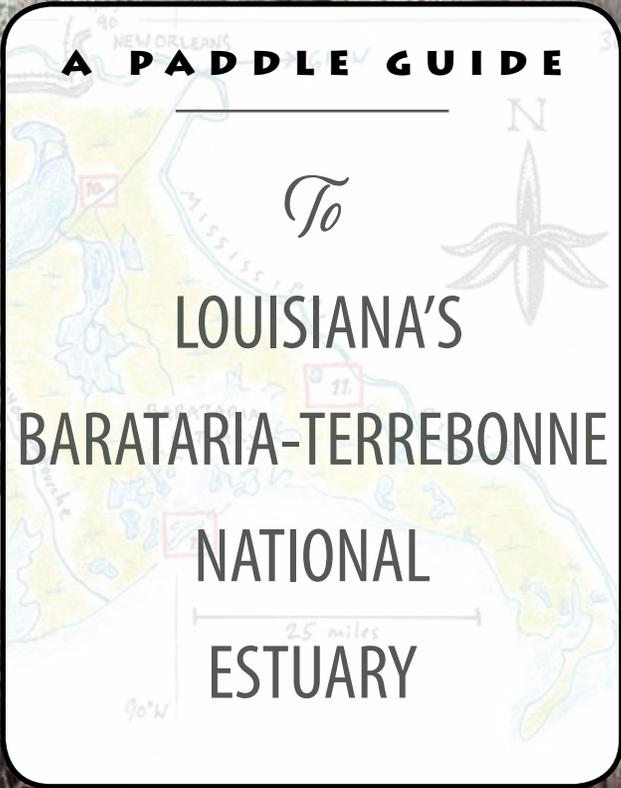


A PADDLE GUIDE

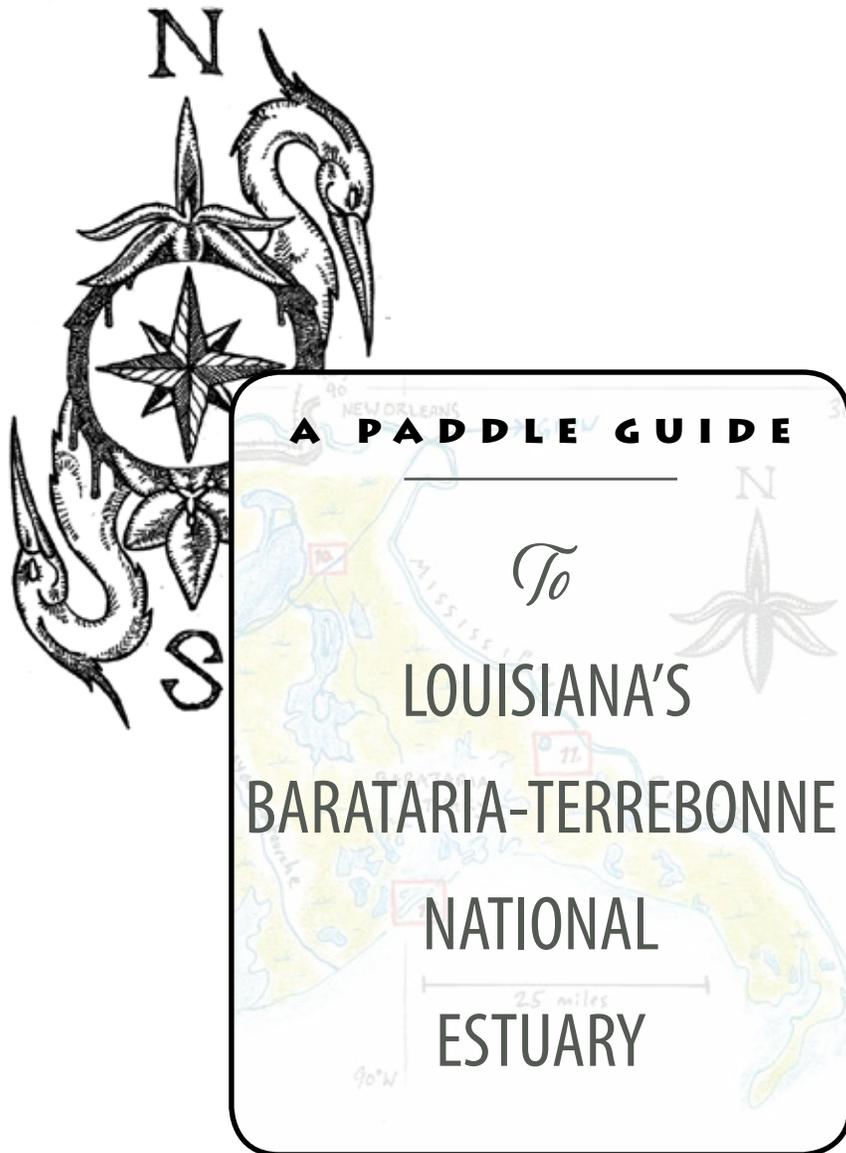
To
LOUISIANA'S
BARATARIA-TERREBONNE
NATIONAL
ESTUARY





Note: Reference in this booklet to any specific commercial product, process, service, or the use of any trade, firm, or corporation name is the for the information and convenience of the public and does not constitute endorsement favoring, disapproval, or position by the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program.





A BOOKLET OF SELF-GUIDED DAY TRIPS
FOR CANOE AND KAYAK

R Kay

concept, content, hand-drawn maps, diagrams, and photographs (unless noted)

Richard G. Kay

silhouettes, illustrations, and boat key

Bobby 'Panama' Morefield

compass roses

Michael Massimi

BTNEP project manager

Dianne Madden

graphic design

DEDICATION

Dedicated to the father of the author,
Richard George Kay,
who raised me in an old Mohawk canoe on the bayous and bogues of the Florida Parishes,
and who encouraged me – still encourages me – to keep paddling on.

*R Kay wishes to thank Michael Massimi at BTNEP, whose participation and paddling made this guidebook possible.
Also all those other “second paddles” who contributed their time scouting routes: Richard G. Kay,
Ray ‘Moose’ Jackson, Bobby ‘Panama’ Morefield, Stevie Ray Blake, Andi Elena Lipson, Antoine Berard,
Tania Panés, Neight ‘Train’ Tinglof (RIP), Eleanor Warner, Liz Massimi, Jayme Kalal, Cassandra Burrows,
Meschiya Lake, Sansa Asylum, Shiri Goldsmith-Graziani, and David Crellin.*

BTNEP would like to acknowledge the generous assistance of the following contributors to the production of this guidebook: Byron Almquist, Chad Almquist, Andrew Barron, Matt Benoit, Donovan Garcia, Ferris Gilmore Jr., Ferris Gilmore Sr., Rick Hartman, Bill Hill, Tom Kane, Kristy Monier, Leonard Naquin, Kerry St. Pé, and Natalie Waters.

Table of Contents

The Canoe: General Information, Laws, and Safety	3
What is this Booklet?	4
Weather, Tides, Launches, and POSTED	4
A Brief History of the Barataria-Terrebonne	6
Paddling Algorithm	8
Index Map (including put-in coordinates)	9
Paddle Routes	10-31
Glossary	32-33
Wildlife Checklist	34-35
Venomous Snakebite Protocol	35
Canoe Checklist	36

Paddle Routes

1. Grand Bayou Choctaw	10-11
2. Northern Lake Verret (Bayou Corne, Little Grand Bayou)	12-13
3. Southern Lake Verret (Himalaya Canal)	14
4. Tiger Bayou	15
5. Bay Sherman (Bayou Morgan City)	16-17
6. Mandalay Marsh (Minors Canal, Marmande Canal)	18-19
7. Bayou Chevreuil (Lac des Allemands)	20-21
8. Lake Boeuf (Theriot Canal)	22-23
9. Lockport Area (Company Canal, Lake Fields, Bayou L'Eau Bleu)	24-25
10. Barataria Preserve (Kenta Canals, Carpes Swamp)	26-27
11. Bayou Grande Cheniere	28-29
12. Grand Isle	30-31

The Canoe:

GENERAL INFORMATION, LAWS AND SAFETY

SAFETY FIRST

The rules of boat safety apply to all craft on the water, including canoes. Louisiana law requires one personal flotation device on board for each passenger, which must be worn at all times by individuals 16 years of age or younger. Canoes, kayaks, and pirogues, unlike motorized craft, are not required to be registered with LA Dept of Wildlife and Fisheries, but are recognized as legitimate entities just the same. In Louisiana the smallest craft – canoes, pirogues, and kayaks – will sometimes find themselves sharing the channel with the largest – tugs, barges, and cargo ships. You may be surprised to learn that your tiny canoe may use the Harvey Canal Lock the same as a tugboat! This guidebook favors calm, quiet, nature-friendly routes, but several routes do approach or cross the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway (abbr. GIW, ICW, ICWW, or the standard GIWW), so you are advised to be prepared for all kinds of boat traffic. If you are an inexperienced paddler, check out an easy online paddle safety course at www.boaterexam.com/paddling which is sanctioned by the US Coast Guard.

EN GARDE! BE AWARE!

Always file your float plan. Let someone back home know of your trip details. In the case of an emergency, dial 911 if possible, and alert others with emergency signals such as a whistle, airhorn, mirror, light, flare, or shouting. Above all, use your eyes, your ears, and your common sense to avoid dangerous situations. In all likelihood, the most dangerous scenario a paddler is likely to encounter is probably a head-on collision with a buzzing nest of angry hornets!

CANOE OR KAYAK?

The Barataria-Terrebonne Estuary System (referred to in this booklet as “the B-T”) is a diverse enough system that you shall encounter many types of conditions. Normally, on the routes in this booklet you can expect sluggish bayous and gentle water, but tides, currents, and winds are in constant flux, and serene conditions quickly change with weather. Though we have no native rocks in the B-T delta, floods and fluvial obstructions may sometimes produce fast or low-class whitewater requiring skilled maneuvering. Normal winds can whip up a chop on lakes and open marsh. Therefore, a medium-length, mildly keeled canoe with a slightly rockered bottom is ideal for most of the bayou country. Down towards the Gulf, in the open water of the salt marshes and barrier islands, a skirted kayak is probably your best suit.

THE STATE OF THE CANOE

You may find it interesting to learn that canoes are rare oddities in the B-T. For thousands of years dugout canoes were the standard watercraft throughout Louisiana, but things changed when Europeans arrived with their sails and row-boats, barges and steamships. In the early 20th century, petroleum motors revolutionized Louisiana waterways, and the little gasoline “putt-putt bateau” became the bayou champion – the Cajun pickup truck. Soon after, the widespread discovery of oil in Louisiana blew open the door to the petroleum industry. In the past few decades the petroleum and shipping industries have cut thousands of canals into the wetlands, creating open water and dead miles that require bigger, faster boats to navigate. Motorboats now rule the waters. Pirogues have not entirely disappeared in the modern age, still used by swampers to access their remote hunting and trapping leases, but canoes in the B-T have lost their colors. The reasons for this are obvious: lots of motorboat traffic, heavy industrialization, and man-made hydrological complications. However, the B-T is still green and wet, full of protected public wetlands including State Parks, a National Historical Park and Preserve, Wildlife Management Areas, and National Wildlife Refuges. Our estuary provides some the richest birding and fishing habitat in the country, and the canoe is quite at home.

ON CHOOSING A CANOE

“A short, low-ended canoe is the kindest to portage, and the best to paddle among the overhead branches of a small stream. A canoe with a curving, rocker-bottom can turn with quick response in white water. A canoe with a narrow bow and stem and a somewhat V-sided straight bottom can hold its course against a strong lake wind. A canoe with a narrow beam moves faster than any other and is therefore the choice for war.”

–John McPhee,
The Survival of the Bark Canoe, 1975

what is this booklet?

BE YOUR OWN GUIDE

The B-T is a 4.2 million-acre wetland near the mouth of the Mississippi River. It is a living treasure of wildlife, history, culture, and naturalistic opportunity. The purpose of this guidebook is to help the paddler explore a few of its best gems. Specifically, as an education tool for ecotourism, this booklet is intended to assist beginner and intermediate paddlers in choosing routes on accessible, public waterways in the B-T, and being prepared for single-day excursions by canoe or kayak. An algorithm accompanying the Index Map may assist you in determining which route is the best match for you (see pages 8-9). Map distances herein are measured in miles, whereas portage distances are expressed as per voyageur tradition in rods (16 ½ feet per rod, the approximate length of a standard canoe). More experienced paddlers who desire longer routes, more vigorous paddles, or multi-day trips might use this guide as a base reference and then compose your itinerary according to further research.

Carry this guide with you, but get a real map. The maps in this guide are intended for overview and reference only. The scale of the map you require will be dependent on the specific route. Many bait shops and marinas sell navigation maps local to their areas, but be aware that storms, floods, erosion and human activity constantly alter shorelines, so it is best to cross-reference any paper map with recent satellite imagery and make relevant notes. Before you paddle, familiarize yourself with the route and be sure to pack a compass and emergency gear. There is a handy canoe checklist at the end of the guidebook for your convenience.

weather and tides:

Check the weather before you go! This can't be stressed enough. Daily thunderstorms are expected in the summer and might even be a welcome relief from the heat (get off the water if you see lightning), but big storms and hurricanes are predictable, sometimes catastrophic, and should be entirely avoided. Wind is always a factor, especially in the marsh, and it's better to have it at your back than in your face. And don't forget the tides; every route in the B-T is affected by tides. Though they are slighter in some places than others, they are always noticeable. Low tides

mean shallow water, muddy banks, poor fishing, sloppy launches and mucky portages. High tides mean more water to paddle and fish, and easier access to land and shorelines. Check the tides as close as you can to the place you are paddling, because the tide varies significantly place-to-place as it works its way inland up the estuary. Tidal graphs for scores of specific locations can be found at www.louisianasportsman.com/tide_guides.php, or more generally in the annual BTNEP Tidal Graph Calendar.

types of launches:

Launching a canoe requires little else than public access to water and a safe place to park, and the B-T is full of options. Public launches are ideal. They are usually free and have docks, ramps, parking, and sometimes streetlamps, restroom facilities, trash service, fish cleaning tables, picnic areas and playgrounds. Sometimes, however, they are simply but a rough ramp and a few parking spots on the side of the road. Private launches run the gamut from a simple ramp and parking to the full-blown marina with bar, cabins, and restaurant. Expect to pay a fee at a private launch, and it's not a bad idea to check in for local information – sometimes they offer good maps and tips. Roadside launches aren't developed launches at all. They are simply places where you can access the water from the side of the road. There is no ramp, facilities, or designated parking, and safety is the key here. Observe any advisory signs and exercise caution in unloading. Try to park as far off the roadway and shoulder as possible, without getting stuck in the mud.

TO PADDLE OR
NOT TO PADDLE,
THAT IS THE QUESTION...



when and where to paddle:

WHEN TO PADDLE?

Fall and winter are ideal, a time of silence, gentle breezes, sparkling sunlight, clear water, visibility through the trees. Peaceful and reflective, with good water levels, tolerable temps and fewer bugs, and the best time for seeing birds and alligators basking on a subtropical sunny day. Spring brings seasonal meltwater down the river, and floods mean good flow. Even if the roads or launches are flooded, the bayous are as happy as they can be. Fresh greens in the trees, mild sun, new flowers, active wildlife, good flow and plenty water everywhere. Summers are always hot. Be prepared – check the weather and plan accordingly.

WHERE TO PADDLE?

This guidebook seeks beautiful landscapes via natural waterways. There are many routes of this description in the B-T, and in all the rest of Louisiana – we encourage you to explore, and we welcome your feedback. If we familiarize ourselves with our wetlands, use them respectfully, fund their protection and treat them right, they will always be healthy places to live, work, fish, hunt, and play.

*when and where **not** to paddle:*

WHEN NOT TO PADDLE?

1.) Be aware of hunting seasons, which are most often in the fall, but can vary by game species, specific location, and method of take. Pick up a current hunting regulations brochure from the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, or visit <http://www.eregulations.com/louisiana/hunting/> to check for exact dates in specific areas. If it's open season along your route and you prefer safety, peace, quiet, and solitude, consider paddling other routes at these times. Most of the shooting happens at dawn, but it's generally a crowded period of motorboat activity as hunters are scouting their spots and building their blinds and stands. If you do paddle, wear bright colors, perhaps mount a



flag to your boat, and avoid posted or obvious hunting areas. 2.) Summer may seem like the perfect season for exploring the bayou, but be prepared for heat and bugs. Take advantage of the cooler temperatures of early morning, consider shorter trips, and bring plenty of drinking water. Also, this season of low water levels can be a problem for paddling in some areas, especially where aquatic vegetation is thick. Check conditions locally before you go. 3.) Low tide may cause inconveniences for the canoeist. Check the tidal graphs – see Weather and Tides above. 4.) In the aftermath of natural or man-made disasters, check conditions locally before you venture into danger zones.

WHERE NOT TO PADDLE?

