



HIKING

Hiking and Backpacking

When the Sierra Club in New Orleans first conceived the idea for a guide to local trails, the hiking section was embarrassingly thin. The main reason for this was the near absence of trails to hike on. Once you got tired of the Tuxachanie Trail, there was little to do but get a topo map and a compass and set off cross-country. This is still a good alternative, but there are now a number of trails in the area suitable for hiking, and several for backpacking.

The number of hikers and backpackers has also multiplied in the twenty years since the first of the Sierra Club's local guides was published. (It was called the "Outings Kit" and consisted of a bunch of mimeographed sheets and leaflets in an envelope.) More people have discovered the trails that exist. Spring days on the Bayou Coquille Trail (see Barataria Hiking) when the irises are in bloom can actually leave you with a crowded feeling. But the number of people on the trails isn't really large yet anywhere in our area.

Hike gently. Don't collect things, but do bring back everything you took with you. Aluminum foil doesn't completely oxidize in a campfire, and it doesn't weigh that much. If you can

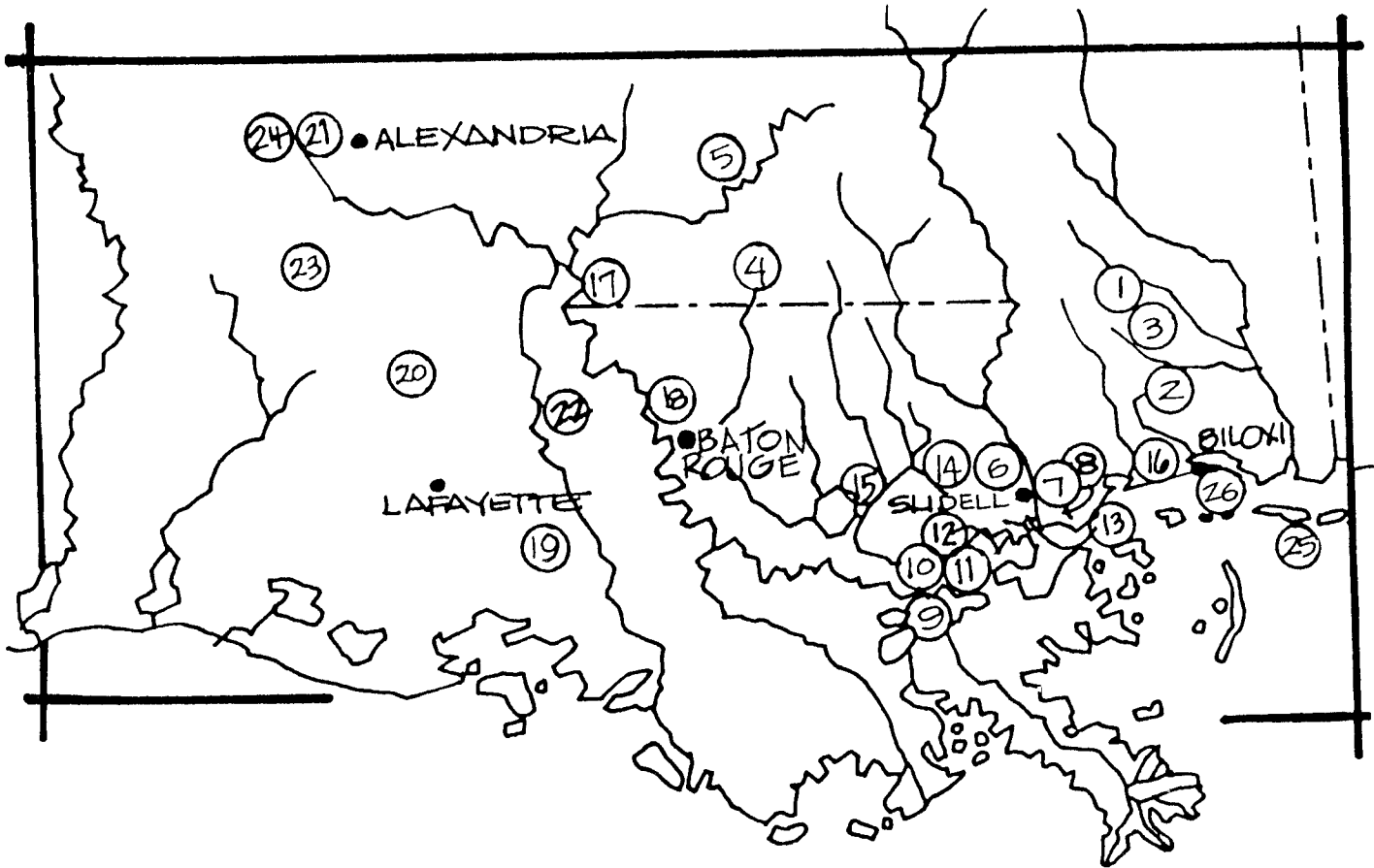
carry full cans and bottles in you can carry empty cans and bottles out. If you carry in oranges you can carry out orange peels. If you can carry it in, you can carry it out.

Equipment for a day hike is simple. You need good shoes or light hiking boots, a little emergency money, a canteen and snacks, first aid supplies, and maybe a rain jacket, depending on the weather. For most of the year, some protection against biting insects is advisable. This part of the country is gentle; don't approach the mountains of the western USA this casually. For an overnight trip, you will need the full equipment of the backpacker, of course.

If you go on a Sierra Club outing, your trip leader will be able to give you advice on the equipment and physical condition required for the trip; don't hesitate to call. Many outdoor stores will give advice and assistance. Others lead outings; consult the Directory. How-to-do-it books on hiking and backpacking are available in many stores.

The exercise, peace, and beauty of the hills and forests are closer than you think. Good walking! ■

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Black Creek Trail

John Sevenair and Adele Plauche, New Orleans Sierra Club

This 41-mile-long hiking and backpacking trail is both a delight and a challenge for those wanting to get away from it all. The trailheads are 2 1/2 hours away from New Orleans in De Soto National Forest in Mississippi. It's longer than the Wild Azalea Trail, and is probably the most beautiful and challenging backpacking trail anywhere near New Orleans.

The diversity of terrain and great variety of flora and fauna are the elements that make the Black Creek Trail so special. You can cross open pine forest into swampy bogs, through dense undergrowth, over rolling and sometimes even steep hills, and onto the river's beautiful white sandy edge. There is plenty of wildlife in the forest, though the armadillo is the animal you're most likely to see.

The trail generally follows Black Creek, which is a favorite canoeing destination. Backpackers can choose from trips of many different lengths because the trail crosses a number of paved and unpaved roads. Three National Forest canoe landings are located close enough to the trail to serve as end points, and these have parking and restroom facilities. The canoe outfitter at Brooklyn is probably the most secure place to park. They do car shuttles for hikers and backpackers when their canoe business isn't too busy; see the Directory.

This area becomes crowded with hunters during deer season, so use extreme caution and wear hunter's orange or (probably best) go somewhere else at that time of year. The Forest Service (see the Directory) can provide you with exact dates for hunting season, which generally runs from November through January.

Probably the most scenic weekend backpack trip begins at Fairley Bridge Landing and ends at Janice Landing. It winds approximately 18 miles through the Red Hills and the Black Creek Wilderness. At first the trail from Fairley Bridge Landing parallels a gravel road. When it reaches another gravel road, turn right and cross a bridge to a T junction. The trail resumes ahead of you.

The trail soon enters the Red Hills, and you'll climb up and down slopes as much as 100' high. After about five miles or so you'll find yourself on the banks of Black Creek, and if you got a late start there are some wonderful white sand beach campsites here.

Then the trail climbs near a gas pipeline, crosses an unpaved National Forest road, and enters the Black Creek Wilderness (there's a sign). From here you follow the valley of Mill Creek down to the Black Creek flood plain. If you got an early start there are campsites at the mouth of Mill Creek and several other places further along on the banks of Black Creek.

After it leaves Mill Creek the trail through the wilderness wanders for several miles across the flood plain. Then it follows lovely Beaverdam Creek for a couple of miles up to a paved road (MS 29). (Is Beaverdam Creek big enough to canoe? Some say yes, some say no.) Turn right on the pavement, cross Beaverdam Creek, and turn right again to follow the creek back down toward Black Creek. You'll emerge again on the pavement opposite a parking lot. Janice Landing is less than half a mile to the right (north) down MS 29.

The trail continues, of course, and it's about 14 more miles to Brooklyn. Beyond the parking lot mentioned in the last paragraph the trail crosses or parallels several logging roads, and it's easy to lose it if you don't watch for the rectangular white blazes on the trees. The trail follows Black Creek or crosses its flood plain for several miles. Several narrow wooden bridges cross wet areas. The longest of these was apparently built when the water was very low, because it's underwater most of the time. Use a walking stick and be careful here; it's slippery when wet. Beyond this the trail skirts the edges of some sandy hills and sometimes climbs into them.

There are several more unpaved Forest Service roads in this stretch. The trail finally emerges on a relatively wide gravel road. Follow this road to a T junction with a paved road. The trail continues into the woods on the far side. If you left your car in Brooklyn, turn right on the pavement, cross Black Creek, and go on into town.

