

The Crosby Arboretum

Mississippi State University Extension Service

Quarterly News Journal

Winter 2012-2013

27.1

How to Identify Sparrows: Get them in your hand!

By Mark Woodrey, Ph.D., Senior Research Associate, Mississippi State University Extension Service

If you have spent anytime around a bird-watcher or watched birds at your feeder, you may have heard or used the phrase “Hey, there’s an LBJ”. I heard this many times and finally had to ask my bird-watching mentor “What exactly does LBJ stand for?” He answered “why, it stands for Little Brown Job”. Now I can see how folks not familiar with sparrows might have that sentiment. However, if you spend time looking at them, you will realize they are much more than LBJs. In fact, they are exquisitely and wonderfully colored, especially when you have them in your hand.

Some species of sparrows are commonly found in urban and rural areas alike. However, a few species are only found in very specific habitats. Typically, the habitat “specialists” are not very common and are often species of conservation concern. Many species of grassland birds, including sparrows, are found only in fire-dominated pine savanna habitats. Among the species found in these habitats, the Henslow’s Sparrow is one of many intriguing species of LBJs.

Henslow’s Sparrows breed in grassland ecosystems throughout the Northeast and Midwest, but head south to spend the winter along the Gulf Coast. Termed “short-distance” or intra-continental migrants, this species is dependent on fire-managed pine savanna systems such as those found at the MSU Crosby Arboretum. As a species of conservation concern, MSU scientists have been studying the winter ecology of Henslow’s Sparrows for several years. The goal of their work has been to understand the importance of prescribed fire on the abundance and distribution of this rare species.



Henslow’s sparrow in grass. (image by Bill Howe, US Fish and Wildlife Service)



MSU Ornithologist holding a captured Henslow’s Sparrow. (image by Bruce Reid, Audubon Mississippi)

One of the more enthralling aspects of their work involves capturing and banding these elusive creatures. Capturing these secretive birds is a fun, active and enjoyable pursuit. Ornithologists, or scientists who study birds, from MSU have perfected a trapping technique involving the use of nets called mist-nets. These nets resemble your grandmother’s hair net, although larger, that are strung between two poles and carried through the savanna. When a bird is flushed by a group, two individuals chase the bird and set the mist-net in front of the spot where the bird landed. The group then gathers around the area where the bird landed, and proceed to flush the bird into the net where it hangs unharmed. Once removed from the net, scientists place a uniquely numbered band around the bird’s leg and release it unharmed. The goal of banding birds is to understand their movements throughout the winter season.

MSU researchers have learned that frequent prescribed fires on the wintering grounds are extremely important for these sparrows. In fact, if a site is not burned at least every 3-4 years, Henslow’s Sparrows will not use the area. Interestingly, this fire routine has been found to match the historical fire regime for pine savanna habitats. In fact, there are many species found in this habitat, including plants and animals, which are fire-adapted, or require a regular rate of fire to sustain their populations. Luckily, these small migratory birds have many places along the Gulf Coast, like Crosby Arboretum, that they can call home during the winter.

Learn more about the prescribed fire these sparrows depend on. Call [601-799-2311](tel:601-799-2311) or email rstafne@ext.msstate.edu to join **Mr. Terry's Crosby Arboretum Burn Crew** as a **volunteer** this winter (Dec.-Feb.).



The Crosby Arboretum Mississippi State University

A regional arboretum representing the native flora of the Pearl River Drainage Basin in Mississippi and Louisiana.

Picayune, Mississippi, USA

Director's Notebook:

This winter we are offering an exceptional schedule of activities to entice you to visit the Crosby Arboretum. Attendance for fall's programs was fantastic! Response for our hummingbird program was so enthusiastic that speaker James Bell graciously agreed to conduct a second lecture to accommodate all those who had hoped to attend. And almost 700 persons turned out for Bugfest this year, a record number for the event. Those who enjoy the novelty of the night insect collecting activities will be pleased to learn that Dr. Christian Stephenson from Hancock County Extension has offered to conduct other night collecting events throughout the year. A hit at Bugfest this year was the traveling classroom and portable scanning electron microscope, courtesy of the Mississippi State University Department of Biochemistry, Molecular Biology, Entomology and Plant Pathology.