Is this bayou private property? Or was this “water bottom” navigable in 1812, the year of statehood, and therefore public according to Louisiana law? The laws describing public waterways and wetland ownership can be confusing, but as a rule, all natural, navigable bayous of considerable size are fair game for the canoe even if the bordering lands are private property. This guidebook describes routes in public waters. However, smaller coulees, sloughs and canals sometimes lead into private property before they dead-end, and how would you know? Look for signs reading **POSTED**. That is the dead giveaway. **POSTED** means No Trespassing On This Land behind This Sign. In other words, stay in your boat. If you think that a smaller waterway might be private, follow your intuition and limit your explorations to the main channel. Be respectful of signs, camps, blinds, fishing sets, gates, and canal closures. The wetlands of the B-T are home to a great many people, and you must assume that their eyes are on you. Trespassing on camps, docks, and hunting structures is illegal and disrespectful. This guidebook is written with ecotourism in mind, but even if you're “taking only pictures and leaving only footprints,” please be aware that most people value their privacy and don't want uninvited footprints on their front porch. Additionally, if you are a large group of canoes with multiple vehicles and/or trailers, choose routes with launch parking described as “ample” in this guide, and take into consideration the impact of your number.

POSTED MEANS NO TRESSPASSING

a brief history of

THE BARATARIA-TERREBONNE

The Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary was built by the avulsion (delta building and switching) process of the Mississippi River at the end of the Ice Age, when large amounts of glacial sediments were washed downstream. Sedimentation would periodically clog the main channels, and as channel banks eroded during flood events, the river would break free, changing its course to find faster outlets to the Gulf of Mexico. Old Man River shifted his course at least five times over the last 7,000 years, forming the fan-ribs of the B-T: the Atchafalaya River, Bayou Terrebonne, Bayou Lafourche, Bayou Barataria, and the current Mississippi River. The most recent channel of the Mississippi was Bayou Lafourche, until the river changed course a thousand years ago. At the beginning of the 20th century, Bayou Lafourche was still a major distributary, deep and wide enough to accommodate steamships from the Gulf of Mexico all the way up to the Mississippi, but modern civilization has had its effect. Now the bayou has been cut off from the Mississippi by man-made levees; it has silted in to a fraction of its former self, its slight flow maintained by pumps. After historic river floods in the 1920s, in an effort to protect life, property, and commerce, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, at the behest of

the people, began to raise the levees, build revetments, control the distributaries, dredge the channel, and straighten the river to ensure a predictable, controllable flow. Flood control structures such as the Morganza and Bonnet Carre Spillways function as human-operated pressure-relief valves, allowing the river to discharge massive amounts of water into older established crevasses during critical flood events. Control has its price; starved of its annual floods and sediments, the wetlands have suffered and subsided, leading to numerous expensive restoration efforts.

Louisiana has been occupied by the human animal for about 12,000 years. We have been here long enough to witness the river changing courses and the B-T delta being born. In the early days, we hunted bison, deer, turkey, rabbit and other game, and we shared our hunting grounds with bear, wolf, cougar, and jaguar. We farmed the prairies, coteaus, and fertile levees of bayous, and we fished extensively. Mound-building cultures came and went, leaving behind permanent man-made rises of land which soon became tiny forests, havens for wildlife and landmarks on the flat, water-dominated horizon.



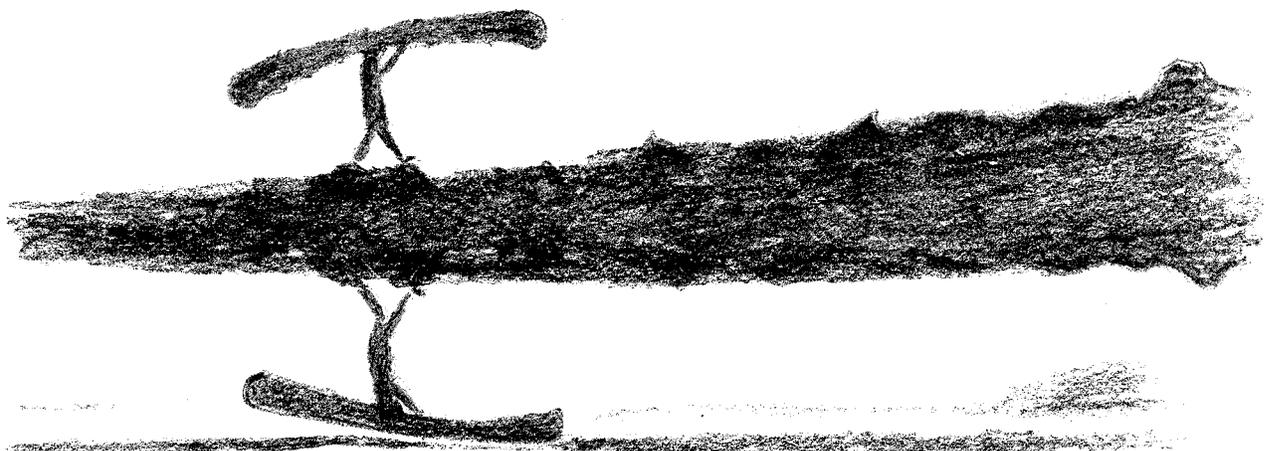
Livonia Mounds in the Upper Terrebonne Basin

By the late 1600s, the Chitimacha were a dominant society of the B-T, ruled by one great chief at a time. The calumet – the ceremonial smoking pipe – was the instrument by which peace and war were negotiated. French delegates, who claimed the entire drainage of the Mississippi as a French colony, became accustomed to the necessity of the calumet ceremony. In the 1700s, due to pressures from the New Englanders in the East and Spanish in the West, the native people of the continent were in flux. Many converged on the vast mid-continent territory of the Mississippi Valley. In the timespan of a single generation, the Atakapas, Choctaw, and Houma established permanent homes in the B-T, and large numbers of French, Spanish, and Acadians (French Canadians) repatriated themselves to these wild wetlands. At the same time, Africans arrived by the thousands through no will of their own. The Chitimachas, who had a fierce reputation, tenaciously held on to their ancestral homelands in the bayous, but their lands were coveted. This great migration of the 1700s with its cultural blending would entirely remake the population of the B-T estuary and all of south Louisiana. Many place names – towns, bayous, lakes, prairies – come from that era and are still in use today, mostly a mixture of Choctaw and French, as these were the most common languages of that time.

In the 18th century, the B-T changed colonial landlords from French to Spanish and briefly back to French again. Finally in 1803 a vast territory of 828,000 square miles (the entire drainage of the Mississippi, all of which reaches the sea through the bottleneck of the B-T) was sold to the USA in Napoleon's Sale of Louisiana. In that era, crossing all the political lines, the privateer Jean Lafitte (originally spelled Laffite) ran smuggling routes throughout the B-T, leaving behind remote outpost communities such as Grand Terre and Grand Isle and endless romantic tales of hidden pirate treasure. Louisiana became a state of the Union in 1812 and the first half of the century saw the clearing of the lands for agriculture, logging, cattle farming, and sugar cane agriculture, enabled by a brutal system of slave

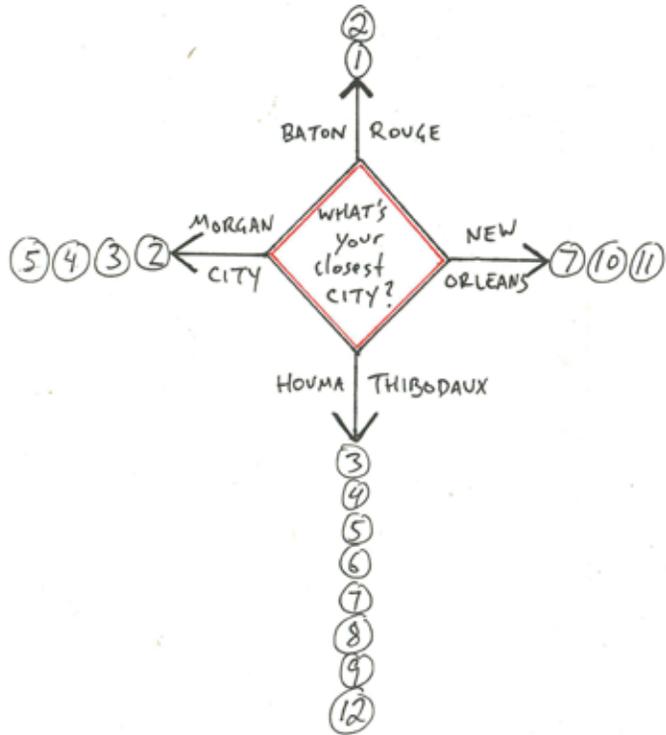
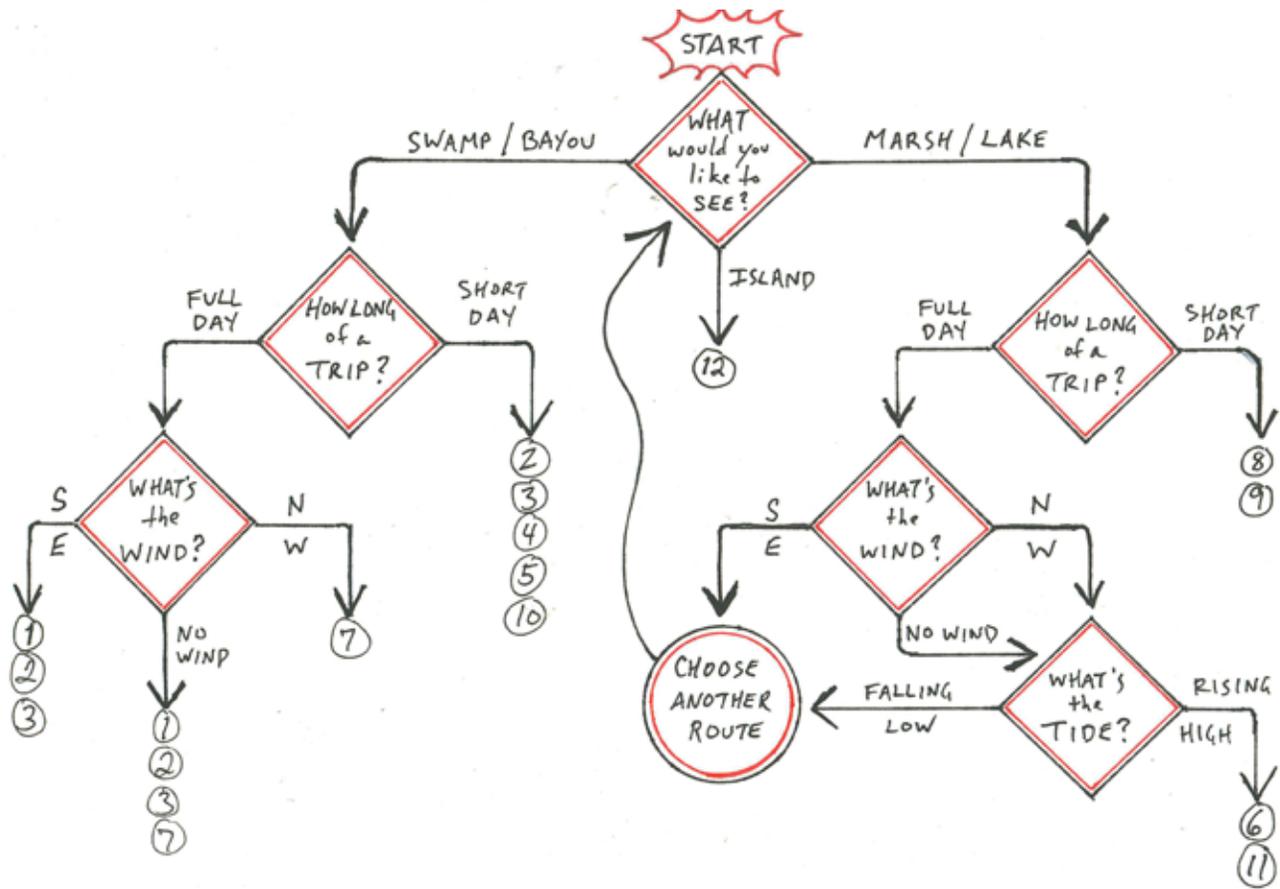
labor. The Civil War swept across Louisiana mid century and left behind many more English-speaking Americans in its wake, and so began the slow decline of the French and Choctaw languages. By the end of the 19th century, following waves of migrations, south Louisiana was populated by immigrants from all over: Ireland, Italy, Sicily, Croatia, Canary Islands, Saint-Domingue (Haiti), England, China, the Philippines, to name a few. The Germans (des Allemands) came in heavy numbers and brought innovations such as the accordion, which revolutionized the fiddle-based Cajun and Zydeco music. Sugar cane, cotton, fisheries, shipping and logging dominated the landscape for many years.

By the early 1900s the swamps were all but logged out, and the invasive water hyacinth, introduced at the 1884 World's Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition in New Orleans, had established itself as a navigational impediment. Oil was discovered in west Louisiana in 1901 but large-scale production in the B-T didn't begin until the 1930s. Around the same time, the invasive and voracious nutria was introduced from South America to bolster the fur industry. The Gulf Intracoastal Waterway was completed in 1942, providing a conduit for saltwater and industry to reach the freshwater wetlands. And so begins this chapter of our modern bayou history: petroleum canals, excavations, roads, pipelines, industry, pollution, invasive species, and erosion. The last half-century has seen a boom of heavy industry, suburban development, and flood control levees – all of which have permanently altered the hydrology of the estuary, assisted by natural and man-made catastrophes. The estuary needed damage control, and by the 1980s, restoration and conservation groups began to emerge. BTNEP was founded in the year 1990 and continues to provide a leading role in conservation. Through it all and to the end, the estuary survives, providing bountiful fisheries, recreational and commercial opportunities, cultural heritage, and homes to Louisianians of new and old blood, all species included.



choose your route

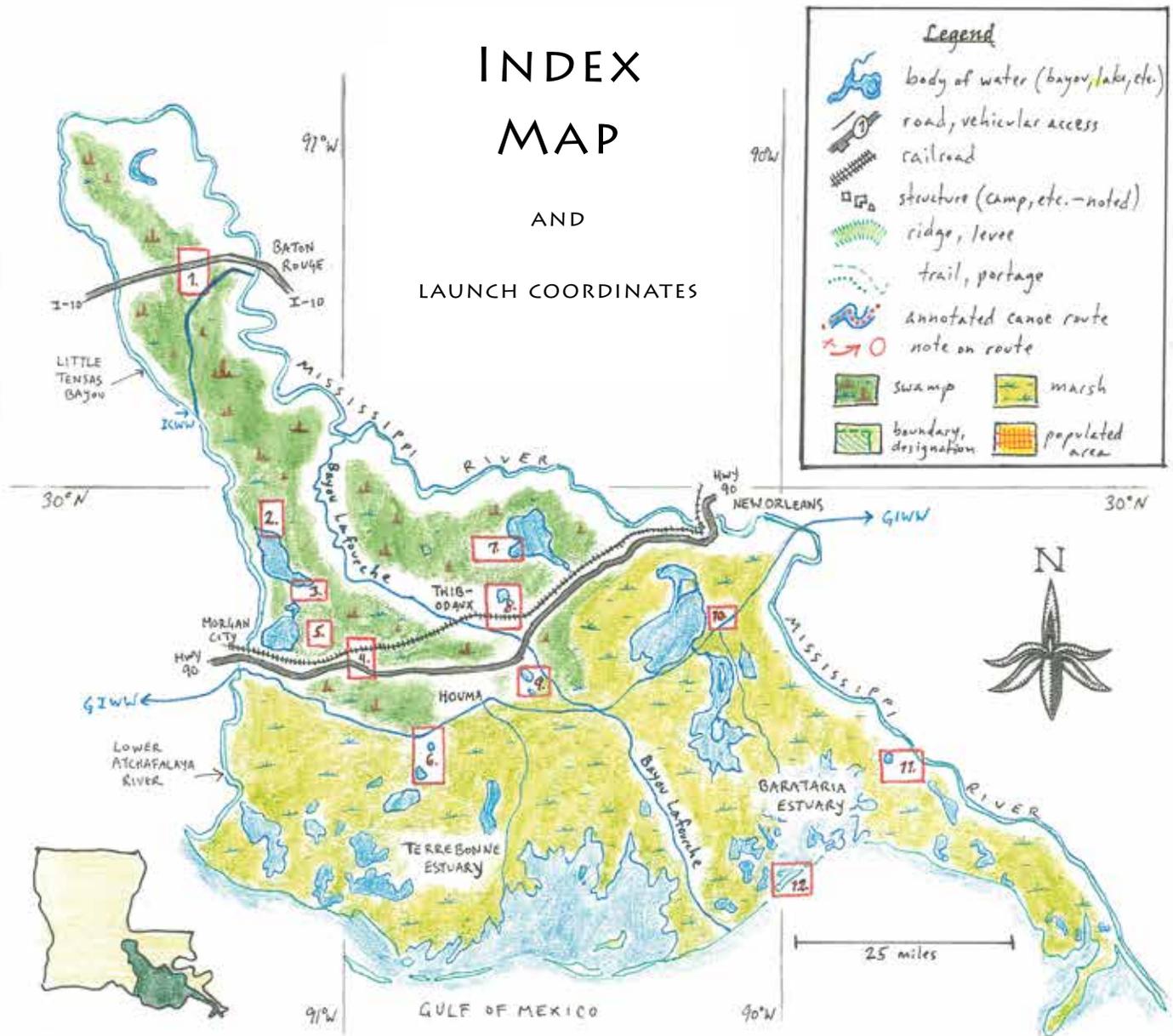
A PADDLING ALGORITHM



numbers correspond to Index Map, next page

INDEX MAP

AND
LAUNCH COORDINATES



- 1 Grand Bayou Choctaw** pages 10-11
in: (30.476061, -91.385094) out: (30.392532, -91.322711)
- 2 'Upper' Lake Verret** pages 12-13
(30.014346, -91.154188) or (29.946683, -91.138427)
- 3 'Lower' Lake Verret** page 14
(29.825934, -91.044011)
- 4 Tiger Bayou** page 15
(29.684159, -90.999899)
- 5 Bay Sherman** pages 16-17
(29.740974, -91.038818)
- 6 Mandalay Marsh** pages 18-19
in: (29.560619, -90.791213) out: (29.462320, -90.751585)

- 7 Bayou Chevreuil** pages 20-21
in: (29.911316, -90.728985) out: (29.867920, -90.599684)
- 8 Lake Boeuf** pages 22-23
(29.738135, -90.647103)
- 9 Lockport Area** pages 24-25
(29.645815, -90.543087)
- 10 Barataria Preserve** pages 26-27
(29.805036, -90.118965), (29.764340, -90.104035),
(29.769269, -90.081760), or (29.780473, -90.099621)
- 11 Bayou Grande Cheniere** pages 28-29
in: (29.557911, -89.885760) out: (29.513046, -89.764251)
- 12 Grand Isle** pages 30-31
(29.238517, -90.003434) or (29.261603, -89.953443)
marinas: (29.203849, -90.040239) or (29.261671, -89.961811)

GRAND BAYOU CHOCTAW

Trip length: 8 miles one-way shuttle, full day.