The western part of the trail is scenic too. The trail's western end is at Big Creek Landing. From here the path follows the river (there are beautiful overlooks) for several miles. Then it leaves the creek and wanders through sandy upland pine forest. There is an abandoned CCC camp, now a parking lot, just east of US 49.

Getting there: To get to Janice Landing, take I-10 to the US 49 exit near Gulfport and go north to

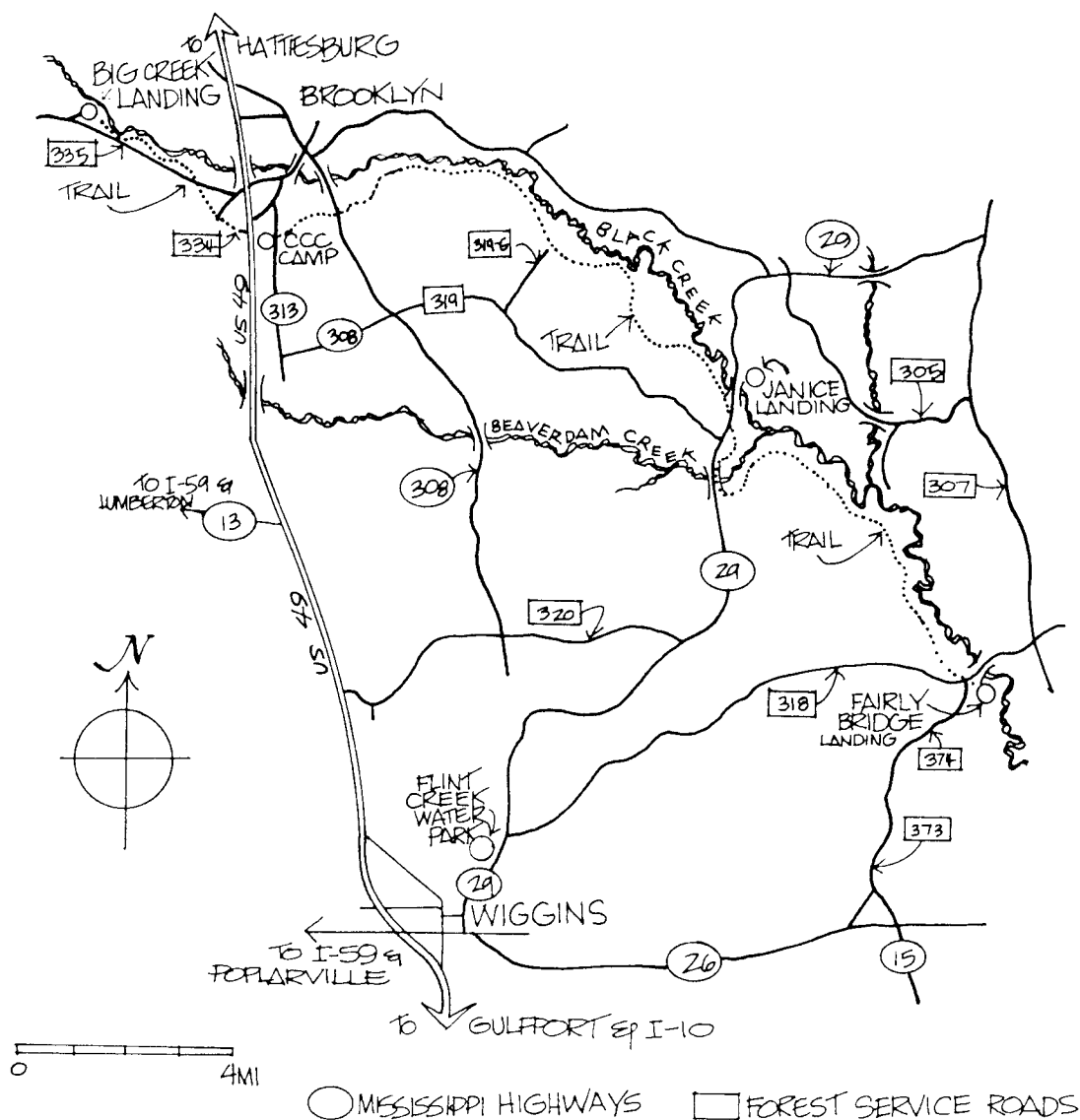
Wiggins, Mississippi. Turn onto MS 29 and follow it through Wiggins and the forest, across Black Creek to the landing. To ferry cars to the Fairley Bridge landing from here, go back south on MS 29, turn left on "Florida Gas Road" not far beyond the Beaverdam Creek bridge, and then turn left on Forest Service 318 to Fairley Bridge. The road to the landing and its parking lot goes to the right just before the bridge. The turnoff to Brooklyn from US 49 is well marked.

To reach Big Creek Landing at the western end of the trail, take the MS 13 exit from I-59 at Lumberton and go east. Then turn left (north) at divided four-lane US 49. You can also reach this intersection from Gulfport to the south. Turn left again on a paved road just before you reach the bridge over

Black Creek. Take the first paved right a few hundred yards later, and after a few miles turn right at the Big Creek Landing sign.

To reach the abandoned CCC camp/parking lot just east of US 49, take the turnoff (a right turn) to Brooklyn. Make a very sharp right turn a few hundred yards later, and go another few hundred yards to the right turn to the parking lot.

There are two good maps of the area, and these are recommended for this trip or any other segment you may choose. You can obtain a free map from the Forest Service at the address and phone number given in the Directory. The Forest Service sells a more detailed map, and this is carried by some local outfitters as well. ■



Tuxachanie Trail

by John Sevenair

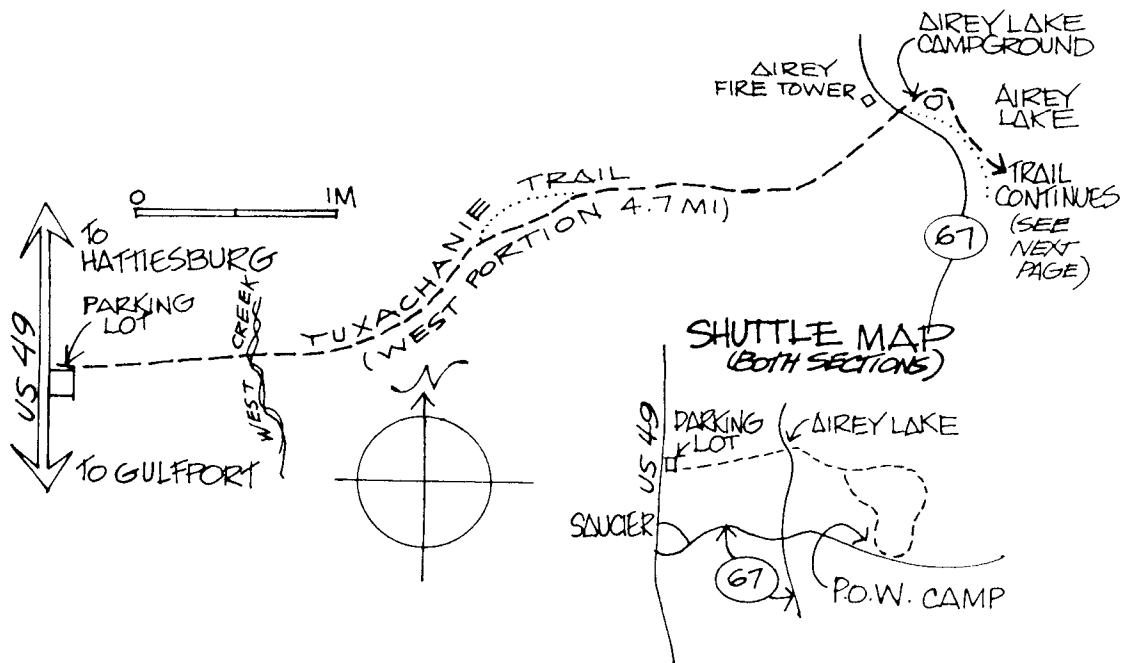
There was a time when, if you wanted to backpack on a marked trail between Alabama and Texas, the Tuxachanie Trail was just about the only possibility. With a total of 17 miles of trail, the Tuxachanie is still a good choice, though it can be crowded.

For the first five miles east of US 49 the trail follows the bed of an abandoned logging railroad that dates from the early part of this century. There is a small pond full of water lilies near US 49. A mile from the trailhead the path crosses a footbridge over West Creek. This can be impassable in wet weather. Further along you can see low sandy ridges with longleaf and slash pine, cactus, and palmetto. Between these ridges there is savannah and boggy grassland. Look for pitcher plant flowers and tiny wild orchids in

spring.

Not far to the east of Airey Tower Road on the trail you come to Copeland Spring, named for a clan of outlaws who used it. A little further beyond this the trail enters what can seem to be a tangle of hiking trails, horse trails, and logging roads. It's easy to get confused without a map, and you can do it even if you have one.