Excitement has been building as we are edging closer to the completion of our latest educational exhibit, the Swamp Forest. By the time you read this, site contractor Daniel Broome will most likely have completed construction work on the 930 linear foot stream channel that will create a link between the Gum Pond and the Piney Woods Pond. Daniel worked closely with Ed Blake on many of his landscape projects, and performed the site construction for our beautiful new Gum Pond Exhibit.

The new forested wetland exhibit will be developed within a four-acre portion of the Arboretum's Woodland Exhibit. This site is a young wet pine flatwood which previously served as agricultural and forestry land. The original stream corridors were converted to drainage ditches when the site was farmed in the 1930's, and the new exhibit will restore a stream channel.

The Swamp Forest Education Exhibit was made possible by a Five Star Restoration Grant through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, funded by Southern Company. Five Star grants provide environmental education and training through projects that restore wetlands and streams.

We invite you to the Arboretum to see the master plan and graphic boards for the Swamp Forest Exhibit created by Professor Bob Brzuszek's landscape architecture graduate students on display in the Visitor Center.

- **Patricia Drackett**, Director
The Crosby Arboretum, MSU Extension Service



The Arboretum's Swamp Forest Educational Exhibit will be located north of the Arrival Journey bridge. (Image by P. Drackett)

Senior Curator's Corner:

I was thankful to see fall arrive in southern Mississippi. Not only is fall my preferred season, but Halloween is my favorite holiday. One of the nicest things about fall here is the way the temperatures cool off each day quickly, making a high of 85 perfectly tolerable. The colors, smells and sounds of the changing season make me giddy.

If you haven't heard yet, I am now in charge of the Volunteer Program at the Arboretum. On the Volunteer page of the website you will find a couple of ways you sign-up and view areas of need for volunteers. One way is through postings I create for us on www.volunteersignup.org. On this site I list specific tasks needed for upcoming programs and events. Each event that I create has its own link that I post on our website and distribute via email. This is a free service created by volunteers for volunteers. Another site I am using is www.volunteermatch.org. If you go there and type in Picayune, MS you will find about 56 opportunities in our area, but if you narrow it with "plants", you will find several, on-going, long-term tasks where we need volunteers at The Crosby Arboretum. I have been given two charges with the volunteer program: increase the number of volunteers and the number of hours those volunteers contribute. To do this I must find ways to maximum our message without increasing cost or time on my part. I am also looking for a few volunteers to take lead roles in plant propagation in the greenhouse and nursery and a volunteer to call volunteers without email/computer access about needs at the Arboretum. I look forward to hearing from those who are willing to help!

- **Richelle Stafne**, Senior Curator
The Crosby Arboretum, MSU Extension Service

Crosby Arboretum Program Schedule

December – February 2013

DECEMBER 2012

WINTER SPARROW BANDING FIELD WALK

Saturday, December 1
9:00 to 11:00 a.m.

Coastal bird biologist **Mark Woodrey**, MSU Coastal Research & Extension Center, will conduct this field walk and workshop that will focus on mist netting winter sparrows (primarily Henslow's sparrows) and give participants an opportunity to observe and handle wild birds. Mark will discuss the Arboretum's prescribed burn program and what it means for these birds, as well as the ecology of this longleaf pine habitat. Dress appropriately, as we will be walking through grasslands (those who prefer may stay on trails). Program is free to members and \$5 for non-members. Register by November 30.

HOLIDAY ORNAMENTS FOR BACKYARD WILDLIFE

Saturday, December 1 (Kids)
1:00 to 2:00 p.m.

Birds and other critters often need extra food in the winter for fuel and warmth. Children will enjoy making tasty delights such as peanut butter pinecone feeders and popcorn-cranberry garlands that will attract birds and wildlife to your backyard. All materials will be provided. Cost: members' children \$3; non-members children \$5. Please register by November 30.