PUT IN / TAKE OUT

Several small bayous converge at Hwy 76 to form Grand Bayou Choctaw, but there is no developed public launch into any of them. The best option seems to be the old-fashioned road-side put-in. Park safely on the shoulder next to the south side of the bridge over either Poydras Bayou or Stumpy Bayou (see inset), and haul your gear down the slope into the bayou. You might scout both put-ins to see which one is better according to conditions of the day, and note that group parking is not possible. At the other end, leave a vehicle near where the bayou terminates at the Intracoastal Waterway. There is a private marina here (Floyd's Morley Marina, 7675 Choctaw Road, Brusly) with a proper launch for a small fee, ample parking, toilet, cold drinks and other conveniences. By road the launches are 21 miles apart.

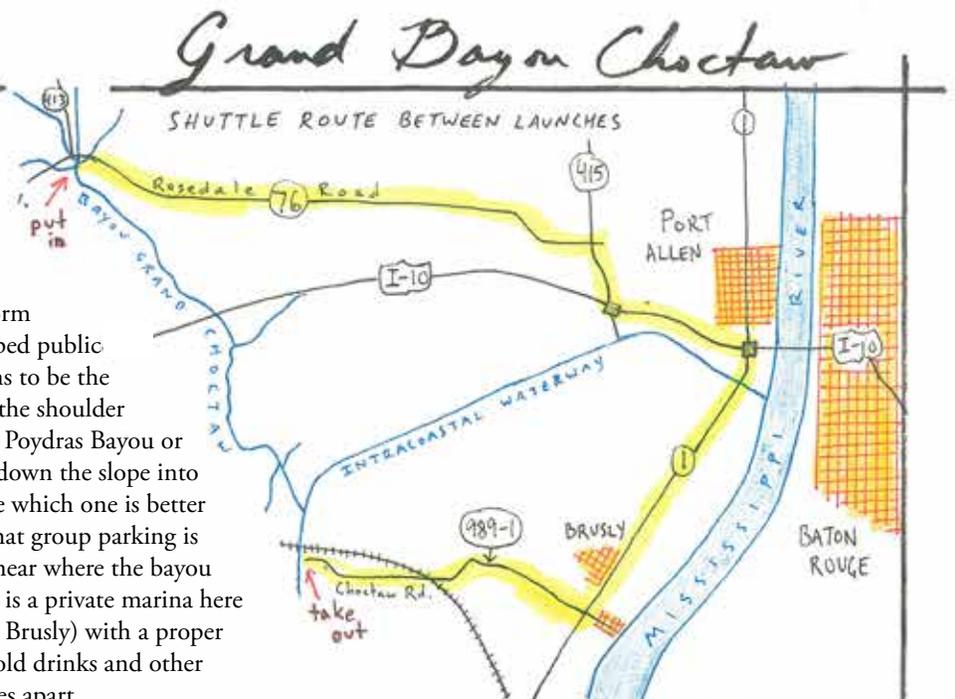
OVERVIEW

Located in the northernmost corner of the B-T estuary, practically in the suburbs of Baton Rouge, Grand Bayou Choctaw is a wide, slow, natural bayou through upland swamp and riverbottom forest. Trees like elm, pecan, sumac, and upland oaks occur here, which are not as common in the lower reaches of the B-T. The water is silty year-round, the chocolate color of the Mississippi.

The route begins in suburbia but immediately leaves the development and becomes a pleasant, quiet float accompanied by gators and gar, with shaded edges and a deep forested buffer on both sides which is great for birding. This is DMAP (Deer Management Assistance Program) country – private hunting lands with deer stands, clearings, and signs posted by hunting clubs. Shady little coulees and sloughs creep into the main channel from time to time, and these are worth a peek. Picturesque Little Bayou Choctaw has a character of shaded secrecy, a break from the sun, and Alligator Bayou at the lower end also offers its own character. This route sees the birth of a grand bayou and follows its entire course to its end at the GIWW, a trip that leaves the paddler with a certain sense of fulfillment.

ROUTE

Launch into the confluence at Hwy 76 and paddle south, noticing how several small channels combine quickly into one flow. The bayou meanders gently for several quiet miles. Just past the 1-10 bridges at mile 4 (the half-way point of the route),



Little Bayou Choctaw comes in from the east; don't pass up this opportunity for a shady change of pace. Further down at mile 6½, look for alligators and camps in Alligator Bayou, which offers extra miles

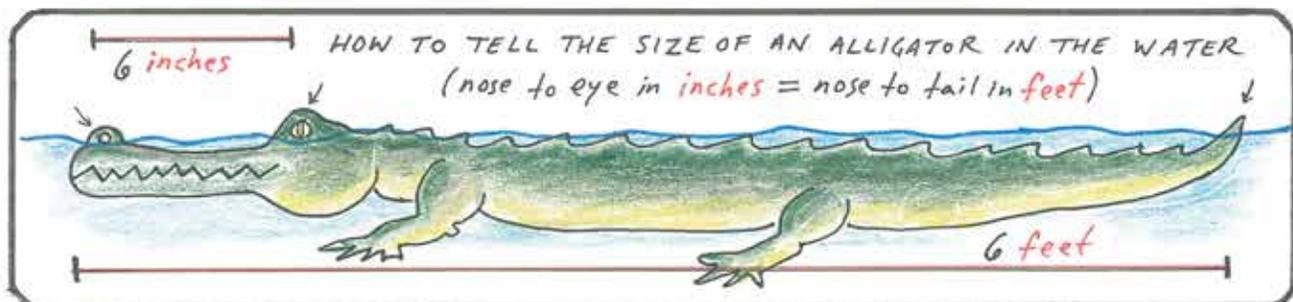


roadside launch on Hwy 76

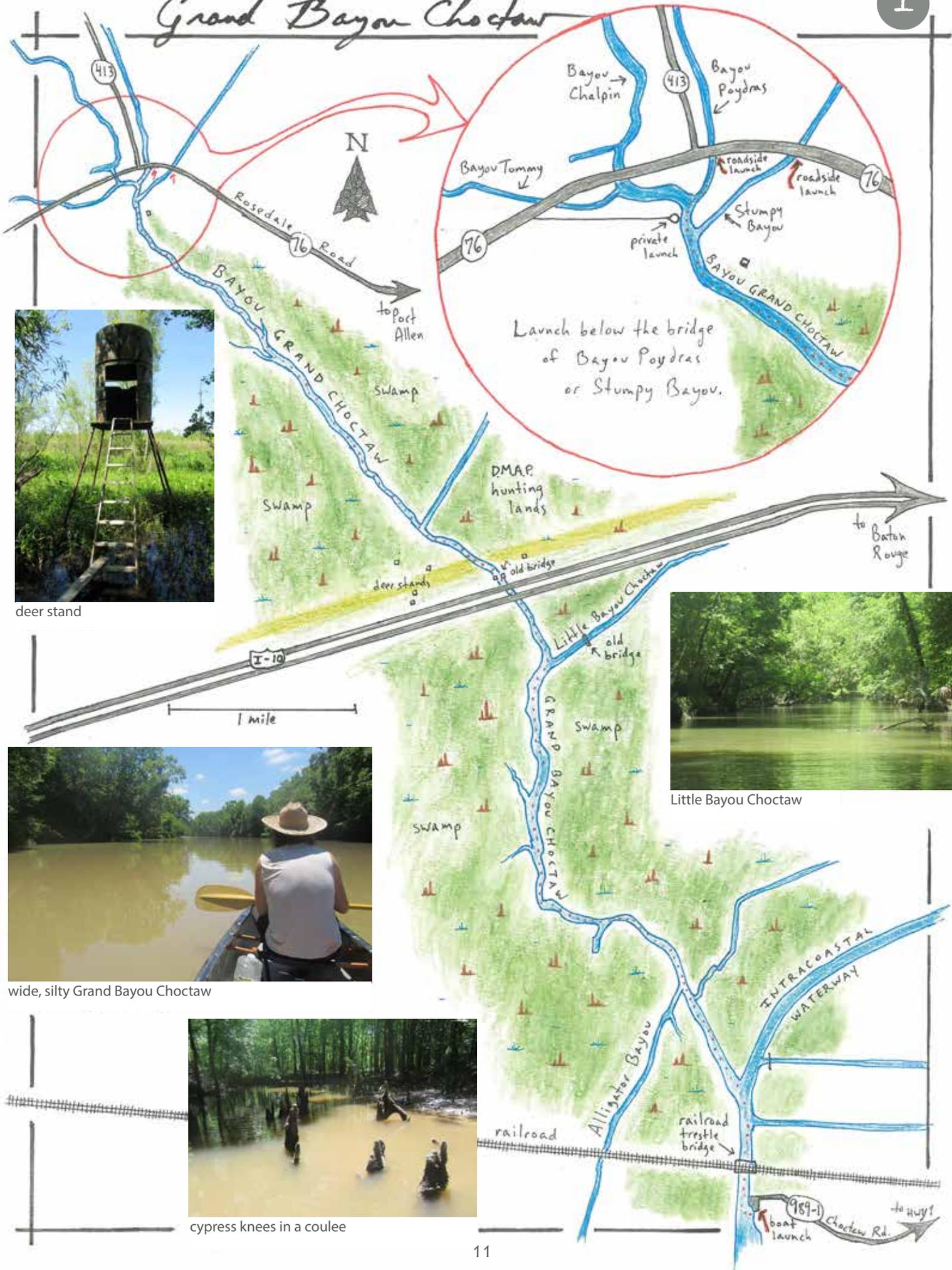
of exploration. After a ¾-mile paddle on the GIWW, the 8-mile route ends at the marina just past the railroad bridge.

DANGERS AND CONSIDERATIONS

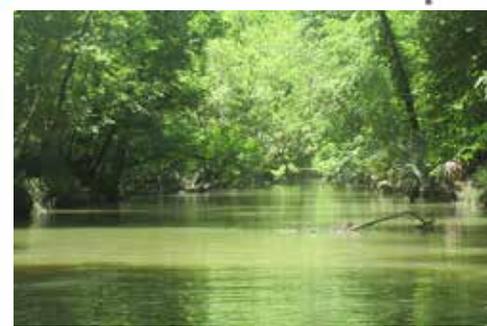
Practice canoe safety at all times, especially during the crossing of the GIWW, where you might be surprised by barge traffic. Be ready for sun, as there is plenty of it on a wide bayou like this one. During dry seasons Grand Bayou Choctaw can get very low and expose the mud on its banks, which makes for a messy boat, but there will always be water to paddle in this silty milk chocolate-colored bayou. The best time to plan a trip is during the late winter and spring floods, when the water is high and flowing, and the banks are lush and full. Grand Bayou Choctaw sees much activity during deer hunting season in autumn and early winter (check LDWF for specific dates). Practice vigilant safety at this time: make yourself visible with lots of bright safety colors, mount a red pennant (flag) on your canoe, keep to the main channel of the bayou and don't enter any posted areas.



Grand Bayou Choctaw



deer stand



Little Bayou Choctaw



wide, silty Grand Bayou Choctaw



cypress knees in a coulee

NORTHERN LAKE VERRET

Trip length: Various loop and shuttle options, 4-12 miles, full-day and short-day trips

PUT IN / TAKE OUT

Privately-owned Sportsman's Cove launch ((985) 252-8700) on Hwy 70 at Bayou Corne, for a small fee, provides a ramp, dock, toilet, ample parking, and other amenities. Little Grand Bayou public boat launch at the end of Hwy 402 is a tiny, end-of-the-road affair with a ramp and minimal parking. It is possible to connect Bayou Corne, Grand Bayou and Little Grand Bayou, in a one-way route with these two launches, using two vehicles to shuttle the 16 road miles.

OVERVIEW

The cypress swamps north of Lake Verret are deeply forested and seriously fished. Almost everyone you might encounter on Grand Bayou is fishing, whether by rod and reel, hoop trap, trotline, or jug set. Blue catfish is the main bounty but other freshwater game including goujon (mudcats) and crawfish are harvested. Naturalists will find plenty of interesting wildlife: gators, turtles, frogs, insects and birds including roseate spoonbills. Several bayous meander slowly in every direction, with a general progression southward towards the lake. Smaller bayous, pockets of swamp, grassy bays, and dead-end petroleum canals densify the maze. Land exists only as spoil mounds at confluences or along canals. Little Grand Bayou, Bay Mauguerite, and Little Bayou Long are much smaller channels, flowing through close swamp and grass-edged bays that are home to herons and alligators.

ROUTES FROM LITTLE GRAND BAYOU

The Little Grand Bayou public launch provides another set of loop options, and shorter loops may be combined for a full day of paddling. **1)** For a rewarding short-day route, launch and paddle north. The bayou enters a dark corridor of swamp, the trees nearly closing the canopy above you, and eventually it opens up into a grass-edged bay that is home to great numbers of little blue herons. The bayou drifts for 3 quiet miles before it discharges into Grand Bayou. Turn left and follow the main channel of Grand Bayou southward for about two miles, noticing all the fishing jug sets, which to the untrained eye might appear as trash or flotsam. Near the confluence of a large petroleum canal you will notice a Christmas tree – a slang term for a valve head. Notice also a large spoil bank; turn left off of Grand Bayou here, dogleg your way eastward for 1 mile back to Little Grand Bayou through the canals, and soon you will find yourself back at the launch, after a 7-mile paddle. **2)** Launch north and just past ½ mile notice a small canal heading west. Turn left and follow it to its end, then turn south until you reach the tiny Little Bayou Long. This is a small, enchanting channel a little more than a mile long through a floating lawn of aquatic grass and pennywort, edged with many large old cypress trees. (The navigable channel of the bayou is so very narrow that it may become clogged in certain conditions, and if it is, see map for alternate routes.) At its western terminus, Little Bayou Long opens into larger Grand Bayou. Follow this north (to the right) into the territory of fishermen and big gators. Soon you will see a fork off to the left; this is Bayou Alcide, but stay to the right on Grand Bayou. After about two miles, turn right into the second old petroleum canal you see, near the Christmas tree mentioned above, which brings you back to Little Grand Bayou launch via



a patch of salvinia

the dogleg canals. That route is 6½ miles.

3) Launch into Little Grand Bayou and follow the path described in Route 2, above. When you reach Little Bayou Long, cross over it rather than follow it. Continue south on the canal and soon you will reach a fork; the left-hand (eastern) canal is a dead-end. Take the right fork and head southwest all the way to the lake. Bienvenue to swampy, cypress-edged Lake Verret! Turn left (east) and paddle the moss-bearded primordial edge to the mouth of our Little Grand Bayou, and head north back to the launch. This route is 4-miles. You might combine Routes 2 and 3 into a wiggly figure eight, which would be a 10-mile, full-day trip. These routes are difficult to describe in text, so be sure to study your map.

