland research, and more involvement within universities and communities. We are becoming a premier Chapter that has the most to offer our wetland scientists, students, and natural resource managers.

We continue to support our lobbyists working to preserve and conserve our wetland resources while our Chapter funds support the very research required for "rulemaking". Our Chapter provides scholarships for student research and if you know a student in search of grant money for an exceptional project, please contact us.

As wetland science continues to grow, I would like to encourage each of you to research and pursue the **Professional Wetland Scientist** (PWS) or **Wetland Professional In Training** (WPIT) certification. Our Chapter covers a large area with varying types of wetlands and

includes States that are under heavy development. Some of the State and City departments, as well as industry and developers, are looking for qualified wetland scientists to provide them with the most reliable information regarding wetlands and potential impacts to wetlands. As a PWS and private consultant, I believe it is only a matter of time before it is required that individuals submitting wetland data to any resource agency possess a PWS certification, much like a Professional Engineer does for engineering projects. The Society of Wetland Scientists is currently working on a proposed plan to promote PWS certification to federal/state/local government as the highest level of certification wetland professionals can possess.

I would like to encourage you to become involved in the Chapter as a member or committee/board member.

Scott Jecker

Announcements



The South Atlantic Chapter of the **Society of Wetland Scientists (SWS)** invites you to join them 5-10 June 2005 in Charleston, South Carolina for the **26th Annual International Wetlands Meeting**. The Conference will focus on **ecological, landscape, and regulatory transformations** using the wetlands typified by the Southeastern U.S. Coastal Plain as a model. This physiographic province contains by far the largest extent of wetlands in conterminous United States. Hope to see you there.

SOUTH CENTRAL CHAPTER

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[http://sws.org/
regional/southcentral/](http://sws.org/regional/southcentral/)

The Society of Wetland Scientists is a nonprofit organization founded in 1980 to promote wetland science and the exchange of information related to wetlands.

Objectives :

- to operate solely and exclusively as a charitable and educational organization to foster conservation and understanding of wetlands.
- to advance public education and enlightenment concerning the Nation's wetland resources.
- to provide an independent forum for an interchange of ideas and data developed within wetland science.
- to develop and encourage wetland science as a distinct discipline by supporting student education, curriculum development, and research.
- to encourage and evaluate the educational, scientific, and technological development and advancement of all branches of wetland science and practice.
- to encourage the knowledgeable management of wetland resources.

The Society continues to grow and has over 4000 members from the U.S., Canada, Mexico, and many other countries.