ARBORETUM OPEN HOUSE

Saturday, Dec. 8
10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Please join us for the Arboretum's annual holiday open house celebration. Come browse the gift shop, and the work of local artisans and craftspersons. Light refreshments will be served. Program is free and open to the public.

VOLUNTEER MEETINGS

Please Note Change: Arboretum volunteer **FRIDAY** meetings for winter: Dec. 7, Jan. 11, and Feb. 8. Meet in the mobile by the greenhouse at 10:30 a.m. If you would like to volunteer, please contact Richelle Stafne, at (601) 799-2311 Ext. 101 or via email at rstafne@ext.msstate.edu. Can't make the meetings? No problem. Just contact me and we will work with your schedule.

JANUARY 2013

INTRODUCTION TO BIRDING

Saturday, January 12 (Family)
10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

Ever wonder why birding is fast-becoming the most popular sport in America? It's not just sitting and watching birds, it's also about exploring the variety of habitats in which they are found! **Susan Epps**, avid birder and writer, will discuss the fun aspects of birding, including feeding and identification tips. Learn about our resident birds and migrants that visit each year, books, equipment, materials, and other birding resources. Suited to ages 7 and up. Members free; non-members \$5, non-members' children \$2. Register by January 11.

WILD ABOUT WINTER

Saturday, January 19 (Teachers)
9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

The Mississippi Museum of Natural Science is offering a fun-filled and hands-on, interactive workshop for teachers and homeschool educators to teach core curriculum. Come join us for a WILD About Winter workshop. This advanced Project Wild workshop will focus on native Mississippi winter wildlife and how to incorporate seasonal wildlife, particularly migratory species and organisms' winter adaptations, into your classroom. Attendance in a previous Project WILD workshop is suggested, but not required. Open to both teachers and homeschool educators, it is FREE for Hancock and Pearl River County teachers. Others, \$15 for registration and book, and \$10 for CEU's. Prepare for a "working lunch" (bring a brown bag lunch). If you have a Project Wild book, please bring it. To sign up, call the Arboretum office at 601-799-2311 or contact Richelle Stafne at rstafne@ext.msstate.edu.

FORGE DAY: BLACKSMITHING AND METALWORKING

Saturday, January 26 (Family)
10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Join us for a full day of metalsmithing demonstrations by area craftsmen. A chance to learn techniques and tips to get started in metalworking! Enjoy the demonstrations, or try your hand at the forge. (Those doing forge work must complete a waiver form prior to participating). Safety equipment for participants will be provided. Members free; non-members \$5, and \$2 for non-members' children.

Tip! Email rstafne@ext.msstate.edu to sign up to receive **News and Updates** from The Crosby Arboretum via email **listserv!**

Crosby Arboretum Program Schedule

December – February 2013

FEBRUARY 2013

ARBOR DAY NATIVE PLANT SALE

Saturday February 16: 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Members Admitted at 9:00 a.m.

Winter is a good time to plant trees and woody shrubs.

Choose from a variety of trees and shrubs at this plant sale, and come early for the best selection of hard-to-find native plants. We'll help you select the right plant for the right place! **Free admission.** Arboretum Visitor Center.

WINTER BOTANY FIELD WALK (Family)

Saturday, February 23

10:00 to 11:30 a.m.

Join **Heather Sullivan**, a Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, & Parks Botanist, in an exploration of the Pond and Savanna Habitats of the Crosby Arboretum. Learn about the natives plants found within these habitats, their past and current uses by humans, and how they survive within these communities. Program is free to members and \$5 for non-members. Register by February 22.

Arboretum Spring Events:

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Edible Landscapes, March 2, 1:00 p.m.

Wildlife Day (Kids), March 7, 9:00 a.m.-12 noon

Bonsai Class, March 9, 9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.

Spring Plant Sale, March 22/23, 10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.

Dr. Wayne Porter Native Plant Talk, April 5, 11:00 a.m.