ROUTES FROM BAYOU CORNE

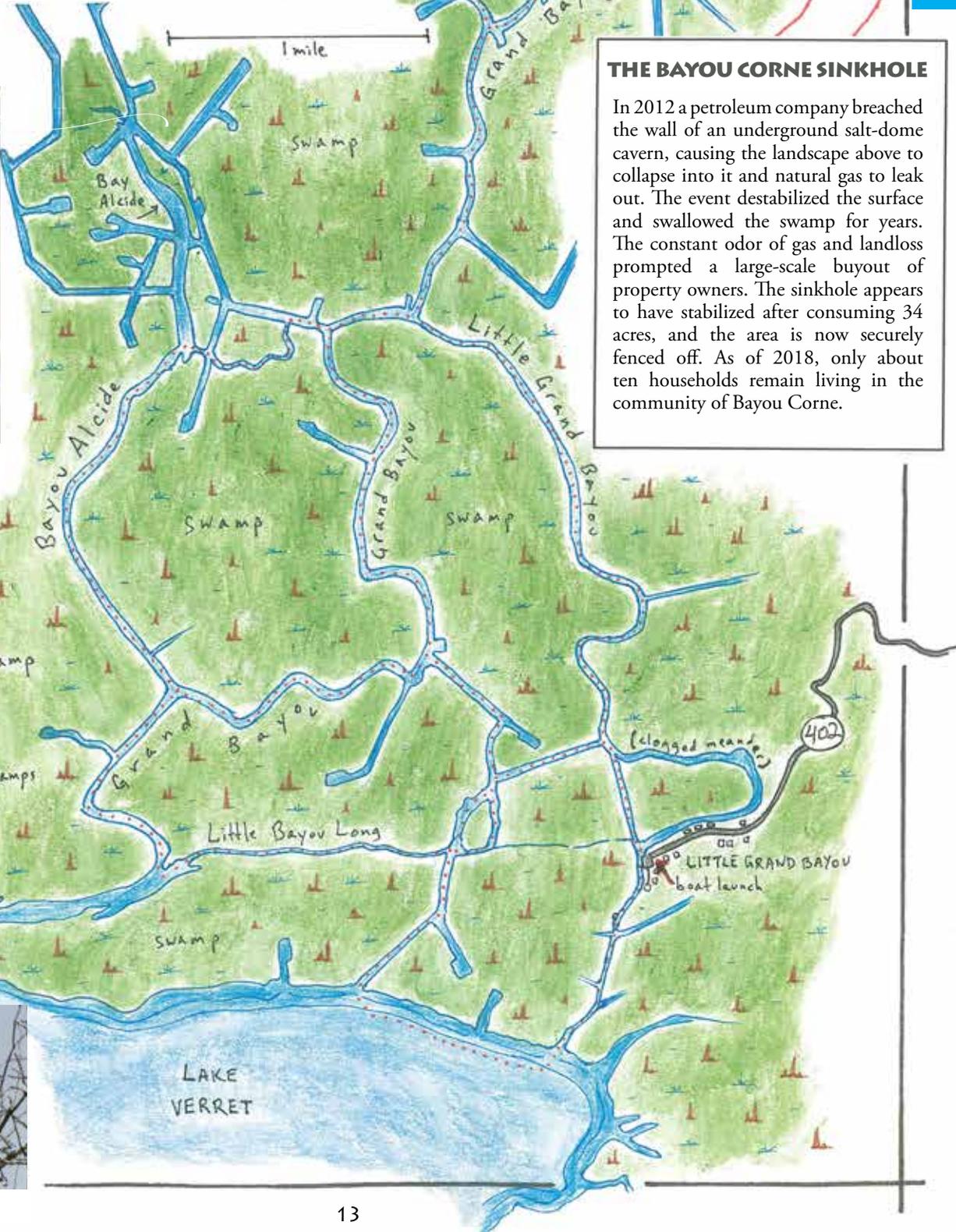
1) A full-day loop would be to launch into Bayou Corne at Hwy 70, paddle to the nearby confluence of Grand Bayou and follow the flow south. Meander down Grand Bayou (notice the mouth of Little Grand Bayou at mile 3, as well as several other old petroleum canals) until it meets Bayou Alcide, and then begin your return; at this intersection you've gone 6½ miles, your half-way point. Paddle up Bayou Alcide to Bay Alcide, where the water deepens and opens up – but before you enter the open water look for a tiny, very swampy little bayou that will return you to Grand Bayou (if this way is blocked by vegetation, canals provide alternate routes). Backtrack up Grand Bayou and take the short diversion through enchanting Bay Mauguerite back to Bayou Corne, which will deliver you directly back to the launch. That route is about 12 miles, a vigorous all-day paddle (especially if the bayous are flowing), so if you plan to do it, be sure to get an early start. **2)** A shorter route in the same waters would be to simply watch the clock while exploring at your own pace and head back at a reasonable hour, choosing a different route back if possible. **3)** Alternately, do a full-day shuttle trip: leave one vehicle at Sportsman's Cove and one at the Little Grand Bayou launch and paddle between launches, choosing your own route.

DANGERS AND CONSIDERATIONS

You can see that these routes are a boater's labyrinth. Carry a good map of appropriate scale, and be sure to have a compass. Pay close attention to both. A GPS or smartphone is a reliable instrument until it loses signal or gets wet, so always carry the backup of a compass and a waterproofed paper map. If you do have a "smart" device, you might pin-drop yourself a "trail of breadcrumbs." Do your best to be off the water by nightfall, lest you end up sleeping in your boat and fending off the loup garou. In any case, you should always carry a headlamp, boat lights, poncho and bug spray.



deep swamp



THE BAYOU CORNE SINKHOLE
In 2012 a petroleum company breached the wall of an underground salt-dome cavern, causing the landscape above to collapse into it and natural gas to leak out. The event destabilized the surface and swallowed the swamp for years. The constant odor of gas and landloss prompted a large-scale buyout of property owners. The sinkhole appears to have stabilized after consuming 34 acres, and the area is now securely fenced off. As of 2018, only about ten households remain living in the community of Bayou Corne.



catfish bounty



roseate spoonbill

SOUTHERN LAKE VERRET

Trip length: 4 miles one-way to the lake and back, a short day; or 10 miles with the Bayou Gannevair loop, a full day.

PUT IN / TAKE OUT

Himalaya Canal public launch, on Hwy 1012 west of the community of Supreme. Ramp and ample parking.

OVERVIEW

The swamps of the southern Lake Verret area are vast and mostly roadless. Though it has been thoroughly logged, the cypriete is growing back, and the occasional old behemoth still stands, holding hegemony over the younger forest. The lake itself is bordered with an edge of cypress trees growing directly out of the water, giving the sense that the trees are making a slow attempt to take over the world. Swamp dwellers live bayouside in camps great and small, where the family car is a boat.

ROUTE

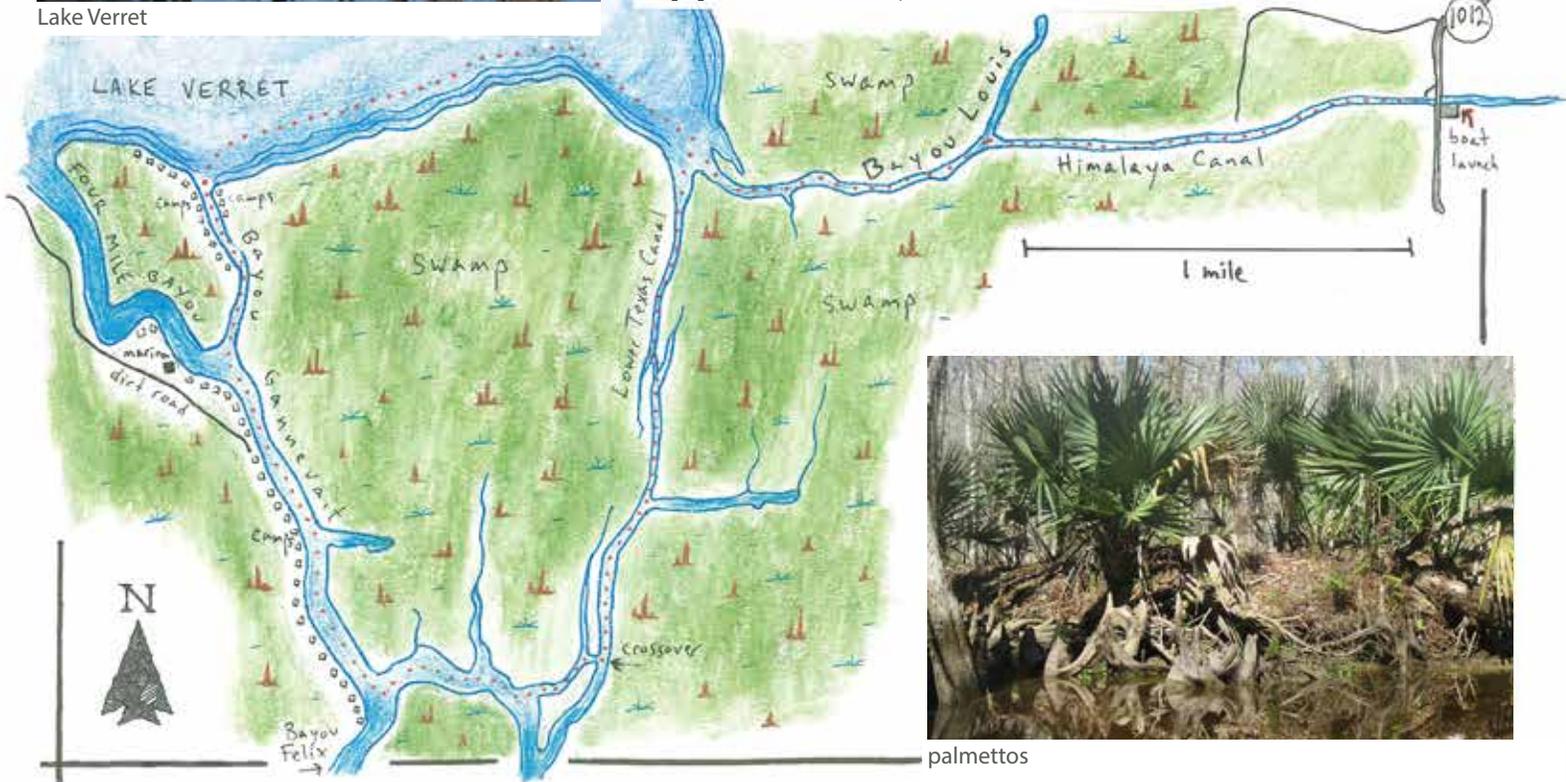
Launch into the old Himalaya logging canal (the name Himalaya is possibly Choctaw, as in Atchafalaya) and paddle westward through deepening cypriete until the channel joins the natural flow of Bayou Louis, distinguished by the absence of spoil banks. Just over 2 miles from the launch, the bayou opens into a small bay, and behold the great swamp lake! If Lake Verret isn't too choppy, a loop option is possible by crossing the lake on your return. Head south on Lower Texas Bayou, which is

paralleled by an old canal of the same size, revealed by the spoil banks. The flow alternates from one channel to the other, but when you see the obvious east-west trenasse, veer to the right and cross over into the western channel. Soon you will emerge into the much bigger Bayou Gannevair (GUNNY-vay). (If you miss the east-west cut, you will soon notice the larger bayou through the trees on your right, just a few rods distant. You can portage. Or, if the vegetation allows, paddle to the next trenasse which is ¼ mile away.) Turn right into Bayou Gannevair and paddle ½ mile to its intersection with Bayou Felix (feh-LICKS), and turn right (north) to follow Bayou Gannevair. The mouth of Four Mile Bayou is 1 mile ahead, which is distinguished by its dirt road. (At the intersection of these two camp-rich bayous is a small paddle-up marina offering conveniences.) Return to the lake ½ mile up Bayou Gannevair, and eastward 1½ miles along the lake edge back to Bayou Louis and Himalaya, then retrace your route to the launch.



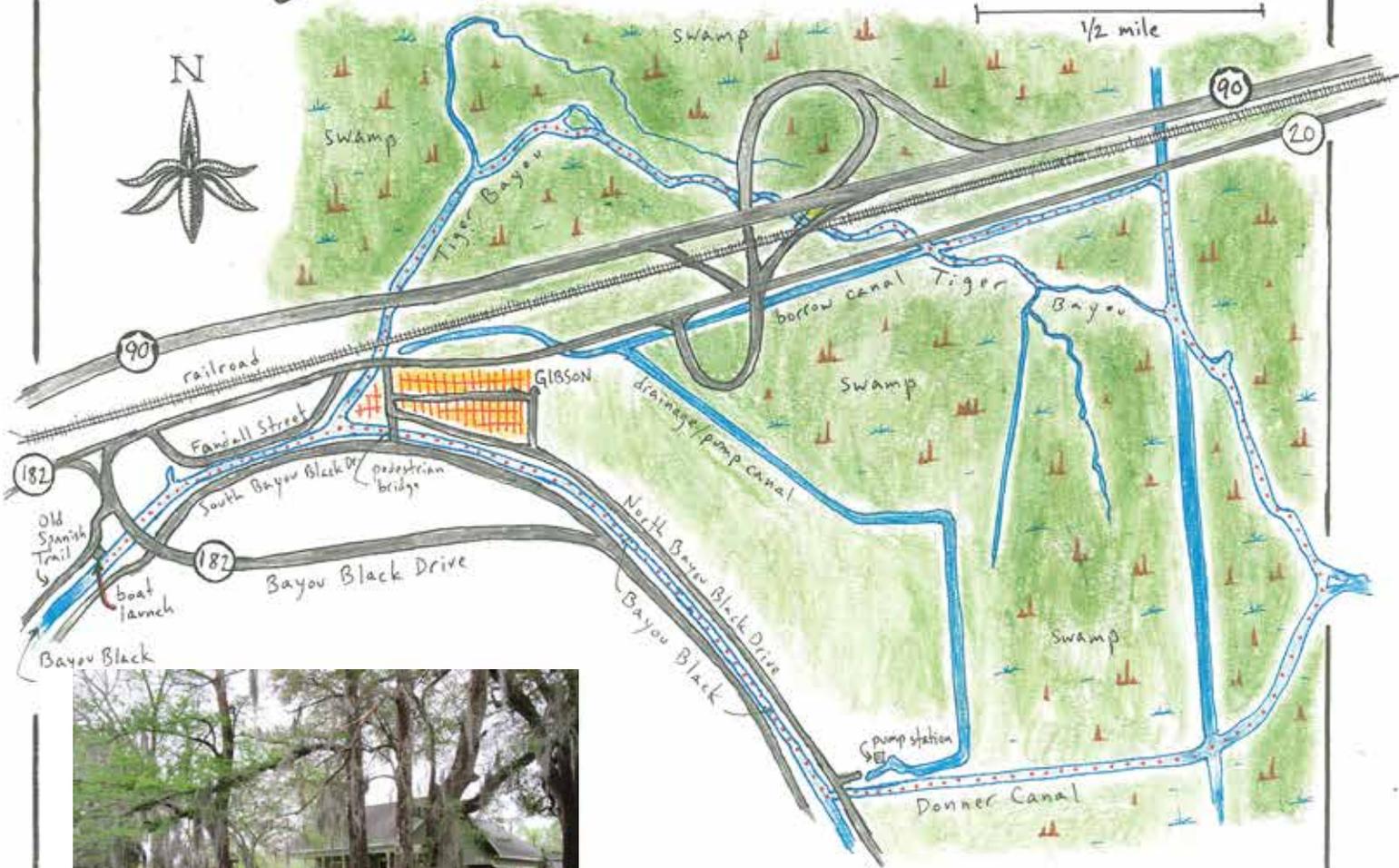
Lake Verret

DANGERS AND CONSIDERATIONS Mind your map as you explore the swamp, so that you don't get lost. A good habit is to look around at canal crossroads and make mental notes of landmarks; curious trees, fishing sets, the alien marks of mankind. In the lake, a little wind can whip up a sizeable chop. Be respectful of private property. Stay in your boat in **POSTED** areas, and don't "explore" any habitations. Also, there is a lot of activity along Four Mile Bayou. Paddle closest to the bank to stay out of the way of zippy bass boats. Expect jet-skis and party-barges to join the fishermen on the weekends, when the whole place takes on the character of a Cajun Riviera. For a quieter trip, paddle on a weekday.



palmettos

Tiger Bayou



swamp life

OVERVIEW

Probably named for the cougars and jaguars that historically traversed south Louisiana, this route, easily accessed from Houma or Morgan City, is popular because of a particularly beautiful section of cypress swamp north of Hwy 90.

ROUTE

Launch into Bayou Black and head east, passing under the Hwy 182 bridge trestle. In ½ mile the bayou forks; follow Tiger Bayou to the north, where a series of road, railroad, pipeline and highway bridges – with just enough clearance for a canoe to pass – deliver you into the primordial cypriere of Tiger Bayou. Linger and slowly explore the next 1½ miles, for this is the most picturesque section of the trip. If you wanted just a short turnaround trip, you could spend all your time in this area north of Hwy 90 and then return to the launch by the same way you came. Meandering forward, Tiger Bayou turns south and crosses back under a series of no less than six bridges and emerges on the south side of Hwy 20. The natural course of the bayou is directly in front of you, but it may be blocked by aquatic vegetation. If this is the case, use the borrow canal along Hwy

TIGER BAYOU

Trip length: 6-mile loop, half day; or a shorter 3-mile turn-around

PUT IN / TAKE OUT

Public launch with limited parking on Old Spanish Trail just off the Bayou Black Road (Hwy 182) bridge in Gibson

20 for an alternate route, heading east until it intersects with a north-south canal; turn south here and paddle ¼ mile to the Tiger Bayou crossing. Veering left, rejoin the natural bayou as it widens a bit – allowing good birding and fishing – and notice a little spit of land that is a nice break spot. In ½ mile Tiger Bayou meets a crossroads of canals, and here follow your compass into the SW corridor. This is the Donner Canal, which bends due west and returns you, after 1 mile, to Bayou Black. Turn right on the Bayou and suddenly you are on a paddle tour through the community of Gibson. From the Donner Canal junction it is less than 2 miles back to the launch.