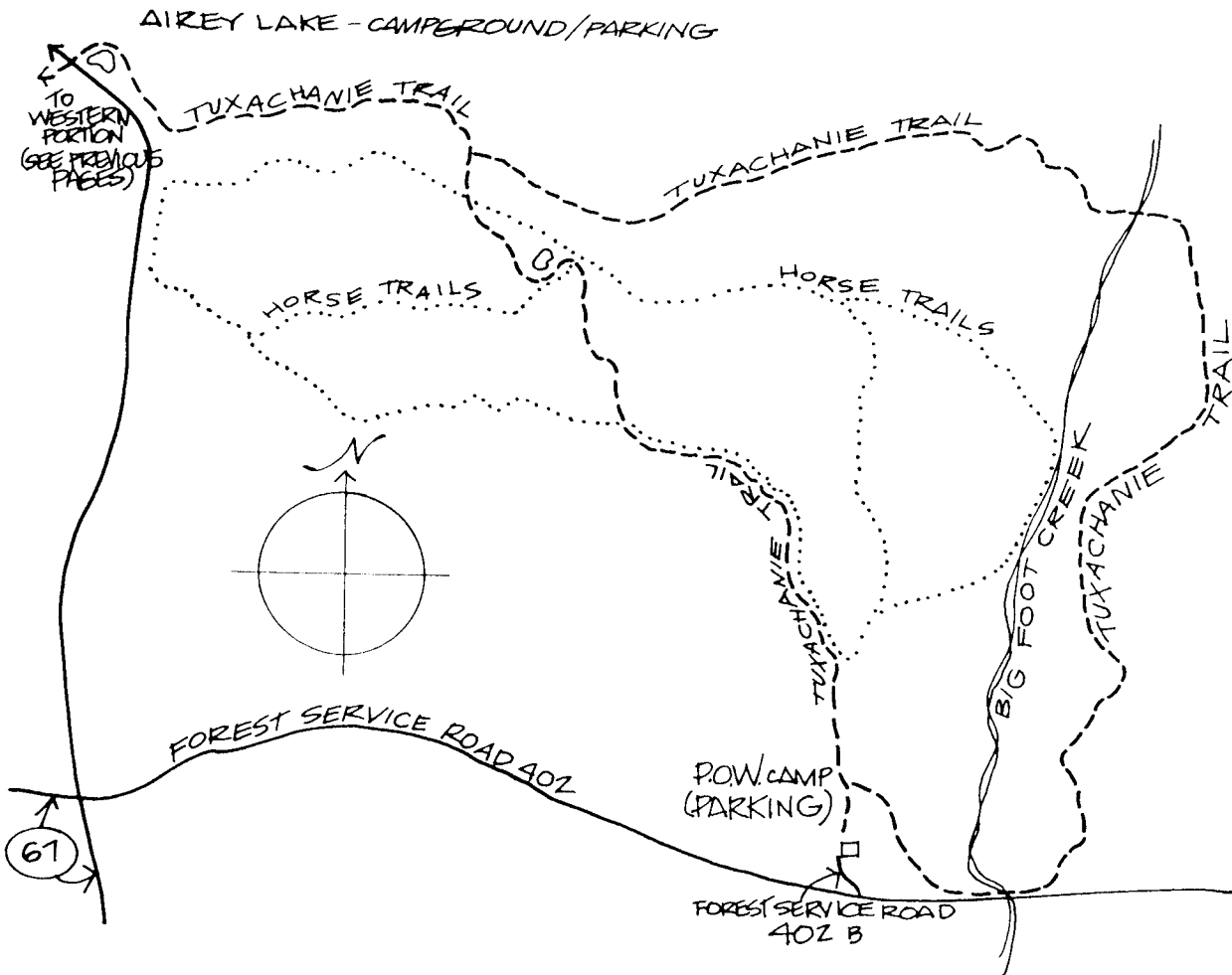
The southeastern access point is an old P. O. W. camp, used to house German prisoners of war during WWII. Camping is possible, but there have been too many incidents of vandalism on cars left there to make it a good beginning or ending point for a backpack trip. This segment of the trail goes on past the camp to the paved road, crosses Tuxachanie Creek, and turns back to the north and west to rejoin the original trail near Copeland Spring. This makes a loop trip



possible, with both the start and the finish at Airey Lake.

The U. S. Forest Service has produced a map of the trail, which can be ordered from them for a modest price. Their address and phone number is given in the Directory.

Getting there: The western end of the trail is 17 miles north of the intersection of I-10 and U.S. Hwy. 49 at Gulfport. The parking lot is well marked. The central access point at Airey Lake and the P. O. W. camp are also easy to find; see the car shuttle map. ■



Flint Creek Water Park

by John Sevenair

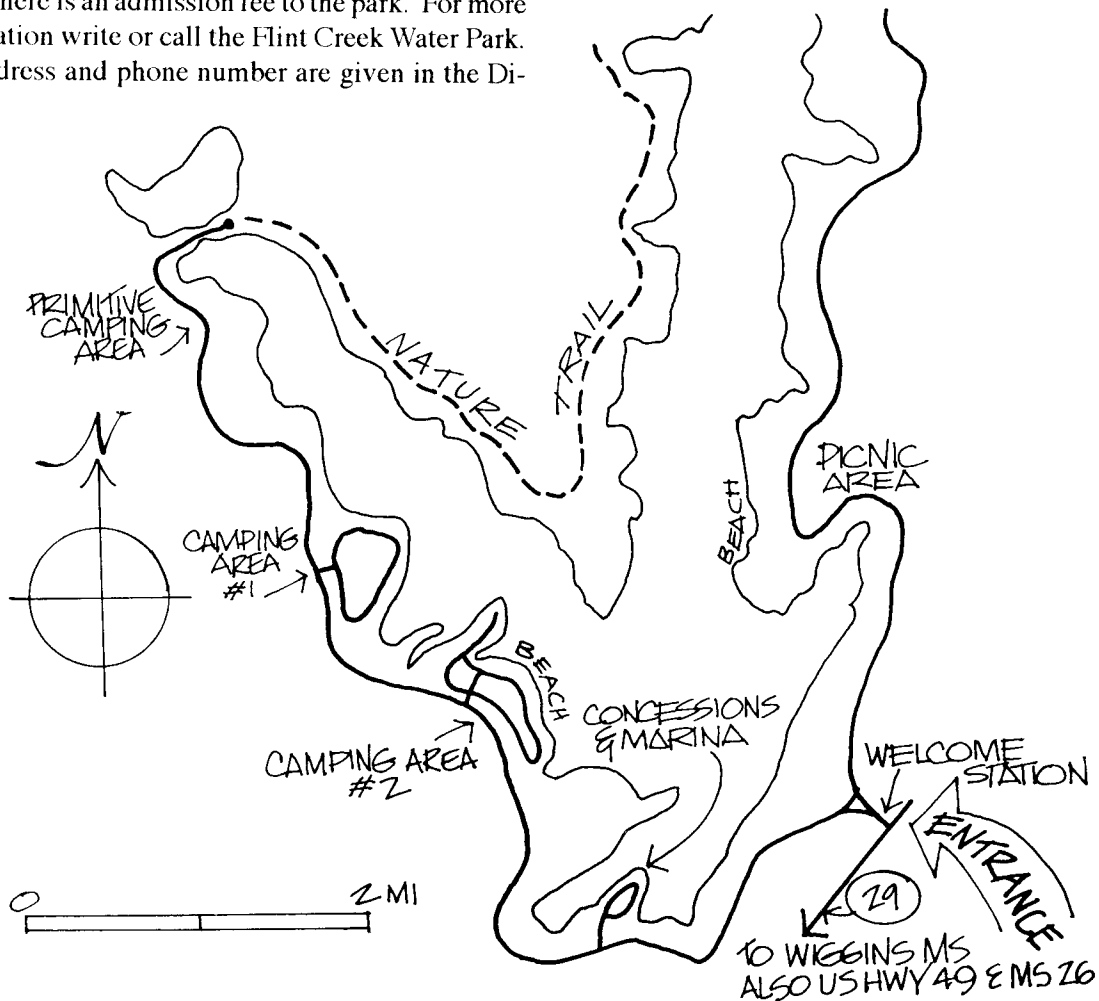
Flint Creek Water Park contains a nature trail that passes through pine forests and over gentle hills, with occasional views of the lake that is the park's centerpiece. The trail once circled the lake, but the fall of some of its wooden bridges and logging on the east side put an end to that. With the superb Black Creek Trail to the north and the Tuxachanie Trail to the south, there are better places to go, but it's worth a look.

The easy-to-follow trail goes about 3 1/2 miles to a dead end. There are gullies and a barbed wire fence along at least one section. Many types of plants live along the trail, including huckleberries in May and wildflowers in season. It makes for a fairly pleasant moderate day hike that can be combined with car camping in the park. Swimming in the lake is permitted only at the designated beach near the picnic area. There is an admission fee to the park. For more information write or call the Flint Creek Water Park. The address and phone number are given in the Di-

rectory.

Getting there: Flint Creek This water park is on Mississippi Highway 29 just north of Wiggins and south of Black Creek. To reach the end of the trail from the Welcome Station/Park Headquarters, take the road that goes west (to the left of the dam). Go past the marina, cabins, campgrounds, the end of the pavement, and the primitive campground. Cross a causeway and park near the gate that blocks your progress on the far side. Walk around the gate and continue on the road about 100 feet until you see a sign pointing to the trail.