Dr. Charles Allen Garden Lecture, April 6, 10:00 am

Strawberries & Cream, April 7, 1:00-3:00 pm

Earth Day Events, April 27 10:00 am-2:00 pm

Check back in spring for confirmed information!

Volunteer Requests for Winter

We will need volunteers to assist with Forge Day, Arbor Day Plant Sale, the ticket booth, maintenance of the Children's & Butterfly Gardens, planting in the greenhouse and clean-up of the Arboretum nursery. We rely on the hard work and generosity of our volunteers. Call Richelle to find out how you can help 601-799-2311 ext 101 or rstafne@ext.msstate.edu.



The annual Forge Day offers visitors a chance to observe blacksmithing and knife-making from area craftsmen. Quality, hand-made items are available for purchase. Join us in January for this family-friendly event! (image by R. Stafne)

Reservations: Call the Arboretum office at (601) 799-2311, to confirm all events and to make program reservations, as seating is limited. Programs are subject to change.

Physical Address: 370 Ridge Road, Picayune, MS 39466

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 1639, Picayune, MS 39466

E-mail Contact: rstafne@ext.msstate.edu

Hours of Operation: Wednesday-Sunday, 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

2012 Admission Fees: Adults, \$5; Seniors (over 55), \$4; Children under 12, \$2; Members, free admission to grounds and programs.

Webpage: www.crosbyarboretum.msstate.edu. Lists programs and events, volunteer opportunities, Arboretum and Natural Area information, and news updates.

For more information, or to register, please call the Arboretum at (601) 799-2311. Membership is \$40 for families, \$30 individual; \$15 students. The Crosby Arboretum is located in Picayune, Mississippi, off I-59 Exit 4, on Ridge Road (between Wal-Mart and I-59). Follow signs to the Arboretum. Please park in our Visitors Parking lot and enter the site at the ticket booth. Follow the Arrival Journey (woodland path) to the Visitor Center. Those needing special assistance may choose to enter via our Service Entrance across from The Cycle Shop on Ridge Road. Please let us know if you require special assistance so that we may expect you.

Stay connected with the Crosby Arboretum!



Mississippi State University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, disability, or veteran status.



The Crosby Arboretum Mississippi State University

A regional arboretum representing the native flora of the Pearl River Drainage Basin in Mississippi and Louisiana.

Picayune, Mississippi, USA

Memorial Tree Plantings This Winter

Trees will be planted this winter for the following long-time Crosby Arboretum contributors and supporters who died in the past year: **Glade Woods** of Picayune died in May. He was a staunch supporter of Mississippi State University, the Picayune community and Crosby Arboretum. He was deeply committed to the development of Pearl River County, and willingly gave time from his busy schedule to provide input on the Foundation Board for the proposed Education Center. He was well known for his expertise and dedication at the national level. **Dr. Tom Rhea Phillips** of Hattiesburg passed away in June. He was a dentist and naturalist who greatly contributed to the Arboretum's conceptual development during the early years. His son, Mike Phillips, is a member of the Crosby Arboretum Foundation Board. **Dr. Donald Bradburn** of New Orleans died in July. He was a wonderful photographer who documented nature and portions of the Arboretum's development. His widely-published works include the recent book, *Last Barriers: Photographs of Wilderness in the Gulf Islands National Seashore*. Donald's wife Anne was a past president of the Crosby Arboretum Foundation Board. **Dr. Noel Polk** of Jackson passed away in August. He was an internationally recognized Faulkner and Welty scholar who grew up in Picayune. He organized the 1984 L.O. Crosby, Jr. Memorial Lectures at USM, featuring scholars from all over the nation and resulted in his book, *Mississippi's Piney Woods: A Human Perspective*.



Vaccinium elliotii, Elliott's blueberry, at the Arboretum. (image by R. Stafne)

PLANT PROFILE: Elliott's blueberry

One of my favorite plants at the Arboretum is Elliott's blueberry, *Vaccinium elliotii*. This quarter's profile plant provides interest through many seasons including fall and winter. This perennial, deciduous, upright, woody shrub can attain a height of 8-10' and is hardy in zones 6-9.