DANGERS AND CONSIDERATIONS

You are never far from the road on this route, to which your ears will attest. But then again, if you get lost, you know exactly where the highway is. Hyacinth blockages may alter your plans, so be sure you can identify alternate routes on your map. Though man-made canals may not be a natural-bottomed experience, in this case they make a loop possible. On Bayou Black you are in everyone's backyard, so please respect property and privacy.

bald cypress

Spanish
moss

BAY SHERMAN

Trip length: 2½ miles one-way to Bay Sherman, 5-6 miles round-trip; an easy half-day

PUT IN / TAKE OUT

A basic gravel launch with ramp and very minimal parking area on Hwy 398 near the community of Bayou L'Ourse.

OVERVIEW

If deep swamp is what you're after, this route's got it. Bayou Morgan City is a small, natural bayou winding through a deep, roadless cypriere. Clear water and numerous side channels make for good fishing and wildlife viewing, but the distinct appeal of this route is the big cypress trees. Most of Louisiana's swamps were logged out by the 1940s, but a few individual trees – some hollow, some used as tow points, seed trees, or landmarks – were lucky enough to be left behind. Bayou Morgan City is full of them. At every turn is an enormous, moss-draped cypress tree, its gnome-like knees crowding in every direction. Though not the biggest cypress you'll ever see, this is one of the most memorable corridors of venerable trees in the B-T. Water hyacinth and other floating vegetation is present here, but a decent flow and a steady march of recreational boat traffic keeps the main channel passable. The bayou widens out when it reaches Bay Sherman, and the deeper water grows bigger alligators. The bay offers shoreline and side channels to explore, and eventually evolves into Bayou Sherman which flows past a grid of oil-patch canals into remote Grassy Lake.

buttress

cypress
knees

ROUTE

Head north from the launch under the bridge and up Bayou Morgan City, and you're immediately in the swamp. Look for wildlife around the islands, ponds, hyacinth rafts and canal crossings, and examine the big cypresses to see what creatures might be hiding up high. The water widens significantly when you reach Bay Sherman, and bald eagles prefer this open space. The bay also has grassy edges where alligators bask and hide. A loop is not possible on this route, so turn around at your leisure and head back the way you came. The wide bay marks a convenient midpoint for a 5- to 6-mile route.

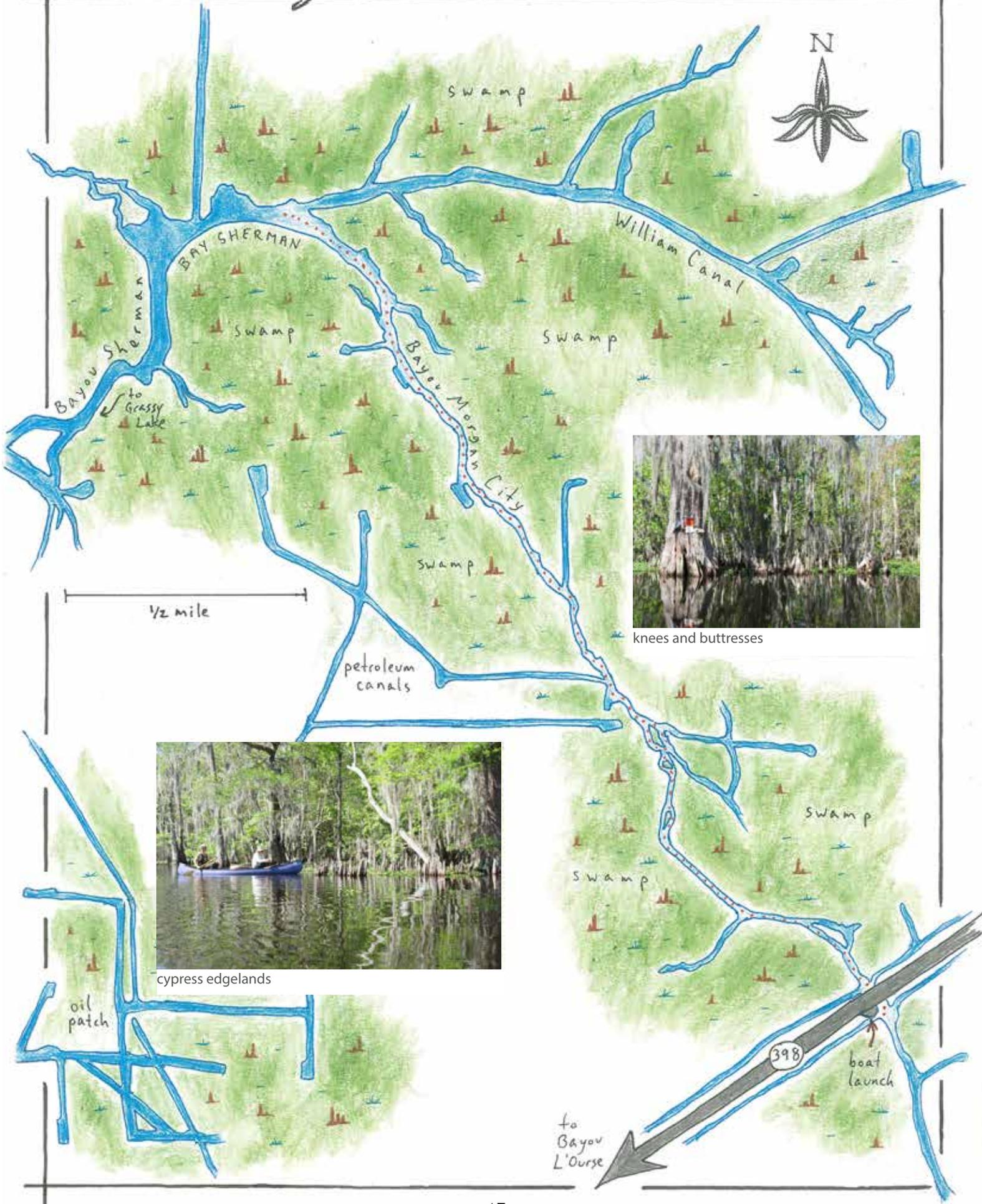
DANGERS AND CONSIDERATIONS

Bayou Morgan City is so small and meandering that motorboats must idle slowly along, but the throttles open up suddenly on Bay Sherman, so be visible on the water to avoid surprises. Watch for wasps in trees and snakes along the banks. Venomous cottonmouth moccasins are excellent at camouflage and they are hyperaware, so by the time you see them they've certainly seen you, and they have the unnerving habit of staring you dead in the eye to let you know. Respect their personal space and take a picture with your zoom. Alligators are everywhere, big and small, but unless they've been fed by the human hand, they want nothing to do with you. Bugs and sun are usually a paddler's greatest bother.



venerable cypress

Bay Sherman



knees and buttresses



cypress edgeland

MANDALAY MARSH

Trip length: 11 miles one-way with shuttle; a full, long day.

PUT IN / TAKE OUT

Put in at Cannon's Boat Landing in the community of Waterproof, which for a small fee provides launch, ample parking, picnic tables, and toilet. (Cross the bridge from Hwy 182 to the north side of Bayou Black, into the community of Waterproof, and find Cannon's directly on the right.) Take out at a parish launch on Bayou DuLarge in the community of Theriot, with ramp and ample parking. (The launch is exactly at the intersection of Marmande Canal and Bayou DuLarge, on the side of Hwy 315.) It is 14 miles by road between launches, requiring two vehicles to shuttle.



water control gate



Marmande Ridge

OVERVIEW

The fresh-to-brackish marshes of the B-T are extensive and full of life, but they can be a challenge of access for the paddling day-tripper. The Minors Canal / Marmande Canal route described here follows man-made canals deep into the marsh through the US Fish & Wildlife Service's Mandalay National Wildlife Refuge. It skirts a pair of large marsh lakes, and returns by way of the jungly cheniere of an old silted-in bayou. (For another view of the marsh and swampy spoil banks, there is the mile-long Mandalay Walking Trail in the far NE corner of the refuge, on Bayou Black Road across from Cannon's Boat Launch. Look for the roadside sign.)

ROUTE

Launch at Cannon's, cross under the Hwy 182 bridge into Minors Canal and head south. Immediately you will see a water control structure, a small Tainter gate used to prevent flooding and control salinity. If it is closed, you can follow the directions on the sign to open it by pushbutton and pass through. Paddle past swampurbia backyards and briefly enter swamp, the canal lined with bald cypress and American lotus. Two miles from the launch, Minors Canal crosses the GIWW and you enter the Lake Hatch section of the Mandalay NWR. Here you distinctly leave the trees behind and enter the marsh. Notice the old cheniere of Bayou Mauvais Bois, the "Bayou of Bad Trees," on the horizon to your right. Chopped up by petroleum canals, this bayou no longer flows, but its forested ridge provides good cheniere habitat. One mile below the GIWW is Lake Hatch, full of birds, fish, and alligators. Hyacinths drift in rafts, indicating the flow of the tide. Minors Canal is a straight run

of several miles; the old Marmande cheniere becomes visible to the southeast and remains a wandering landmark for the rest of the trip. Though the old Bayou Marmande no longer flows, its land ridge is a healthy corridor of mature oak trees, and all the wildlife that a chenier supports. Seven miles into your trip, turn east into Marmande Canal, its opening marked by trees and a few camps across from a gated canal into private Lake Theriot. Paddle the Marmande canal for four miles, running gators ahead of you, until it re-enters civilization in the oak-draped community of Theriot. Your take-out is hard to miss at the confluence of Bayou DuLarge, on the side of the road to your right.

DANGERS AND CONSIDERATIONS

Use caution when crossing the GIWW. It is a big water. Be aware of lumbering barges, whizzing bass boats, and everything in between. As usual, it's best to go on a rising tide with a following wind. Besides burning sun and biting flies, water hyacinth is likely to be your greatest annoyance. Hyacinth rafts move in and out with the tide and may bottleneck near the mouth of Marmande Canal, but small blockages are passable with a little determination. Larger blockages are not passable. This is a long trip, so get a very early start and always carry a headlamp in your boat kit, just in case you are out after dark.