The author is indebted to Cornell J. Tramontana Jr. and Jim Nanninga for their assistance. ■



Percy Quin State Park

by John Sevenair

This Mississippi park surrounds Lake Tangipahoa just west of I-55 near McComb. It has the usual state park amenities of cabins, campgrounds, picnic areas, and boat launch facilities. There are also some trails in the park. Sometimes trail maintenance is a little casual or overdue, but you might think of this as adding to the adventure. Unfortunately, sometimes a bridge fails, and this closes the trail. For up-to-date information, contact the park; its address and phone number is given in the Directory.

A boardwalk nature trail leaves from the park's northernmost comfort station and makes a loop through the swamp formed where the Tangipahoa River enters the lake. A pleasant, somewhat primitive hiking trail takes off from the outermost end of the nature trail loop and goes about four miles around the undeveloped western side of the lake to a point near the western end of the dam. It makes for a good, interesting day hike.

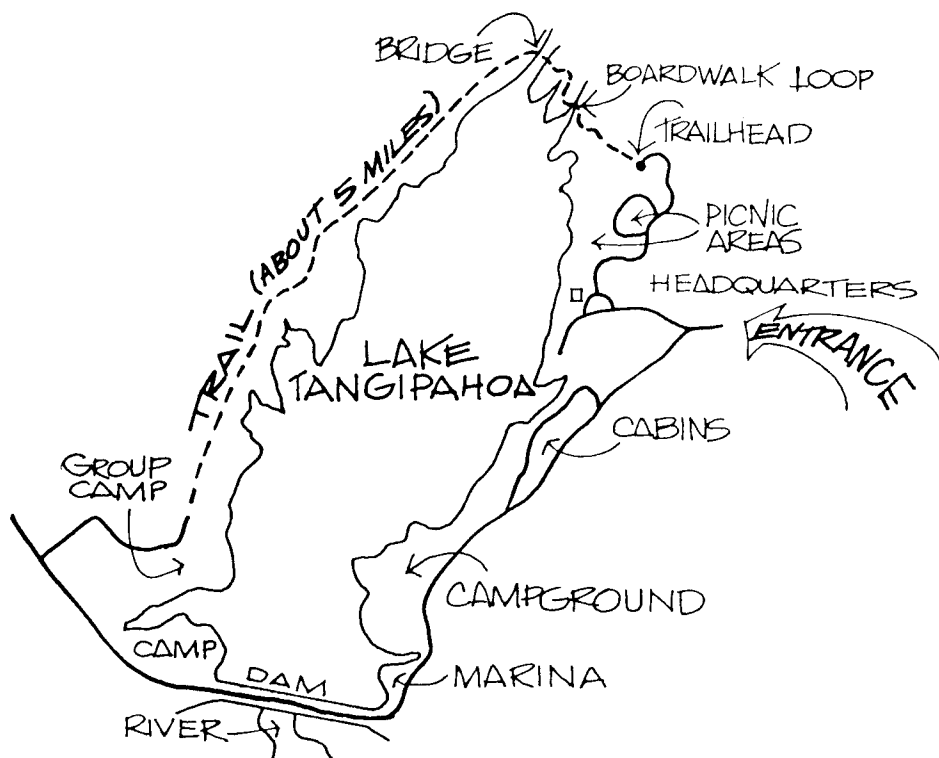
The trail twists and turns through the swamp near the boardwalk nature trail, where it consists of narrow boardwalks, primitive bridges, and wet ground. Percy Quin veterans will miss the wobbly and unstable foam-block pontoon bridge, which was

replaced by a more solid wooden span. Hikers finally cross the main channel of the river on a bouncy suspension bridge to reach higher ground. Here the trail turns south to run through the forest along the western shore of the lake.

The last time I hiked this trail an area of fallen trees blocked the trail not far north of the southwestern end of the trail. We went around this through wet ground on the lake side, following the shoreline and rejoining the trail at a small footbridge. Soon after this we reached the paved road at the group camp.

The Percy Quin State Park trail system continues across the Lake Tangipahoa dam and goes on through the more developed eastern portions of the park. The more vigorous hiker (or the one with no second car and companions for a shuttle) can make a complete circle around the lake if the bridges are in good repair.

Getting there: Take I-55 to Exit 13 (Fernwood Rd.) in Mississippi. This exit is 13 miles north of the LA-MS state line, and the park is a mile or two west of the interstate. Follow the signs from I-55 to the park. ■



Clear Springs Hiking Trail

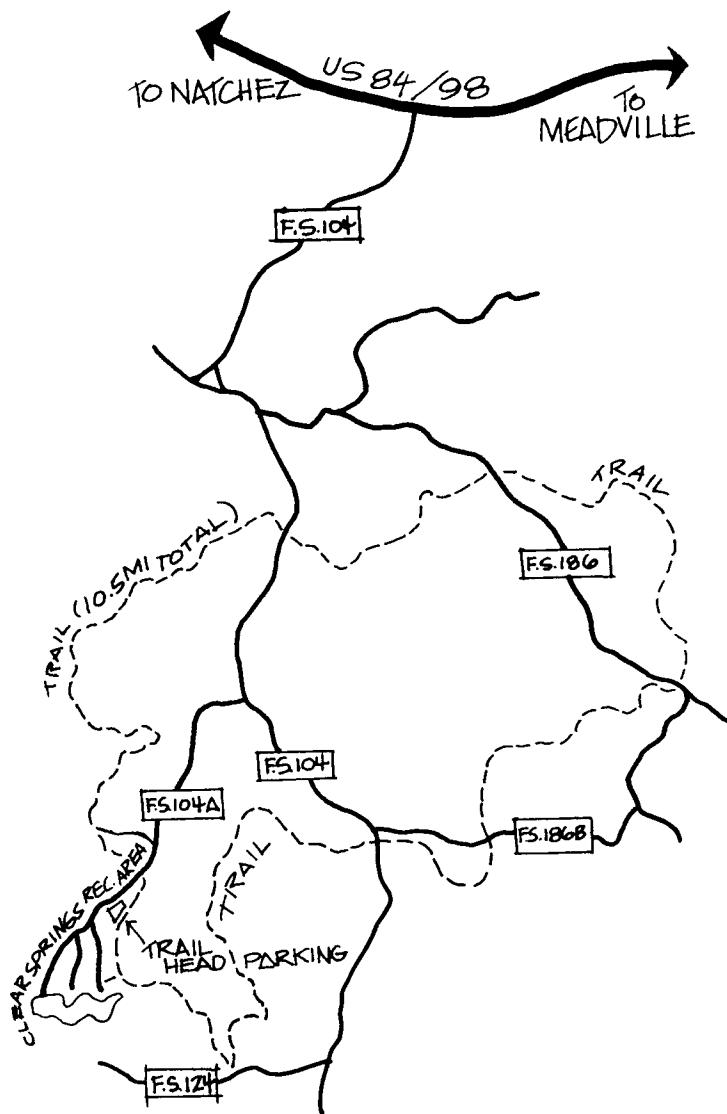
by George Barry, Honey Island Sierra Club

This trail mostly goes through multi-species, multi-age second growth woodland, though you will see some even-aged management (that is, pine plantations and clearcuts) from time to time. There are a remarkable number of hillsides you must climb, considering what part of the country this trail is in. It's an excellent trail for a long day hike or a fairly short backpack trip.

The trail is ten and a half miles long. It leads through mature stands of mixed pine and hardwood tree cover with a few open areas, over hilly terrain dissected by permanent and intermittent streams. All but the smallest streams are bridged, and the area is popular with mountain bikers as well as hikers. For shorter hikes, you can gain access to the trail from several Forest Service road crossings. The trail is adequately marked with small white diamond blazes. Flat areas for large group camping are limited east of Forest Service Roads 104 and 104-a.