Outstanding fall and winter color combined with dainty pale pink to white flowers in spring and edible fruit in late spring and early summer give the plant interest year-round. Plant this member of the Ericaceae family in sun to partial shade with plenty of room to receive maximum fruit and color. Prefers acidic soil. Can be found along trails or waters edge at the Arboretum. Important to native bees and good for wildlife.

Did you know you can sign-up on our blog to receive email alerts when a new blog is posted?



Participants in Patrick LaNasa's Bonsai Class enjoyed an educational and hands-on program in Oct. (image by P. Drackett)

PLANTS AT THE ARBORETUM WITH WINTER INTEREST

Little blue stem (*Andropogon spp.*)

Red maple (*Acer rubrum*)

Plume grass (*Erianthus giganteus*)

American beech (*Fagus grandifolia*)

Carolina jessamine (*Gelsemium sempervirens*)

Deciduous holly (*Ilex decidua*)

Inkberry holly (*Ilex glabra*)

American holly (*Ilex opaca*)

Sweetgum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*)

Golden club (*Orontium aquaticum*)

Winged sumac (*Rhus copallinum*)

Elliott's blueberry (*Vaccinium elliotii*)

For detailed information, and photographs for the above plants and other native plants found in our Exhibits, visit www.crosbyarboretum.msstate.edu to search the Crosby Arboretum Native Plant Database, hosted by the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center (www.wildflower.org). A printable comprehensive plant species list for the Arboretum is also available.

What the heck is a listserv?

By now most of you have been receiving email from me that says “please do not reply to the listserv”. A listserv is an email management tool that allows the manager to input multiple email address and easily update, add or delete as necessary. It prevents duplication within the listserv and gives you a percentage of success along with total number of addresses. In-short, it’s a great time-saver. However, if you REPLY the listserv msg., the listserv wants to email your reply out to *everyone*. So please remember, I use it to get information out to everyone quickly, but don’t reply to the listserv. Always email me directly: rstafne@ext.msstate.edu
To sign-up for Crosby General Info/Updates, Email me!



The annual Fall Native Plant Sale brought in good crowds despite rain on Friday afternoon and all day Saturday. (image by R. Stafne)



Deanne and Breanna Lyle demonstrate the scanning electron microscope for a student in the traveling classroom during Bugfest in September. This attraction was courtesy of the Mississippi State University Department of Biochemistry, Molecular Biology, Entomology and Plant Pathology. (image by P. Druckett)



Thank you to those Members who have opted to receive their Quarterly News Journal *electronically* rather than via mail. To receive your copy electronically, please send your name and email address to kimj@ext.msstate.edu or call 601-799-2311, ext. 103.

The News Journal is a quarterly publication of The Crosby Arboretum, Mississippi State University Extension Service. Journal subscriptions may be obtained with membership at the Arboretum. Printed on recycled paper with ≥30% postconsumer waste recycled fiber. Journal may be received electronically if desired.

Please address correspondence to: **Richelle Stafne**, Editor
 rstafne@ext.msstate.edu
 The Crosby Arboretum
 P.O. Box 1639
 Picayune, MS 39466

Mississippi State University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, disability, or veteran status.

Membership Application

All contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed. For more information call: (601) 799-2311 or print form online.

_____	Student (send student i.d.)	\$ 15.00
_____	Individual	30.00
_____	Family	40.00
_____	Donor	100.00
_____	Patron	250.00
_____	Benefactor	1,000.00
_____	Business	
_____	Sweetgum	100.00
_____	Sassafras	250.00
_____	Live Oak	500.00
_____	Bigleaf Magnolia	1,000.00

Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____
 State _____ Zip _____ Phone _____

Renewing? Memberships are for one year.



The Crosby Arboretum

Mississippi State University

P.O. Box 1639

Picayune, MS 39466-1639

(601)-799-2311

www.crosbyarboretum.msstate.edu