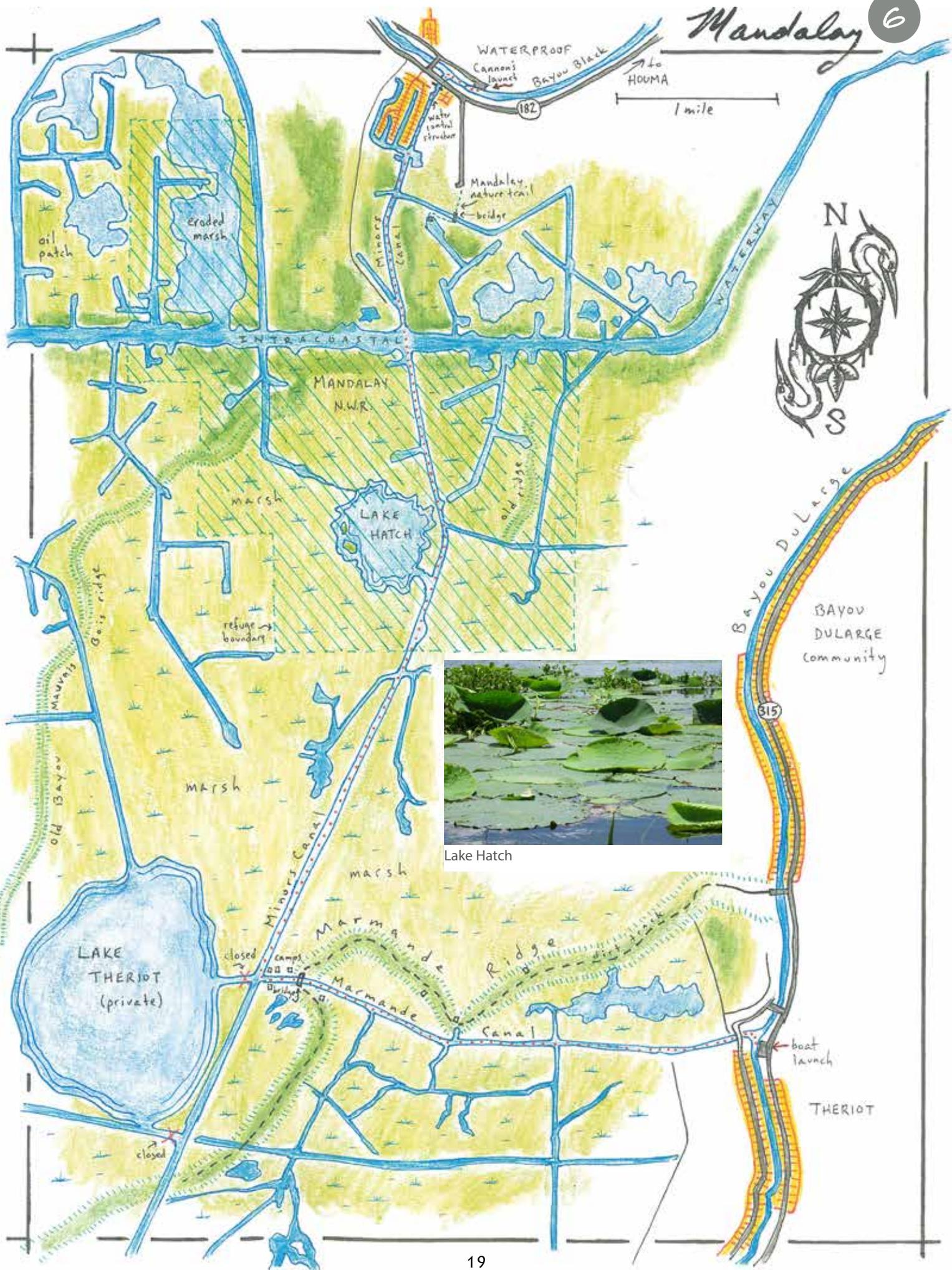


American lotus



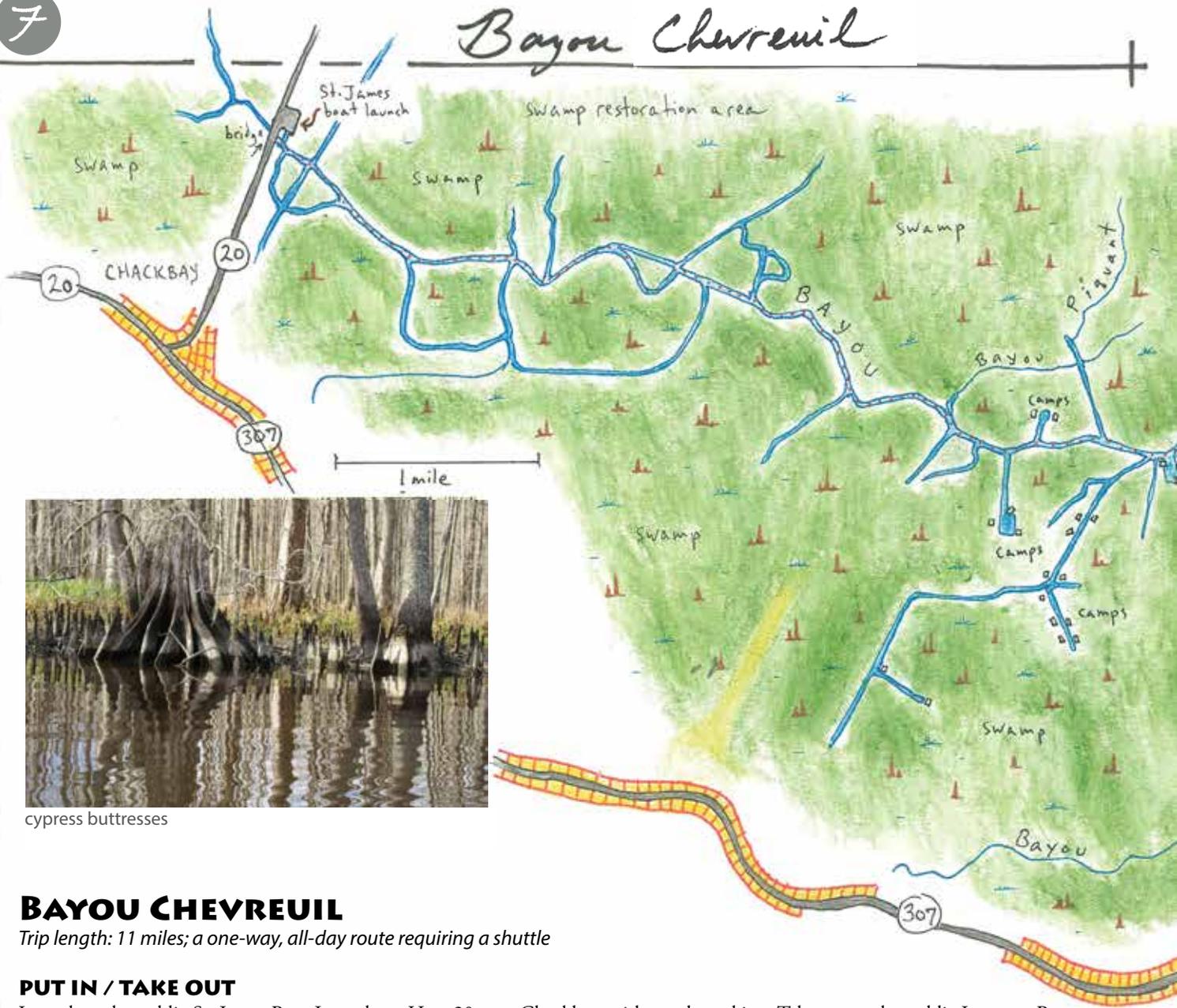
bridge over Marmande Canal

Mandalay



Lake Hatch

Bayou Chevreuil



cypress buttresses

BAYOU CHEVREUIL

Trip length: 11 miles; a one-way, all-day route requiring a shuttle

PUT IN / TAKE OUT

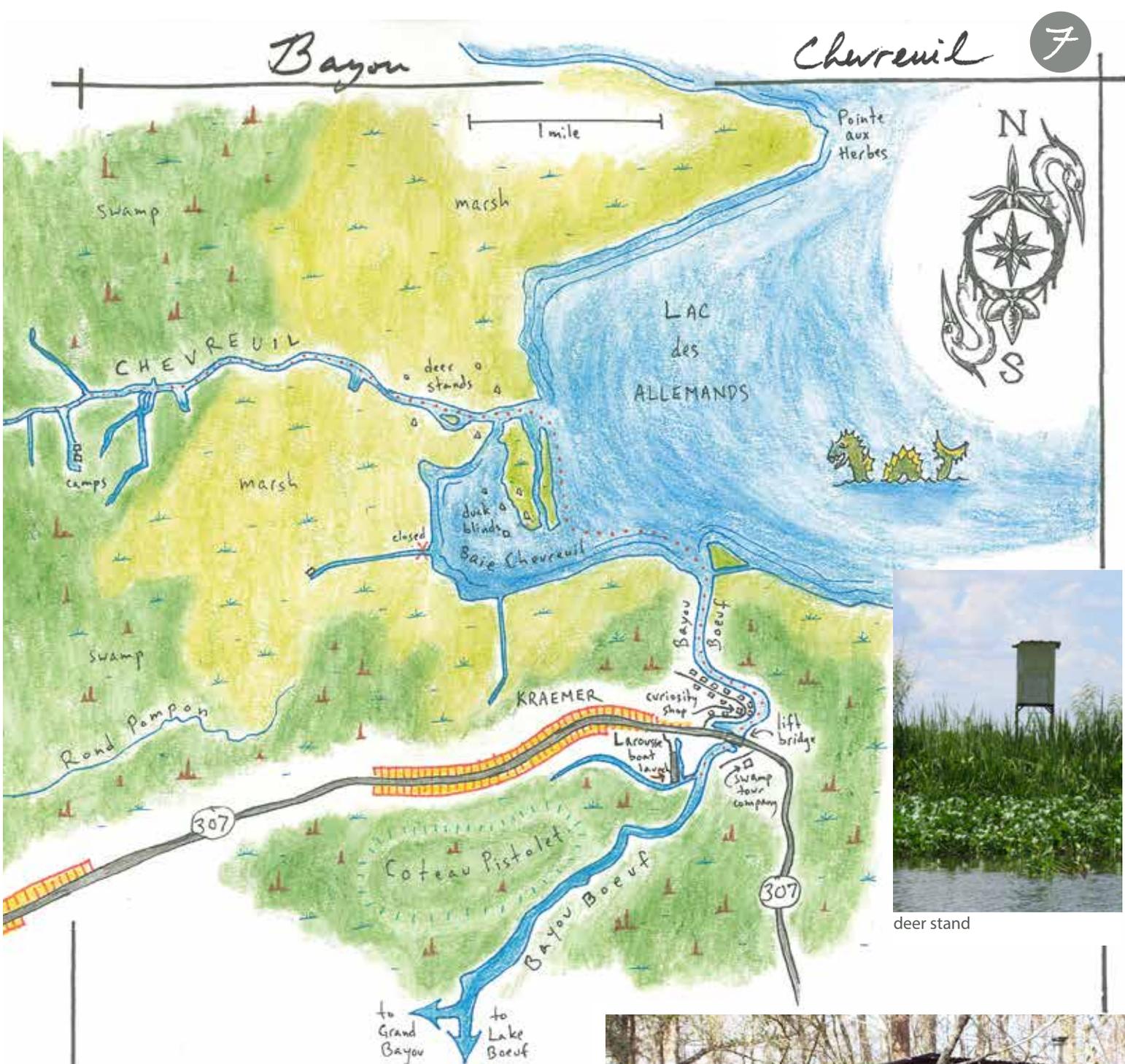
Launch at the public St. James Boat Launch on Hwy 20 near Chackbay, with ample parking. Take out at the public Larousse Boat Launch off Hwy 307, also with ample parking, just past the Kraemer Bridge. This makes for a fairly long trip requiring two vehicles to shuttle the 12 miles between launches. There are no other access points by road, so the only way to shorten the route is to park at one of the launches, paddle for a ways, then turn around. Both ends of the route are pleasant enough for this to be a viable option.

OVERVIEW

Bayou Chevreuil (shev-ROO) means “deer bayou,” probably because the oak-vegetated banks and coteaus (rises of land) create good habitat for chevreuil. The bayou has its origins deep in the swamps of St. James, Lafourche, and St. John parishes and flows several swampy, roadless miles into Lac des Allemands (lack-dez-AL-monds). The route is characterized by cypress, tupelo, gum, maple, and palmetto; a natural, medium-sized and low-flow bayou with numerous side-tracks (canals, sloughs, coulees) suitable for exploration, excepting some private canals and blockages due to aquatic vegetation. At the time of this writing, a swamp restoration project under the Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection, and Restoration Act (CWPPRA) is being constructed on the north side of the bayou, just east of the St. James launch. For online information, visit: <https://lacoast.gov/new/Projects/Info.aspx?num=BA-34-2>

ROUTE

Launch at the St. James launch and paddle east, away from the bridge. This route, traveling west to east, follows cypress swamp for 7 miles then abruptly transitions to freshwater marsh (marked “trembling prairie” on antique maps). Notice deer hunting stands in the clearings. In another mile or so Lac Des Allemands opens up the horizon, with its skies full of clouds and eagles and waters full of “famous” Des Allemands catfish. Skirt the marsh-edge of the lake and head south for ½ mile. At the end of the marshy islands amid the ghost-town of duck blinds, follow your compass SSE another ½ mile to the nearest point of land, the mouth of Bayou Boeuf. Here you enter the swamp again, and the bayou-side community of Kraemer. Pass under the old lift bridge and turn right at the first inlet to find the Larousse boat launch.



deer stand



old swamp camp

photo: R. G. Kay

DANGERS AND CONSIDERATIONS

Be sure to get an early start, as positioning two vehicles at the launches is time consuming. Bayou Chevreuil is ideally paddled from west to east with the flow of the bayou. Watch the weather forecast and choose a day with a mild west wind, a friendly zephyr to assist you. Paddling in an eastern headwind will make the trip seem long and arduous. Boat traffic is expected due to camps, fishing, hunting stands, and duck blinds; activity increases on weekends and during hunting seasons. Be mindful of the mile-long Lac des Allemands crossing, as this is a big shallow lake and wave amplification, particularly from an east wind, can create dangerous conditions for small craft. Marshy shorelines can be deceptive, so check the map, take a compass bearing and stick to it. Avoid doing the lake crossing in the dark, and always carry lights or headlamps for the possibility of being on the water at night.

LAKE BOEUF

Trip length: 3.3 miles one-way from the launch to the lake, 7 miles round trip

PUT IN / TAKE OUT

Theriot Canal public launch on Hwy 308 has ramp, dock, lights, and ample parking.

OVERVIEW

The Theriot (TERR-ee-yo) Canal route is a short half-day or sunset paddle, skirting a Wildlife Management Area and ending in shallow, grassy Lake Boeuf. Boeuf is French for “buffalo,” a nod to the American bison which once ranged deep into the Louisiana swamp. Here you will find lotus gardens in the summer, birds by the thousands in the winter, snakes and alligators in warm weather, jumping fish and sunsets year-round. A duck hunter’s utopia, the grassy lake is a veritable village of duck blinds. Floating mats of marsh form a labyrinth of islands so that it is easy to get lost in time here, or at least find quiet solitude. The lake is full of fish if your angling skills can best the aquatic grass. Sunset over the marsh is a memorable event, and paddling back in the dark is a mystic world of nocturnal sounds and creatures.

ROUTE

Launch into the canal and paddle northeast, away from Bayou Lafourche and the tiny self-operational control structure which checks the water level. The canal is straight and narrow, punctuated with a couple of small bridge and canal crossings. At mile 2 the canal edges the 800-acre Lake Boeuf Wildlife Management Area (The WMA is entirely south of the lake and does not include the lake itself.) At mile 3 the canal opens up to the marsh and the primeval paradise of Lake Boeuf. Venture into the lake and turn around at your leisure, retracing your route back to the launch.



duck blind

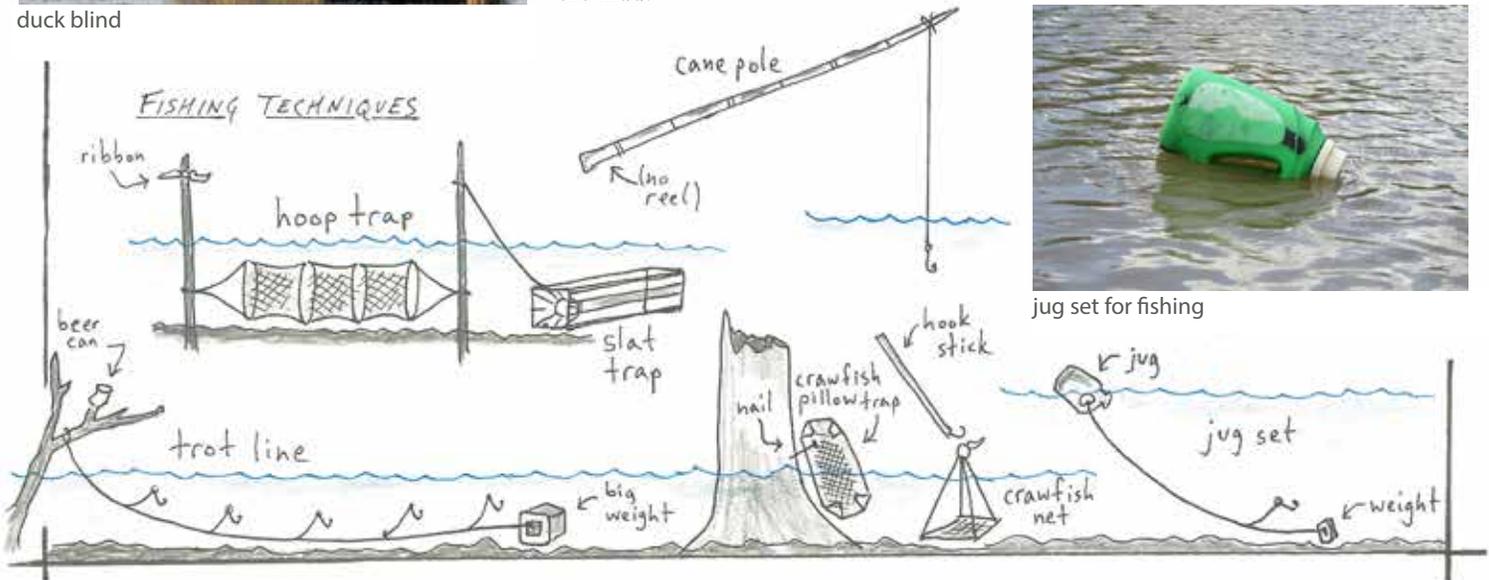
DANGERS AND CONSIDERATIONS

Avoid duck season, especially on weekend mornings, unless you relish the sound of gunfire. The canal is tight and well-travelled, so expect close passings. Use extra caution crossing under the low and narrow bridges. Also expect friendly hellos and curious inquiries. Practice good boat etiquette and canoe safety: make eye contact and stay well to your side to allow passing, but not so close to the shore as to get caught in an amplified last-minute wave that might roll you. Most motoring swampers are experienced paddlers of the pirogue, so they will slow down as they pass you – always acknowledge this courtesy with a wave – but in the case of a wake, orient the bow of your canoe toward the oncoming wave. Bring lights for night paddling: headlamps and bicycle lights work fine for a canoe. If you are without a light and you hear a motor approaching in the dark, three flicks of a Bic – or a wave of a mobile phone light – will magically cut that motor down to a safe idle.

If you plan a sunset trip, expect some bugs. But most importantly, don’t get lost in the lake after dark! The lake is a notorious maze of grassy islands which are constantly afloat, regularly changing the landscape of the “trembling prairie.” Take a bearing at the mouth of the canal and identify a triangulation of landmarks. The mouth of the canal is well-marked with pilings and well-traveled, so if you are unsure of your navigational skills, simply don’t let the canal out of your sight as you explore, and observe the path of other boats. As on any lake, wind-driven chop usually occurs as the winds change at dusk, presenting challenges for small craft. If it gets scary, wear your life jacket, get on your knees to lower the canoe’s center of gravity, and paddle hard. And as my dad says – if you fall in, stand up! But then you’ll just get stuck in the mud.

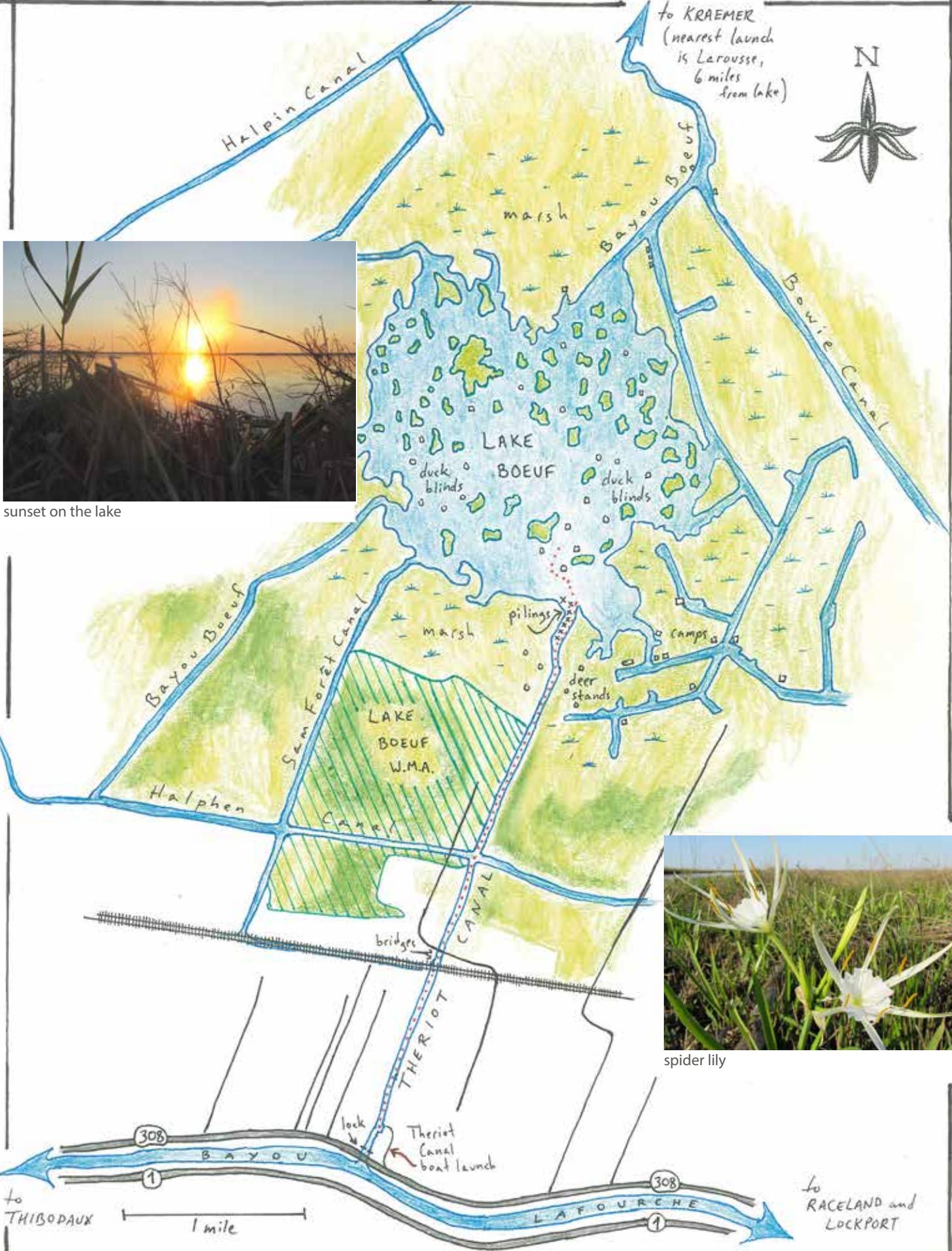


bridge undercrossing



jug set for fishing

Lake Boeuf



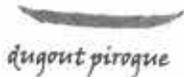
sunset on the lake



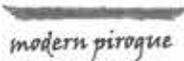
spider lily

Lockport Area

Boat Key



dugout pirogue



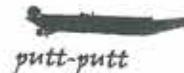
modern pirogue



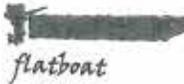
old chaland



old lugger



putt-putt



flatboat



mudboat



crawfish boat



Lafitte skiff



oyster lugger



shrimp boat



airboat

LOCKPORT AREA

Trip length: Variable loops, 6-11 miles, half or full day

PUT IN / TAKE OUT

Lockport Bayouside Park off Hwy 1, with ramp, dock, restrooms, picnic pavilions, play areas, and ample parking.