Getting There: The access road, Forest Service 104, runs south from divided US 84/98 between Natchez and Brookhaven. The turnoff is approximately five miles west of the Meadville area and approximately six miles east of Roxie. A Forest Service sign at the junction shows the way to Clear Springs. The trailhead is on the east (left) side of the road about 4 miles south of 84/98, just above the fee station. No fee is re-

quired for trail use when parking at the trailhead. A fee is required for day use and overnight camping in the developed recreation area. ■



The Pearl River Basin

by Byron Almquist

For information on where the Pearl River Basin is located and the type of terrain in it, refer to the section on canoeing in the basin. Hiking in the basin is a viable alternative to paddling. Usually in summer and autumn there is considerable room to

roam around in the flood plain. As there are few trails, the venturesome hiker or backpacker has the thrill of exploring an area that is largely devoid of the signs of humanity. That is the greatest appeal of the Pearl River Basin. ■

From Lock #2

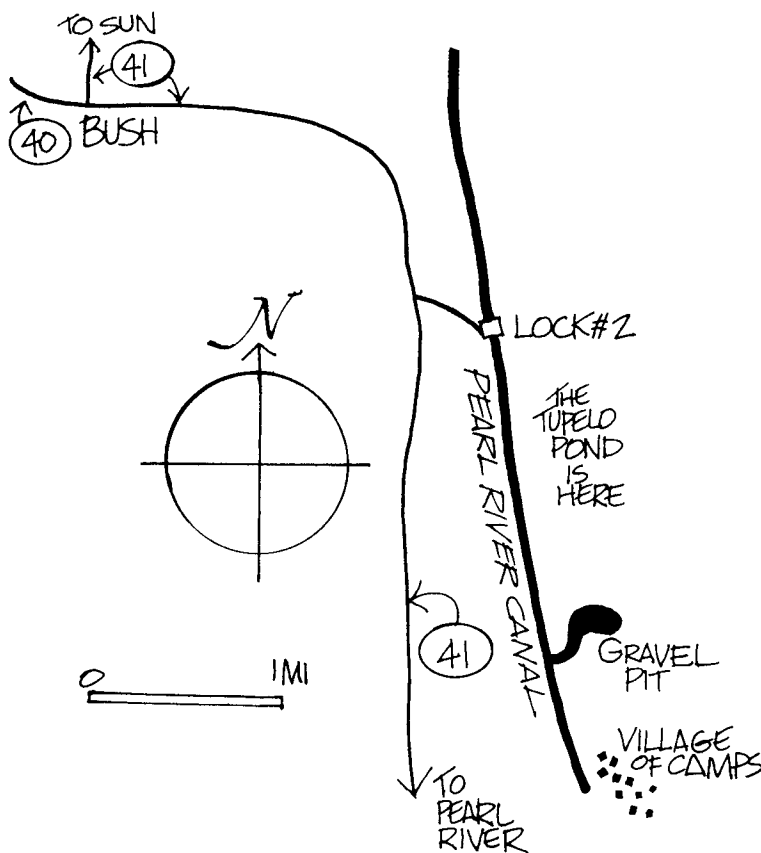
by Byron Almquist, Canoe and Trail Adventures

The main suggestion at Lock #2 is to cross the locks and walk south along the canal. For approximately a mile and a half the hiker can observe off to the left an extensive tupelo pond. Depending on the water level, time of year,

day, etc., there can be considerable activity in the tupelo pond. If you are patient and conditions are right, you can see stationary floating logs covered with turtles and a variety of birds winging through the foliage.

At the end of the tupelo pond is a pond left over from gravel operations. Hike around the rim of the pond admiring its deep blue water. A fourth of a mile after rejoining the levee, the hiker comes to a village of fishing camps complete with electricity, two streets, and piles of discarded cans. One can continue along the levee as far as desired - even to Lock #1, a distance of approximately 12 miles. Depending on the water level, the curious hiker can leave the levee opposite the gravel pit and range out to the east - all the way to the Bogue Chitto. From that departure point there is high ground for miles around that can be explored.

Getting there: To reach Lock #2, go about 20 miles north of Pearl River on LA Hwy. 41 and turn right just south of Bush. The topo map is the Henleyfield quad. ■



From Lock #1

by Byron Almquist, Canoe and Trail Adventures

From Lock #1 there are basically two areas to explore. One is easy - from the parking area walk south, on the west side of the barge canal, to the intersection of the canal with the West Pearl River. From there the hiker can follow the river either by walking at waters edge on its beaches or on 15' banks overlooking the river. It is said that one can, at low water, walk all the way to the city of Pearl River - a distance of approximately seven miles.

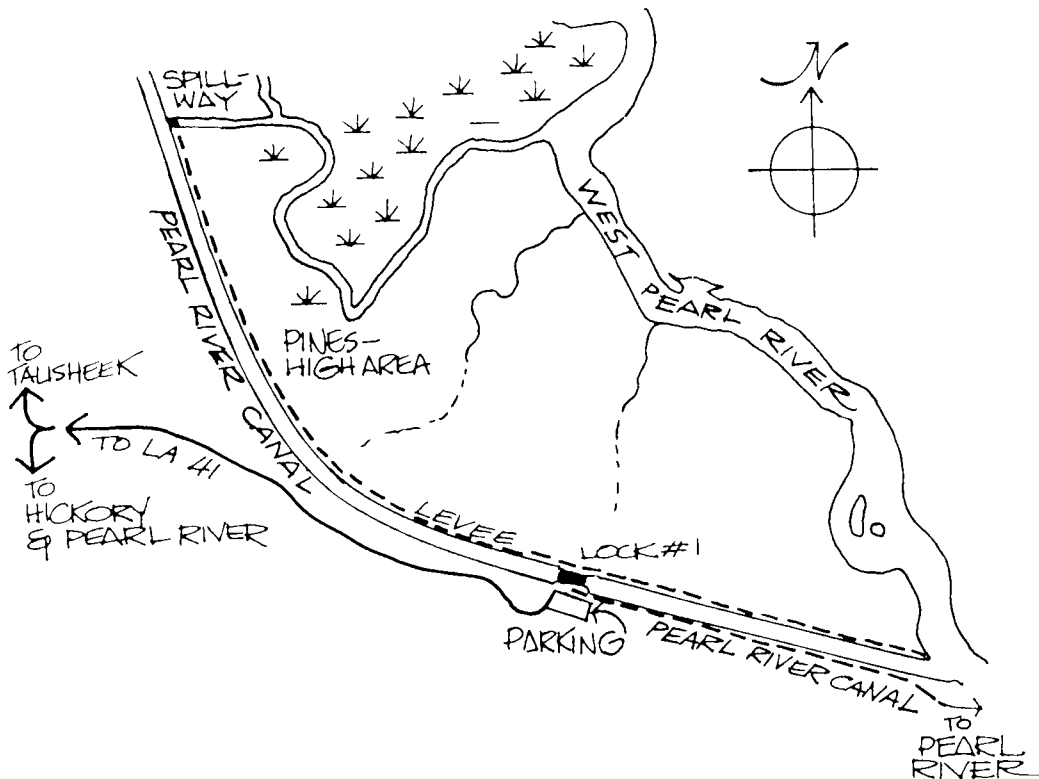
A variation of this route is to hike out away from the West Pearl into the flood plain that lies between it and La. Highway 40.

The other area is reached by crossing the lock and walking in either direction along the barge canal. To the north in approximately 2 1/2 miles are the ponds from a commercial gravel mining operation. En route to that destination the hiker will need to go past a spillway, either by walking on its concrete "toe" or by clamber-

ing over the logs piled up immediately downstream of the spillway.

Another alternative is to walk ESE along the canal to its intersection with the West Pearl - a distance of a mile. Of course anywhere along the canal it is possible for the hiker to turn NE toward the West Pearl and hike to it. Restrictions on this would be any posted property, high water, and heavy undergrowth. But if these are not present, one can meander around between the canal and the West Pearl to the length of one's curiosity or time.

Getting there: The turnoff to Lock #1 is nine miles from I-59 via Pearl River and La. Hwy. 41. The Charter Oak Grocery and (sometimes) a sign mark this right turn. The topo map to use is the Hickory, La. 7 1/2 quad. You will also need the Nicholson, MS. 7 1/2 if you are headed toward the city of Pearl River. ■



Honey Island Swamp Nature Trail

by John Sevenair and Adele Plauche, New Orleans Sierra Club

This loop trail in the Pearl River Basin is about a mile long. With the interpretive trail guide pamphlet, camera, binoculars, and field guides you can spend all day on it, and find yourself coming back, again and again.

The attractions of the trail are many. For instance, it's a good place to see wildlife unless there are a lot of people around. Turkeys can sometimes be seen in the clearings, and Horseshoe Lake is a nesting area for wood ducks. Perhaps even more notable are the plants, some of which have numbered signs keyed to a guide pamphlet. If you walk the trail using the pamphlet you will have a much greater knowledge and understanding of the natural communities that make up Louisiana and Mississippi bottomland hardwood ecosystems.

There are some dangers, however. Water moccasins live in the area, and are sometimes common around the lake; they're poisonous. Insect repellent is recommended unless it's cold.

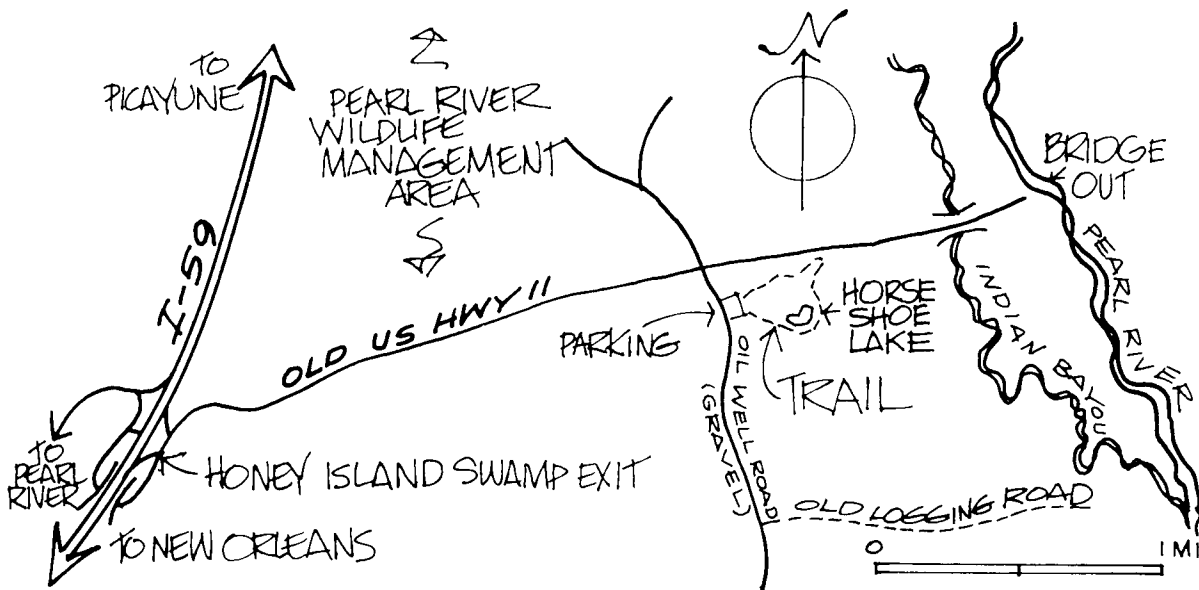
There are restrictions on the use of the trail in hunting season, too, since the land for wildlife management areas such as this is bought with money from hunting and fishing licenses. Don't hike on the trail before 9:30 A.M. during squirrel or turkey season,

and be sure to wear hunter's blaze orange clothes if you hike during the gun season for deer.