OVERVIEW

Most of the routes in this guide seek to avoid areas of heavy boat traffic, but this route seeks to appreciate the diversity of Louisiana's favorite ride – the watercraft. Bienvenue en Lockport, the center of boat culture in the B-T! Worth a visit is the Center for Traditional Louisiana Boat Building, also known as the Louisiana Boat Museum, 202 Main Street (not open every day, call first (985) 532-5106). Traditional wooden boats, dugouts, pirogues, chalands, putt-putts, skiffs, luggers and all manner of historic Louisiana watercraft are on display in the museum, and more are being restored in the workshop next door. The museum hosts the Bateau De Bois Festival (Wooden Boat Festival) every spring, featuring workshops, antiques, boat rides, food and music. Also in the spring, BTNEP hosts its annual Paddle Bayou Lafourche, a multi-day canoe-camping trek down the historic bayou which traditionally begins in Donaldsonville and ends at the Lockport Bayouside Park, where the paddlers will enjoy seeing the diversity of craft. This is an excellent opportunity for meeting fellow travelers and sharing information on routes and conditions in the estuary. For information on Paddle Bayou Lafourche, call the BTNEP office (985) 447-0868 or visit <https://btnep.org>.

ROUTE

A visit to Lockport creates the itch to get on the water, and there are several short excursions that will satisfy. Launch at the park, notice the ruins of the old brick locks (hence the name Lockport) on the other side of Bayou Lafourche. Proceed west on Company Canal, which once connected Lockport directly to New Orleans. Paddle past shipyards and shrimp fleets, barges and tugboats, mudboats and speedboats, flatboats and houseboats and all manner of Louisiana watercraft great and small. In 1.3 miles you reach the edge of Lake Fields (indicated on the map with a “*”), from which you have loop options.

LOOP 1: LAKE FIELDS

To the north is the several-miles-long, one-camp-wide, roadless community of Lake Fields. Paddle up the canal for a swampy backyard tour, with alligators basking on the docks and the smell of boil and barbeque emanating from screened-in porches. Notice the apple snail shells and pink egg clusters on the east bank – a recent invasive epidemic. Expect aquatic vegetation: hyacinth and hydrilla are the enemies of boat travel. 1.7 miles up the canal there is a trenasse into the lake, but the hyacinth may force an earlier portage. (Always respect private property!) Once in Lake Fields, stay close to the lake edge and return to Company Canal, appreciating the front-yard vista of the camps you just saw the backs of. This loop (not including the Company Canal leg from the lake to the launch) is about 3.5 miles.

LOOP 2: BAYOU L'EAU BLEU

At the junction of Lake Fields, Company Canal continues on to the south. Just past ½ mile on the canal is a water control structure, and directly past that on your left is the mouth of Bayou L'Eau Bleu (Blue Water Bayou). This is a natural bayou that flows through a freshwater marsh of giant cutgrass, a relative of wild rice. The banks are lined with maple, willow and invasive Chinese tallow. Freshwater marsh provides ideal habitat for alligators, and in a short paddle you are likely to see several. The first westward canal off the bayou loops you back to Company Canal for your return trip. (Continuing along the bayou is pleasant for a while, but after a few meanders the bayou trends back towards the civilization of Hwy 1 and becomes less pleasant with canal closures and nearby industry.) This loop, beginning and ending at the mouth of Lake Fields, is about 5 miles. If you have time to do the full figure eight route of Lake Fields village and Bayou L'Eau Bleu (11 miles total from the park) and you manage to squeeze in the boat museum, you will have filled your cup with the historic beauty of Lockport.

DANGERS AND CONSIDERATIONS

Watch out for boats! All craft have equal rights upon the water, but being the smallest, you have to be the most aware. Practicing canoe safety and etiquette is essential. Wear your life jacket, stay well to your side of the channel, be predictable, make eye contact, offer a friendly greeting, and in the case of a wake, orient your boat toward the oncoming wave to minimize the risk of tipping. Safety First!



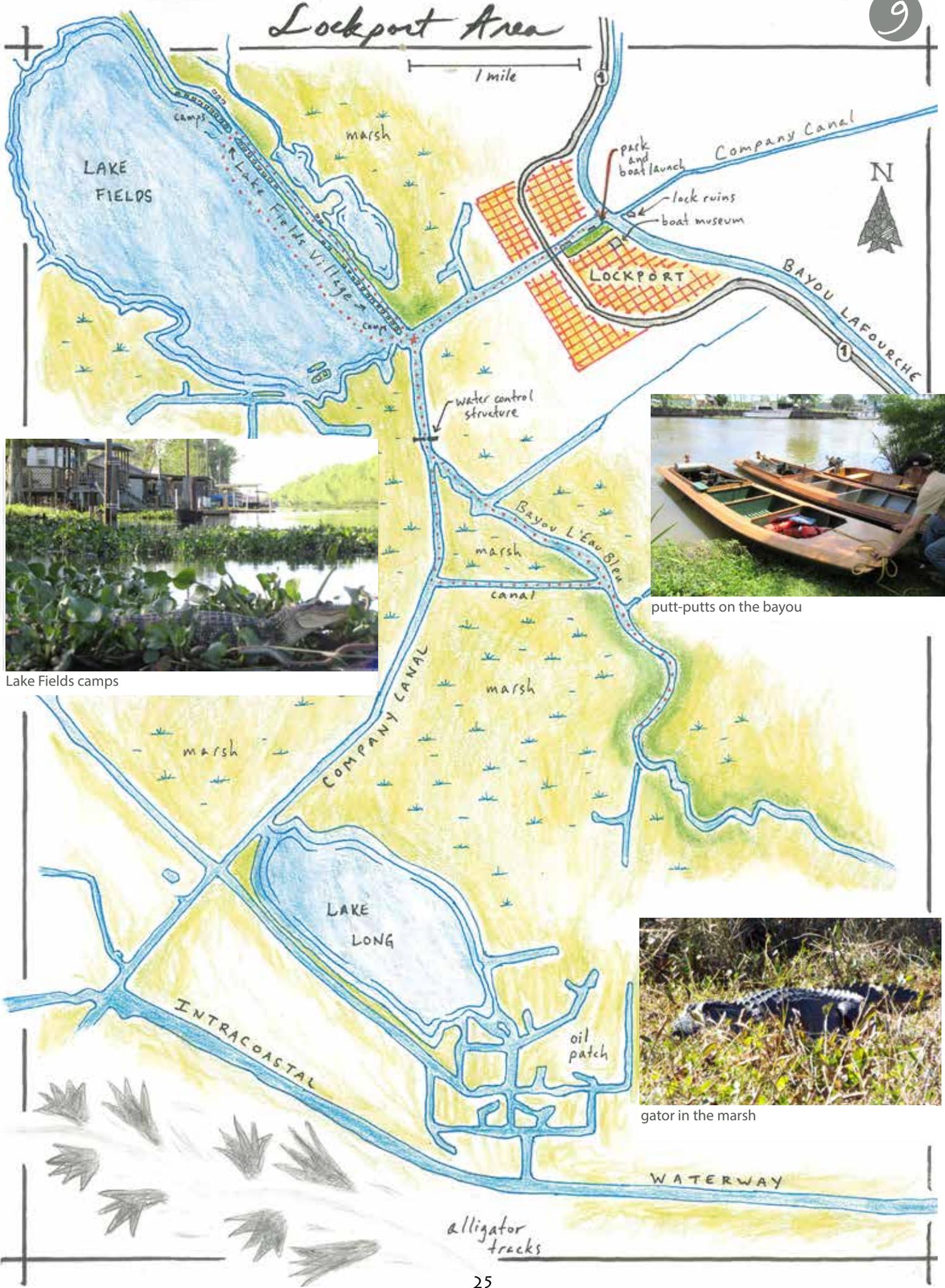
inside the Louisiana Boat Museum



apple snail eggs

Lockport Area

1 mile



Lake Fields camps



putt-putts on the bayou



gator in the marsh

Barataria Preserve

BARATARIA PRESERVE

Trip length: Short half-day excursions, 2-5 miles.

PUT IN / TAKE OUT

Various launches; see below.

OVERVIEW

Jean Lafitte National Historical Park is the only national park in Louisiana, comprised of several dispersed cultural units and one swamp unit, the Barataria Preserve. The Preserve offers hiking trails, educational programs, buccaneer history, explorable wetlands, lots of wildlife, and an excellent visitor center. Naturally you will want to paddle the waters, but aquatic vegetation can be a problem. The Kenta Canals have the best launch options but are challenged by the nuisance of water hyacinth. These blockages ebb and flow over the years, and so it is impossible to guarantee passage through any of these routes. Stop in or call the visitor center desk (504) 689-3690 for updated conditions. On a brighter note about hyacinth, wildlife including alligators, fish, and wading birds often linger visibly at the edges of vegetation rafts.



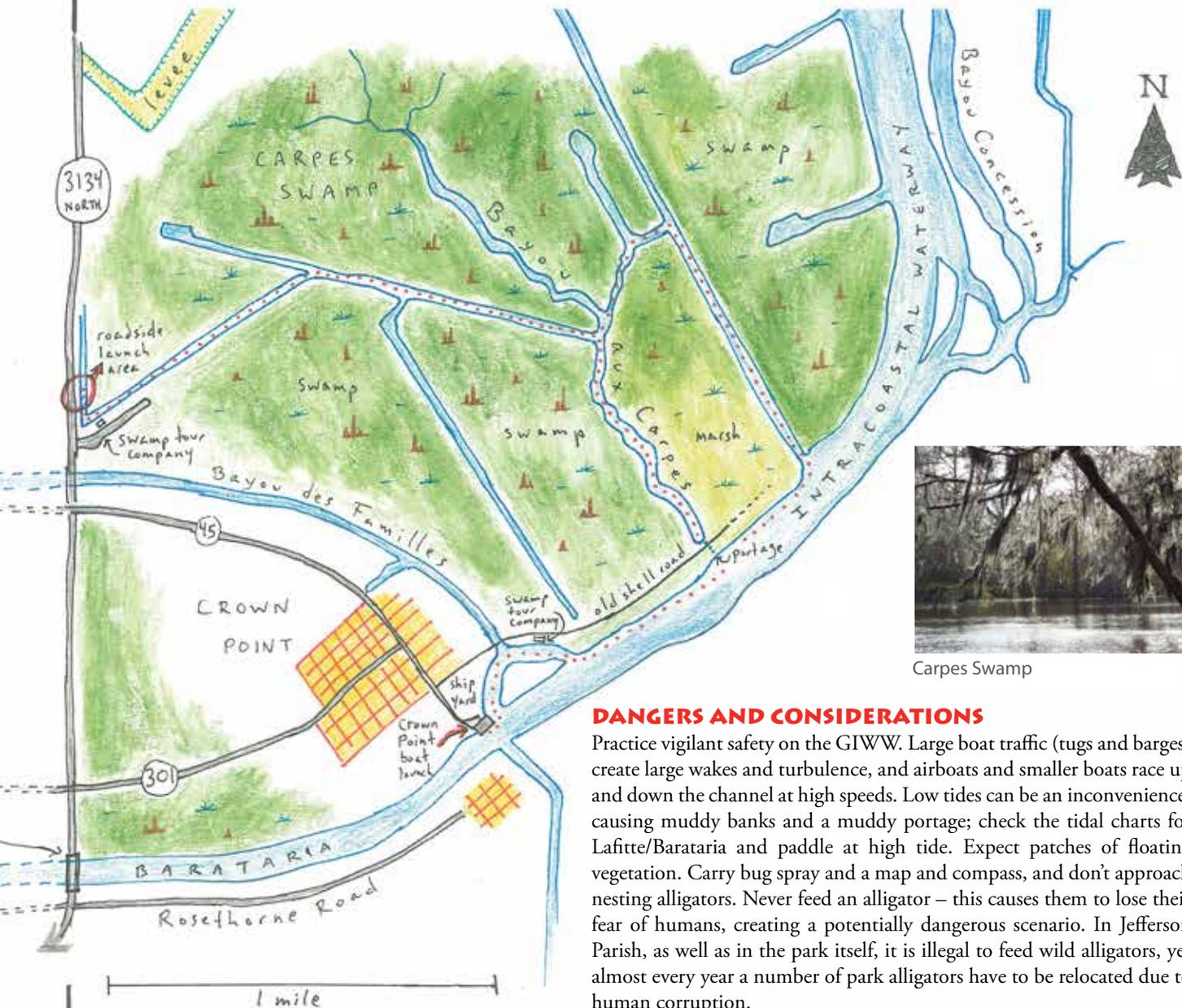
Kenta Canal

KENTA CANALS ROUTES

Use the Twin Canals canoe launch on the main park road, which has ample parking and a wooden dock, or the Lower Kenta Canal launch on Hwy 301 which has roadside parking only. **1) Twin Canals:** Launch at Twin Canals and paddle $\frac{3}{4}$ mile out to the junction of motorboat-free Upper Kenta Canal. From here you want to turn left and paddle towards Bayou Coquille and Lower Kenta, but your way may be blocked. Instead, you can paddle into the gatorfilled marsh via the Parallel and Tarpaper Canals (motorboats allowed) and turn around at your leisure (although Bayou Segnette State Park is just a few miles distant, also worthy of exploration by canoe.) **2) Lower Kenta Canal:** Launch at Lower Kenta and paddle northward. On your right is a palmetto swampland with oak-covered spoil banks, and to your left is the freshwater marsh observed through the thin line of trees. If hyacinth were not an issue you could paddle all the way to the Upper Kenta Canal and take out at the Twin Canals launch, a one-way, $4\frac{1}{2}$ -mile, motorboat-free trip. However, you may not make a full mile before you must turn around. Seeking other horizons, backtrack and head south under the bridge and you soon pop out into the Bayou Barataria portion of the GIWW. Motors are king here, so observe and beware the big boat traffic! Directly across the GIWW is the Lafitte Fisheries Market, featuring restrooms and swampy concessions.

CARPES SWAMP ROUTES For routes in the Carpes Swamp, use either the Crown Point public boat launch or launch roadside from Hwy 3134 into a canal just above Bayou des Familles. **1) Crown Point Loop, 5 miles:** From the Crown Point launch, which has ramps, docks, and ample parking, turn left up Bayou Barataria, the GIWW. You will be passing large ship traffic, so use caution. In just short of a mile you will see a canal on your left that leads into the park; follow it to another canal on the left, and now you are in the Carpes Swamp. Paddle Bayou aux Carpes South to its mouth, which is blocked by an old shell road. An unmarked, unmaintained, 3-rod portage will deliver you back to the highway of barges, and so you return to the launch. If the portage is too overgrown or the water is too low, return by the way you came. **2) Bayou aux Carpes, 5 miles:** Launch from Hwy 3134 into the boat-lined canal which is shared by an eco-tour company. Park safely off the shoulder

of the road – not in the private parking lot, and launch into a ditch under the power lines that immediately hooks into the canal. Paddle $\frac{3}{4}$ mile and emerge into a larger canal, turn right and follow this another $\frac{3}{4}$ mile to Bayou aux Carpes. Enjoy small inlets that deliver you, albeit briefly, into deeper swamp. When you reach the end of Bayou aux Carpes you have paddled about 2 miles from your vehicle; turn around to return at your leisure. **3) Carpes Swamp shuttle:** a 3-mile, one-way tour of the Carpes Swamp, using a shuttle option with two vehicles. Put in at Hwy 3134, paddle Bayou aux Carpes to its end and make the portage (or without the portage, paddle the access canals out to the GIWW, adding an extra mile), and take out of the GIWW at the Crown Point launch. It is $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles between launches by road through a small neighborhood. Paddlers with a bike rack on their vehicle will enjoy this option.



Carpes Swamp

DANGERS AND CONSIDERATIONS

Practice vigilant safety on the GIWW. Large boat traffic (tugs and barges) create large wakes and turbulence, and airboats and smaller boats race up and down the channel at high speeds. Low tides can be an inconvenience, causing muddy banks and a muddy portage; check the tidal charts for Lafitte/Barataria and paddle at high tide. Expect patches of floating vegetation. Carry bug spray and a map and compass, and don't approach nesting alligators. Never feed an alligator – this causes them to lose their fear of humans, creating a potentially dangerous scenario. In Jefferson Parish, as well as in the park itself, it is illegal to feed wild alligators, yet almost every year a number of park alligators have to be relocated due to human corruption.