Bottomland hardwood habitat is rapidly becoming soybean habitat in this part of the country. This trail, prepared jointly by the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries of Louisiana and the Delta Chapter of the Sierra Club, provides a good introduction.

For further exploration of the area, you can walk down Well Rd. south for about 3/4 mile beyond the nature trail. You will see a trailhead on the left leading into the woods. Follow this along the remnants of an old logging road. You may have to do some clearing and bushwhacking, but the tranquility of this lush swamp trail is well worth while. Hike as far as you can without swimming—the logging road eventually runs into a lowland area near the Pearl River—and return.

Getting there: Take the Honey Island Swamp exit on I-59 between Slidell and Picayune, as shown on the map, and follow Old US 11 into the wildlife management area. A sign on Old US 11 points to the trail. Since this is a state wildlife management area, you should have a Wild Louisiana Stamp (or a fishing or hunting license) before you enter here. ■



Barataria Hiking

by John Sevenair

The fact that there is a national park in Louisiana is not as well known as it should be, though many Sierra Club members have been familiar with it since its beginnings. The Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve has several units. The one of most interesting to hikers, canoers, and naturalists is the Barataria Preserve Unit. Its trail system has been enlarged and improved in recent years. Habitats visible from the trail system include natural levee woodlands, cypress-tupelo swamp, and freshwater marsh. Here are some details.

The handicapped-accessible **Bayou Coquille Trail** is the park's most popular, and can be crowded on fine spring and fall days. It begins at a shell midden, the site of a prehistoric Indian village on the natural levee. Hardwoods, including live oaks, grow around the parking lot. The trail then descends the backslope of the natural levee through dwarf palmettos and swamp red maple. Finally it penetrates the swamp, a flooded forest of baldcypress, water tupelo, and pumpkin ash, to the edge of freshwater marsh.

The all-weather **Marsh Overlook Trail** is a boardwalk that continues from the end of the Bayou Coquille Trail, providing more views of the marsh and its wildlife as it follows the edge of the Kenta Canal. It ends at a raised marsh overlook, providing a fine panoramic view of the marsh and its wildlife. This and the Bayou Coquille Trail are the best trails in the park for seeing alligators. A trip from the Coquille Trail parking lot to the far end and back is about two miles long.

The **Palmetto Trail** is also a boardwalk. It's slightly less than a mile long, and like the preceding two can be hiked in all kinds of weather. It connects the park headquarters with the Coquille Trail parking lot. There is a short spur very near the park headquarters that leads to a restful spot to sit. The Palmetto Trail runs parallel to Bayou des Familles and between the natural levee and the swamp. The north half passes through transitional backslope areas, thick with palmettos and red maples.

The unimproved **Twin Canals Trail** runs between the canals atop the spoil bank of an incomplete drainage and development scheme. It is much used for bank-side fishing, and can also provide a

mile and a half round trip walk with good views of the swamp and marsh and opportunities for wildlife observation.

A parking lot with rest rooms, located in an old overgrown pecan grove, provides access to the extensive trail system east of LA 45. The paths here are longer, more primitive, and less crowded than the trails west of the road. This is a good area to see armadillos, swamp rabbits, gray squirrels, and birds.

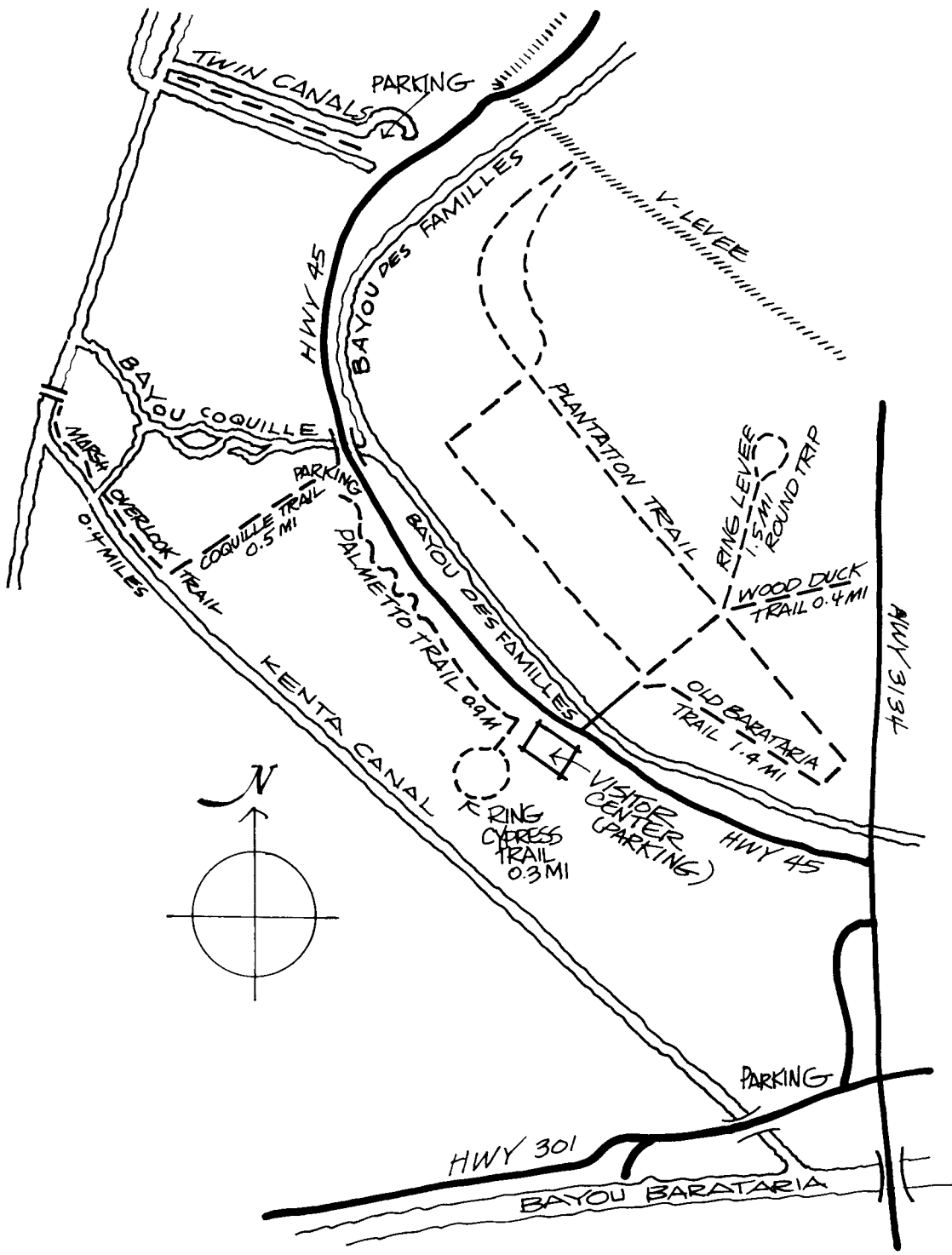
Most of the **Ring Levee Trail** is a narrow boardwalk that penetrates a beautiful swamp, ending at a former oil well site now overgrown by trees. This is the best trail for observing swamp creatures, from painted turtles basking on logs, to brilliantly-hued prothonotary warblers nesting in trailside cavities, to the occasional glimpse of a mink loping along the boardwalk. The path that leads to the branching of the Ring Levee Trail and the **Wood Duck Trail**, plus the Wood Duck Trail itself, are former shell roads. These can be walked in almost any weather.

The other trails here, the **Old Barataria Trail** and the **Plantation Trail**, can be very wet and muddy after rains. Calf-length rubber boots or sacrificial old tennis shoes should be worn at such times. These trails allow you to experience one of the most extensive natural levee hardwood forests left in the delta.

Hiking in the summer can be an ordeal by mosquitoes and deer flies on any of the park's trails. For more information, contact the Jean Lafitte National Park visitor center. The address and phone number are given in the Directory.

Getting there: To reach the Barataria Preserve Unit, get on the West Bank Expressway (US 90) south of New Orleans. Turn south on LA 45 (Barataria Boulevard), which is about halfway between the Greater New Orleans and Huey Long bridges. The park entrance is less than ten miles south of the intersection. LA 45 through the park parallels Bayou des Familles, a former distributary of the Mississippi River.

The author is indebted to the National Park Service and its personnel for information about this area and its trails and wildlife. ■



Public Transit and Levee Hikes

Have you ever wanted to get on a train or bus, get off at the trailhead, and start hiking on a wilderness trail? Would you like to avoid parking your car, retracing your steps to the car, and (for those who know the need for energy conservation) using gas in the car? In many places abroad and a few in the U. S. you can use public transportation this way.

In the New Orleans area you can use the bus, ferry, and streetcar system to take yourself to hikes on the Mississippi River levees. On these trips you can see a plantation home or two, explore wooded trails on the batture (land outside the levee, next to

the river), and watch the changeless and ever-changing panorama of North America's greatest river. Another levee trail, the Jefferson Parish Linear Park, follows the shoreline of Lake Pontchartrain.

The levee-top paths are level, with good surfaces, and if you get tired there's usually a bus line nearby. There is also suburban housing and River Road traffic. This is not premier wilderness, but it's good exercise and often interesting. For up-to-date information on transit routes and schedules, contact the Regional Transit Authority (see the Directory) or the bus companies.

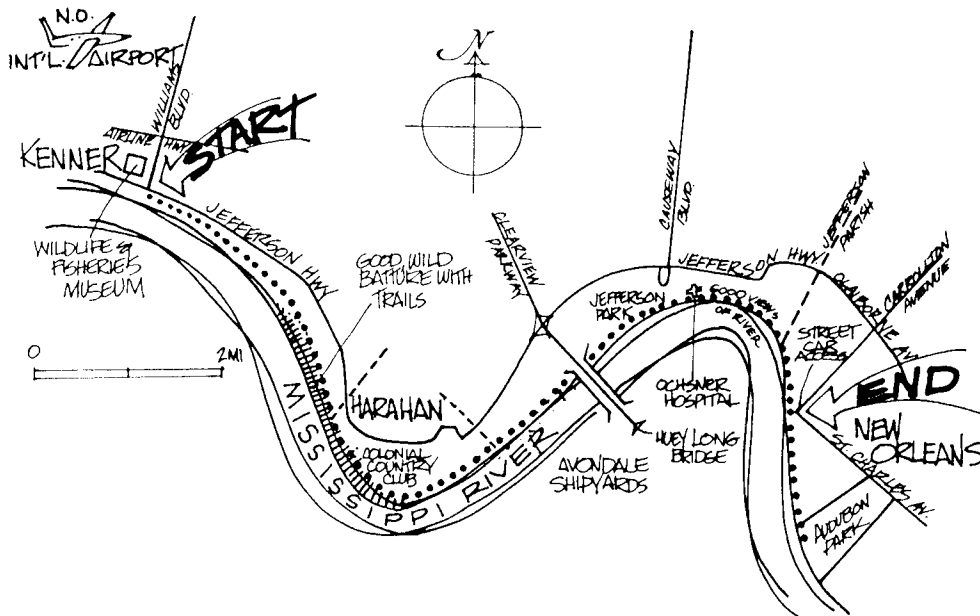
Harahan Trail

This route follows the Mississippi River from Williams Blvd. in Kenner to St. Charles Ave. in New Orleans. By the time you read this, the entire length of this section of levee may be surfaced with a ten-foot-wide strip of asphalt paving.

The batture from Harahan to the west is a notable feature of this route. Paths run through it, birds frequent it, and there are small ponds with populations of turtles. You can't hike on the batture when the river is high. For other landmarks, see the map. One caution: the levees are used by horseback and

bicycle riders, and the battures are used by barge companies and some other industries. Be careful. For a Boy Scout trail pamphlet that follows a slightly different route in this area, and has considerably more historical detail, write the Harahan Historical Trail (see the Directory).

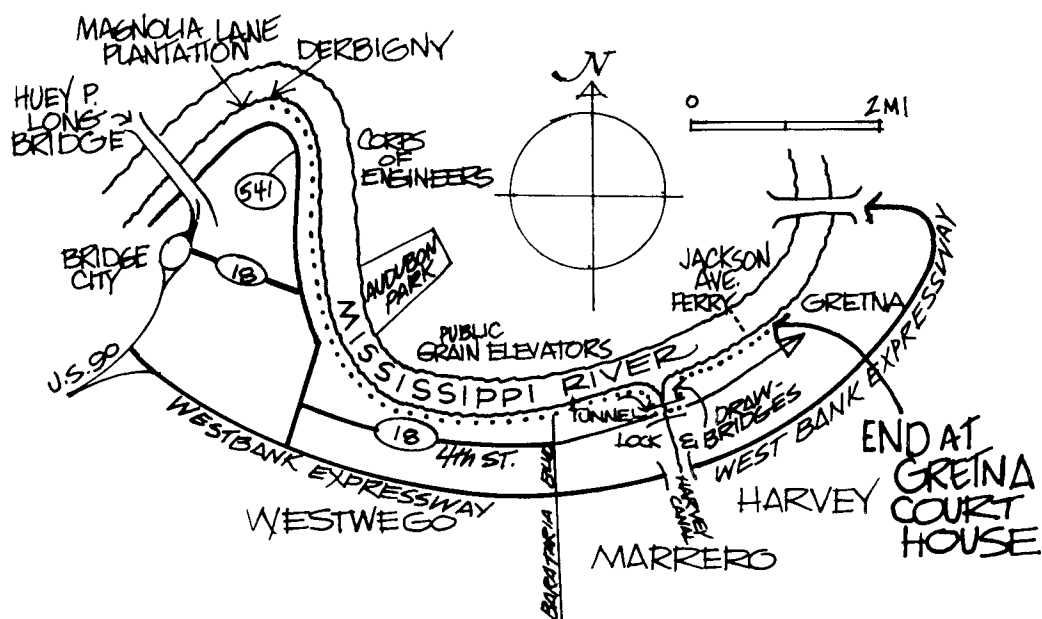
Getting there: Buses run from the intersection of Carrollton and Claiborne in New Orleans via the Jefferson Hwy. to Kenner, so the bus line is near this trail for most of its length. So if you don't want to walk the whole thirteen miles, you have an out. ■



Westwego Levee Hike

This ten-mile-long route follows the river from Nine Mile Point above Westwego to the Gretna Courthouse or the Gretna ferry landing. It leaves the river briefly to cross the Harvey Canal and returns through an industrial park. The hike generally borders industrial areas, though there are two plantation homes near the beginning of the trip.

Getting there: To reach the start you first take a Westwego bus, either from downtown New Orleans or from the Gretna ferry landing. From Westwego take the Avondale bus to either Pecan Grove Road or Bridge City. From either point it is about a mile and a half to Magnolia Lane Plantation, which is open to the public for a moderate fee. ■

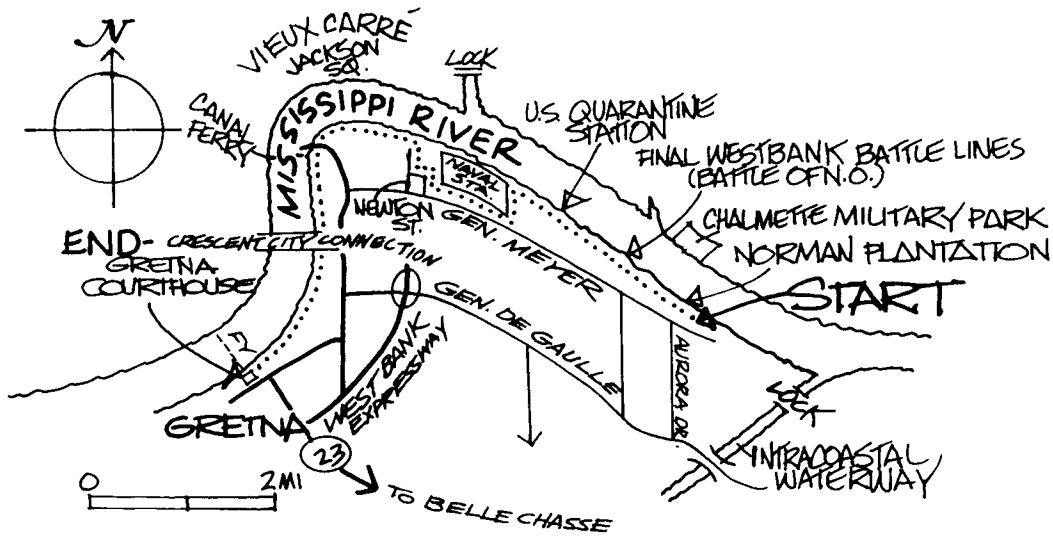


Algiers Levee Hike

The route mainly follows the river levee from the foot of Aurora Drive in Lower Algiers to the Gretna ferry landing or the Gretna Courthouse. This ten-mile walk borders on residential, commercial, and industrial activity, and provides views of river commerce and cross-river views of the New Orleans

riverfront.

Getting there: To reach Aurora Drive, take the Gen. Meyer bus from the central business district or the Algiers local from the Gretna ferry landing. You can return to New Orleans using either the Jackson Ave. or Canal St. ferry. ■

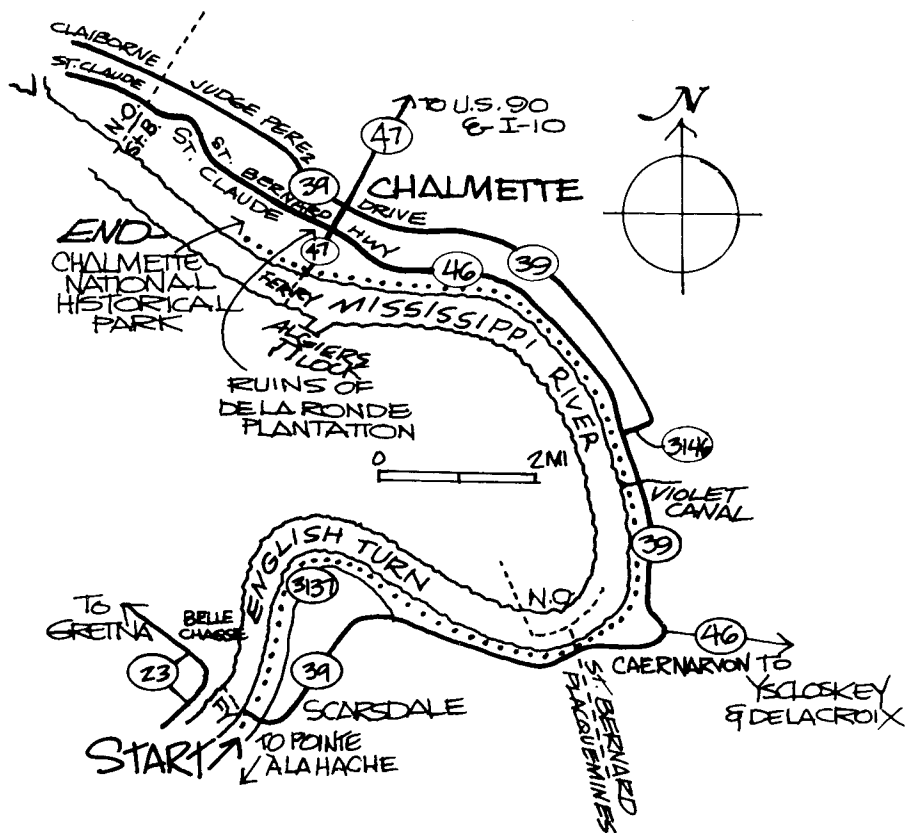


Chalmette Trail

This route follows the Mississippi River levee from the ferry landing at Scarsdale to the Chalmette National Military Park, the site of the Battle of New Orleans. The hike has a largely rural character, but it also passes industrial areas near Chalmette. This is the longest of the public transit hike (sixteen miles), and has no transit access from the middle portions of

the route—so be in good condition before you start.

Getting there: To reach Belle Chasse and the ferry landing for Scarsdale, take a Trailways bus. To return, cross the ferry at the end of Paris Road (La. 47) and walk to the end of the Gen. Meyer Avenue line in Algiers. ■



Jefferson Parish Linear Park

James Guilbeau

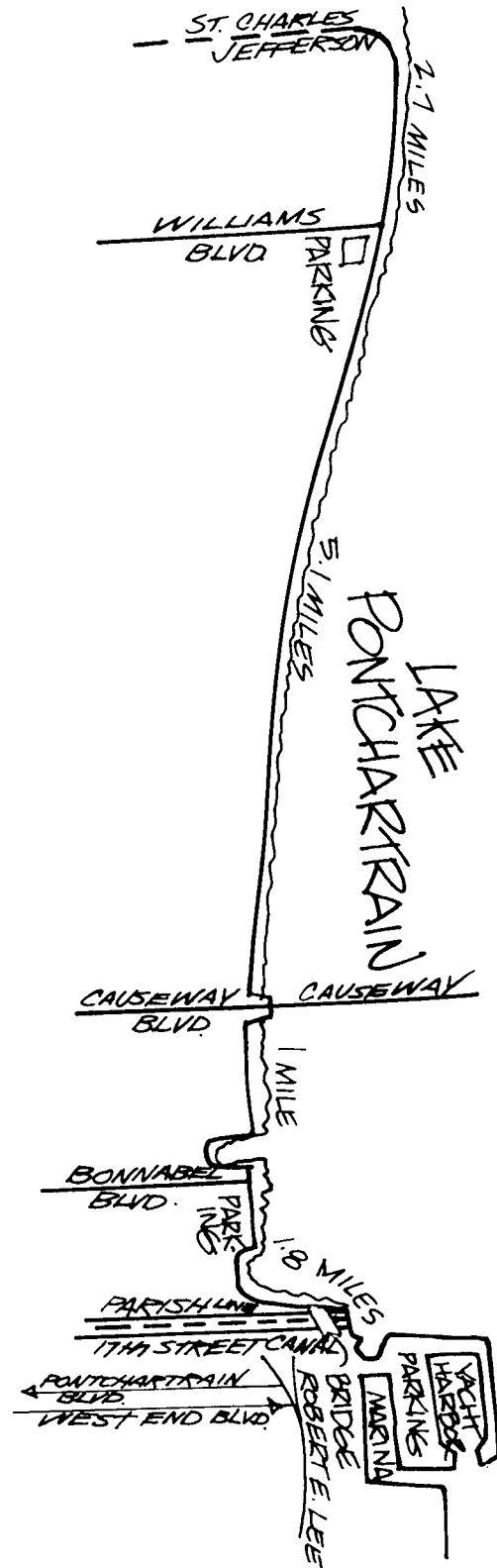
This trail runs from the West End in New Orleans, all the way along the Jefferson Parish shoreline, and south along the Jefferson-St. Charles parish line almost to I-10, a total of over twelve miles. You can begin the trail by crossing a pedestrian bridge over the 17th Street Canal between Coconut Beach (New Orleans' beach volleyball center) and some West End restaurants. The path follows Orpheum St. along the canal for a few dozen yards and turns onto the top of the levee. A few hundred yards further on it drops down to an asphalt path and follows the lake shore for almost ten miles.

The park from Orleans Parish to Williams Blvd. is mostly grass with scattered trees on it. The path makes a short detour through a residential neighborhood at the Bonnabel Canal, which has a boat launch, park, and a pumping station. At Causeway Boulevard a new paved trail follows the lake shore under the end of the bridge; it's no longer necessary to dodge high-speed traffic while crossing the road. In July and early August, swarms of migrating Purple Martins roosting at sunset on the south end of the Causeway provide a great natural spectacle.

There's a small park near the end of Severn Ave., a larger park (with a pond and bird refuge) at the end of Lake Villa Dr. at the Suburban Canal, and a small wild area at the end of the Elmwood Canal. Between the casino at Williams Blvd. and the parish line the land between the path and the levee is mostly filled with trees and brush. The path along the parish line canal mostly has views of suburban back yards and the concrete wall of a hurricane protection levee.

Grassy lawns with scattered trees don't make for very good wildlife habitat, but in the winter and early spring you can often see Brown Pelicans offshore, especially near the canals farther west. The recovery of this species, once extirpated from Louisiana, is an encouraging sign for our environment.

Getting there: Public transit can take you to the north end of Pontchartrain Blvd. a few blocks from the West End, Causeway and Williams at the lake, and the intersection of West Esplanade and Loyola a few blocks from the path in the far west. You can park a car near the park at a number of other spots (see the map). ■



Short Trails around Lake Pontchartrain

This section describes some short hiking trails. Many of them have good views of the marshes and swamps of the Lake Pontchartrain Basin. None of these trails are far from Lake

Pontchartrain, and none is more than couple of miles long. The first trails in the section are in eastern New Orleans, and we'll go counterclockwise around the lake from there.

Louisiana Nature and Science Center

by Bob Thomas, Audubon Institute

The three nature trails at the Center are designed to bring visitors into the heart of a living forest community, and to remind all of us of the subtle beauty that is ours to preserve. The 3/4-mile Wisner Loop Trail is an elevated boardwalk that is wheelchair and stroller accessible, and leads to the Nature Center's wetland s area. The shorter Old Field Trail and the longer Perimeter Trail are both ground-level trails. They offer an exciting and educational look at the forest surrounding the Nature Center.

Located on an 86-acre preserve in eastern New Orleans, only 20 minutes from downtown, the Louisiana Nature and Science Center also

features hand-on interpretive exhibits, native plants and animals, and a planetarium. The Center offers a variety of educational and recreational programs in environmental and natural science for people of all ages. These programs include classes, workshops, camps, hikes, boat excursions, and special events for people of all ages.

Getting there: From I-10 in eastern New Orleans, take Read Blvd. south (away from Lake Pontchartrain) to Joe Brown Park (you can follow the signs). For more information about the Louisiana Nature and Science Center, consult the Directory and go from there. ■