Bayou Grande Cheniere

BAYOU GRANDE CHENIERE

Trip-length: 12 miles one-way requiring a shuttle, a long day

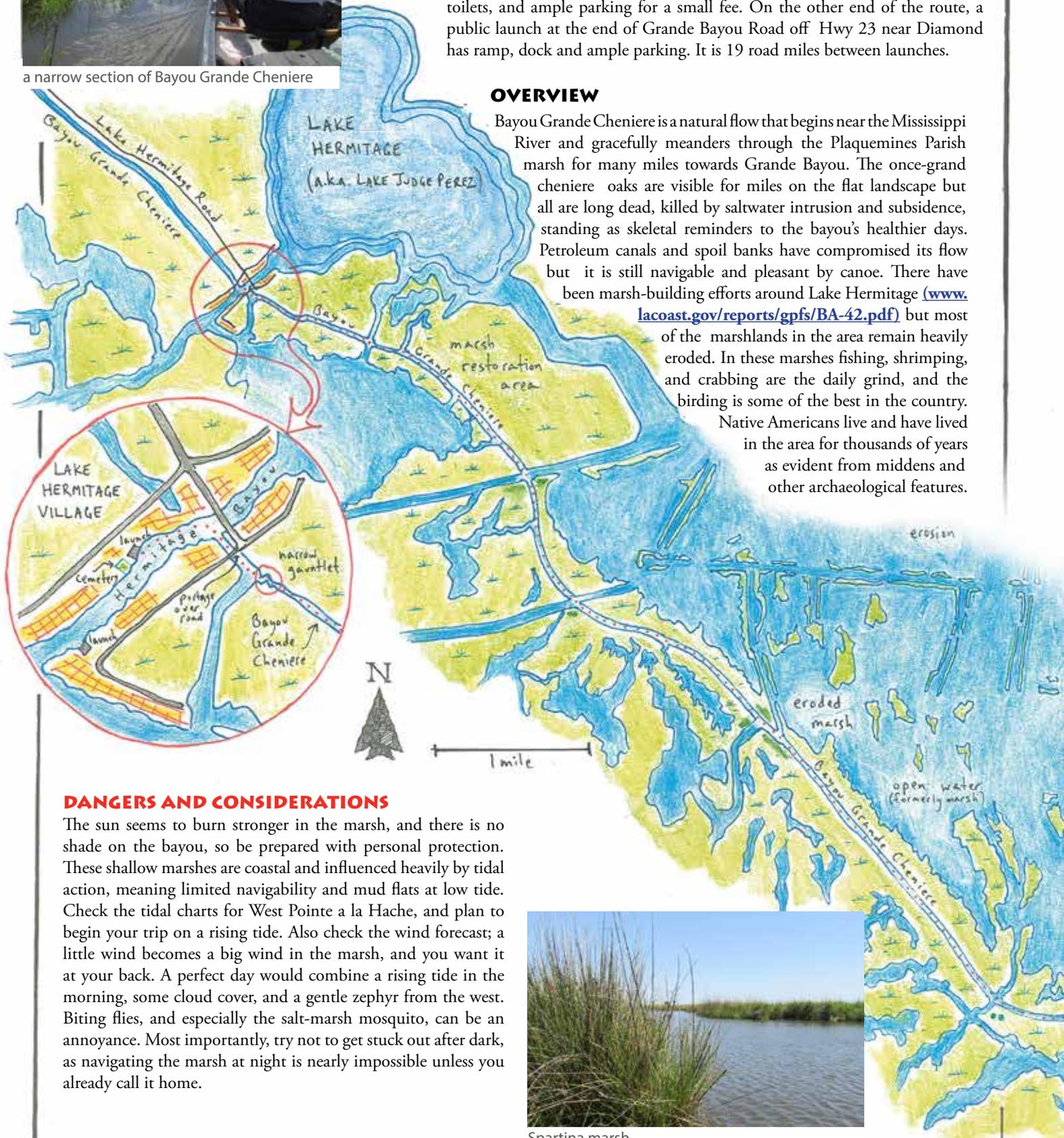
PUT IN / TAKE OUT

A number of private launches in Lake Hermitage Village offer ramps, docks, toilets, and ample parking for a small fee. On the other end of the route, a public launch at the end of Grande Bayou Road off Hwy 23 near Diamond has ramp, dock and ample parking. It is 19 road miles between launches.

OVERVIEW

Bayou Grande Cheniere is a natural flow that begins near the Mississippi River and gracefully meanders through the Plaquemines Parish marsh for many miles towards Grande Bayou. The once-grand cheniere oaks are visible for miles on the flat landscape but all are long dead, killed by saltwater intrusion and subsidence, standing as skeletal reminders to the bayou's healthier days. Petroleum canals and spoil banks have compromised its flow but it is still navigable and pleasant by canoe. There have been marsh-building efforts around Lake Hermitage (www.lacoast.gov/reports/gpfs/BA-42.pdf) but most of the marshlands in the area remain heavily eroded. In these marshes fishing, shrimping, and crabbing are the daily grind, and the birding is some of the best in the country. Native Americans live and have lived in the area for thousands of years as evident from middens and other archaeological features.

a narrow section of Bayou Grande Cheniere



DANGERS AND CONSIDERATIONS

The sun seems to burn stronger in the marsh, and there is no shade on the bayou, so be prepared with personal protection. These shallow marshes are coastal and influenced heavily by tidal action, meaning limited navigability and mud flats at low tide. Check the tidal charts for West Pointe a la Hache, and plan to begin your trip on a rising tide. Also check the wind forecast; a little wind becomes a big wind in the marsh, and you want it at your back. A perfect day would combine a rising tide in the morning, some cloud cover, and a gentle zephyr from the west. Biting flies, and especially the salt-marsh mosquito, can be an annoyance. Most importantly, try not to get stuck out after dark, as navigating the marsh at night is nearly impossible unless you already call it home.



Spartina marsh

ROUTE

Launch at Lake Hermitage Village into Hermitage Bayou and immediately portage across the shell road at the southeast corner of the bridge into Bayou Grande Cheniere. Note that the bayou continues straight ahead, not to the right. Enter this narrow gauntlet of marsh grasses – it is passable by canoe! In a few minutes the gauntlet opens up into the bayou, and you paddle the corridor of standing dead oaks. The bayou was once as wide as the span of oaks before it silted in. The spartina marsh all around is another world – quiet, breezy, timeless. Birds are abundant and so are fish, and abundant wildlife concentrates on and around the low levees of the bayou. It is these old natural levees that have kept the bayou from eroding away completely. Canal crossings are your landmarks on this route. Spoil banks and middens, being the only shaded land (actual land), support a diversity of wildlife: deer, otter, raccoon, and other creatures. After 10 lazy miles – the most enchanting with a density of wildlife and oak skeletons – the bayou comes to an end, its mouth blocked by the spoil bank of a canal and silted in with marsh grass. There are but a couple grassy blockages, each a few rods long and walkable; with gumshoes and light boats, the blockage can be portaged. (An alternate portage-free route is described to the right.) After completing the portage, turn left on the canal and paddle ½ mile, pass a water control structure, then left again on Grande Bayou. It is then 1½ miles to Grande Bayou Village Road, completing a 12-mile trip.



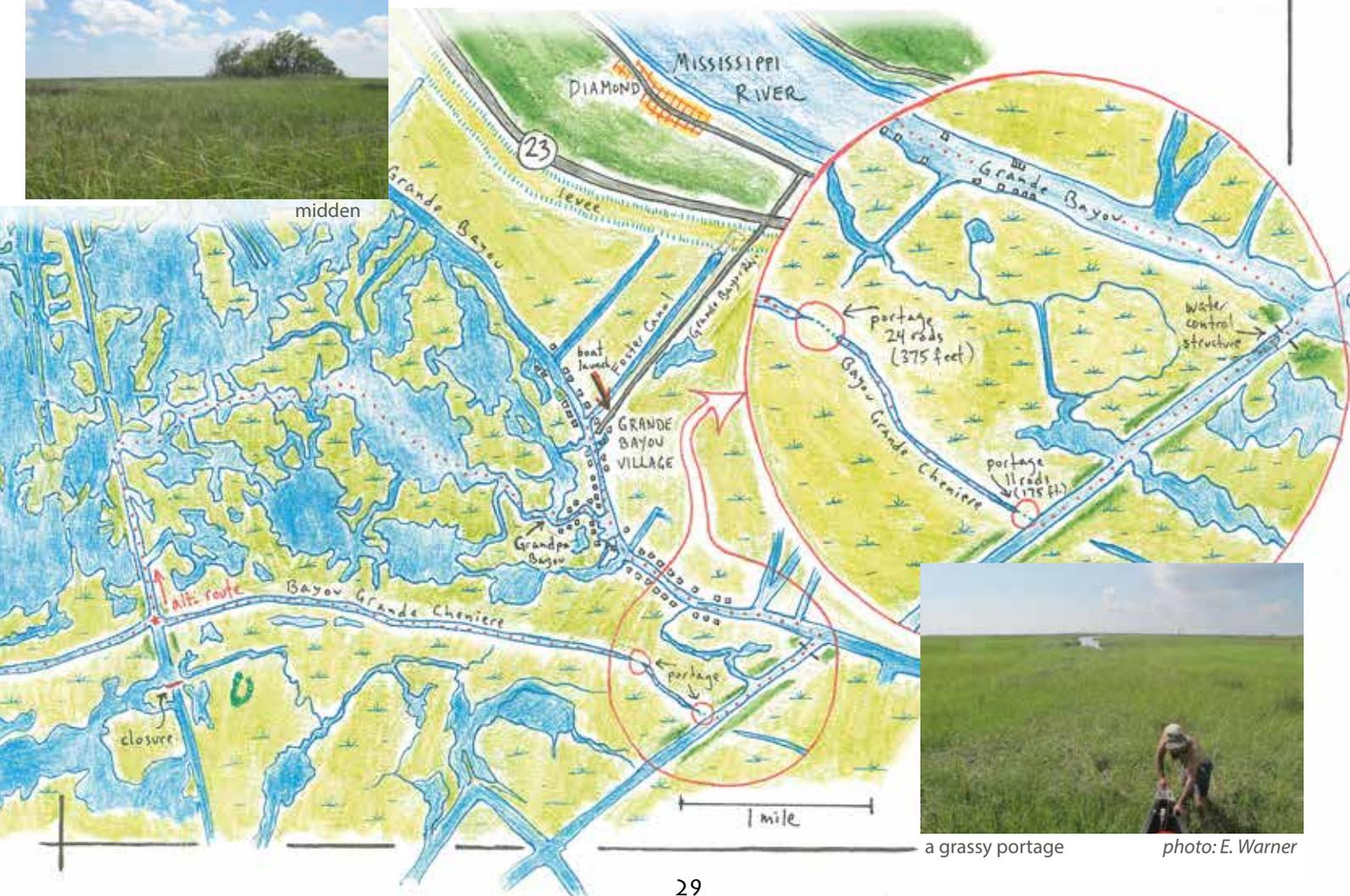
Grande Bayou Village under clouds

ALTERNATE ROUTE TO AVOID THE PORTAGE

If portaging the final leg of the bayou is not an option, the last canal crossing, at approximately mile 7, provides an alternate paddling route through the marsh. At the “crossroads” of mile 7 (see map), paddle this canal northward. After ¾ mile notice significant open water and a marked post on your right. Turn right here and enter a 2½-mile long marsh labyrinth, favoring the main northerly route (poorly marked for part of the way by a string of utility posts). This route puts you into Grande Bayou via Grandpa Bayou, with camp houses all around. Follow your map closely, since there are a number of ways through; but if you get disoriented, stand up in your canoe and notice the nearby camps on the horizon – this is Grande Bayou Village, the way out. (The distance of this alternate route equals roughly the same as the portage route, for a 12-mile total trip.)



midden



a grassy portage

photo: E. Warner

GRAND ISLE

Trip length: Short excursions, partial or half day trips

PUT IN / TAKE OUT

There are several launches on the island. A public kayak launch is located next to the LA Wildlife and Fisheries research complex at the end of Ludwig Lane on the backside of the island, with a grassy landing and ample parking. There are full-service ample-parking marinas and launches at each end of the island, and Grand Isle State Park contains a small, quiet inland lagoon with a launch, dock, crabbing pier, and ample parking.

OVERVIEW

While much of the rest of the B-T system is canoe country with its placid waters, deep swamps and lazy bayous, the windy, choppy, exposed coastal areas of the Gulf of Mexico are best tackled in a kayak. Seven-mile-long Grand Isle is the only barrier island in Louisiana accessible by road, and kayaks are common here. There are kayak rentals and tours, and every summer the island hosts a popular kayak-only fishing rodeo called "Ride the Bull," a reference to hooking into a big bull redfish. The bays and bayous on the backside of the island are full of sport fish and shrimp and crabs, and the nearby marshy islets are worth exploring. Bottlenose dolphins abound, you might even spot a sea turtle or a diamondback terrapin. Grand Isle becomes a birdwatcher's paradise in autumn and spring when migratory birds linger at the edge of the Gulf; and the woods, marshes and sandy shorelines are home to a diverse population of year-round residents. There are birding trails all over the island, so be sure to bring your binoculars and field guides. Camping is available at Grand Isle State Park, where sites can be reserved online. Be aware that the island hosts several popular events throughout the year, and at these times it is swarmed with people and boat traffic. Check www.townofgrandisle.com to coordinate your trip.

ROUTE 1

Launch at the kayak launch and explore the coastline at the back of the island. Small bayous penetrate the marsh towards Chighizola Lane (an old cheniere), and these are full of birds and fish. Immediately across the channel, on the other side of the wave breakers, is a marshy islet crosshatched by small tidal inlets. You could pass an easy several hours paddling around and through it – though it is only three miles from the launch all the way around the islet. Bayou Rigaud and Fifi Island to the east offer more of the same.



hand-lining for crabs

photo: R. G. Kay



birding in the Crab Lagoon

ROUTE 2

Launch at the marina at the east end of the island, and ignore the fishing fleets and sportboats to explore Fifi Island and/or Beauregard Island. These islands, especially Beauregard, were once much bigger and more numerous, being located in the "Bay des Ilettes." Coastal erosion and storms have taken their toll, and the Ilettes are a mere skeleton of their former selves; this is the reason you see the wavebreaks and concrete revetments everywhere to combat erosion. When paddling in this area, avoid wide stretches of open water, and do not get caught in the sweeping current of Barataria Pass! Deep, turbulent water and dangerous riptides will easily jettison a kayak out to sea.

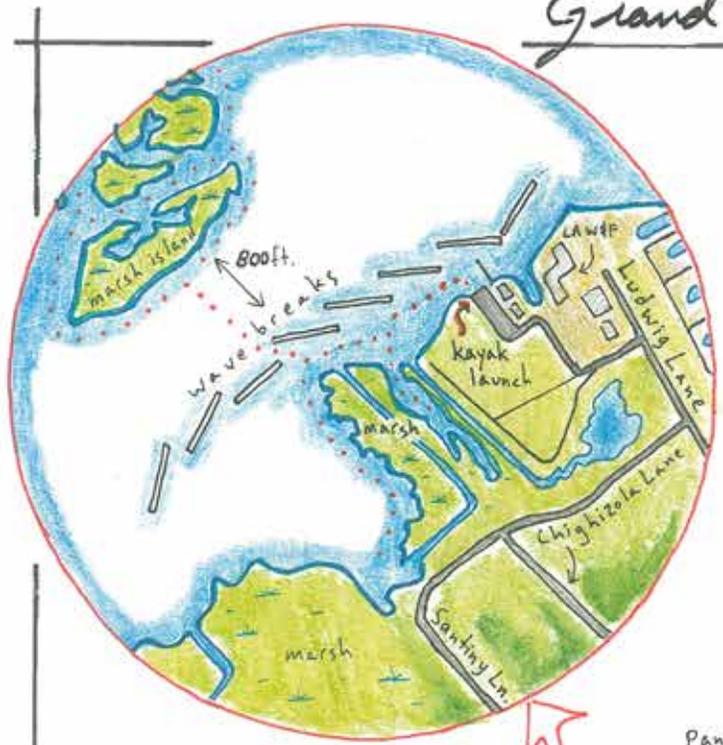
ROUTE 3

The crabbing lagoon in the State Park may be just big enough to get your kayak wet, but it is a protected, inshore body of water without boat traffic or waves, so it is the safest option for testing your kayak before you brave bigger waters. Paddle to the eastern edge of the lagoon and portage over the rock dike into the marshes of the island's eastern point. This area is nice for fishing, crabbing, and birding, and observing the island camps and Coast Guard barracks nearby.

DANGERS AND CONSIDERATIONS

Grand Isle gets extremely hot in the summer. In the marshes and on open water there is zero shade – protect yourself from the sun. The shapes of the islands change with every big storm, so any map is only a rough approximation. But landmarks are plentiful. When you get out in the water be sure to take a good look back at your launch site and note a reference point to return by. A compass is always useful in case you get turned around, because marshy shorelines as seen from kayak level can be disorienting. Expect to encounter wind and chop, and try not to paddle parallel to shore where waves break and canoes roll. Aside from the steady march of boat and ship traffic, the greatest danger to paddlers is Barataria Pass, where strong currents make the water treacherous. Although in calm waters Grande Terre can be reached by kayak, fast changes in the tides create real dangers. For this reason, swimming is forbidden at the eastern end of the island, and canoes and kayaks should likewise steer clear.

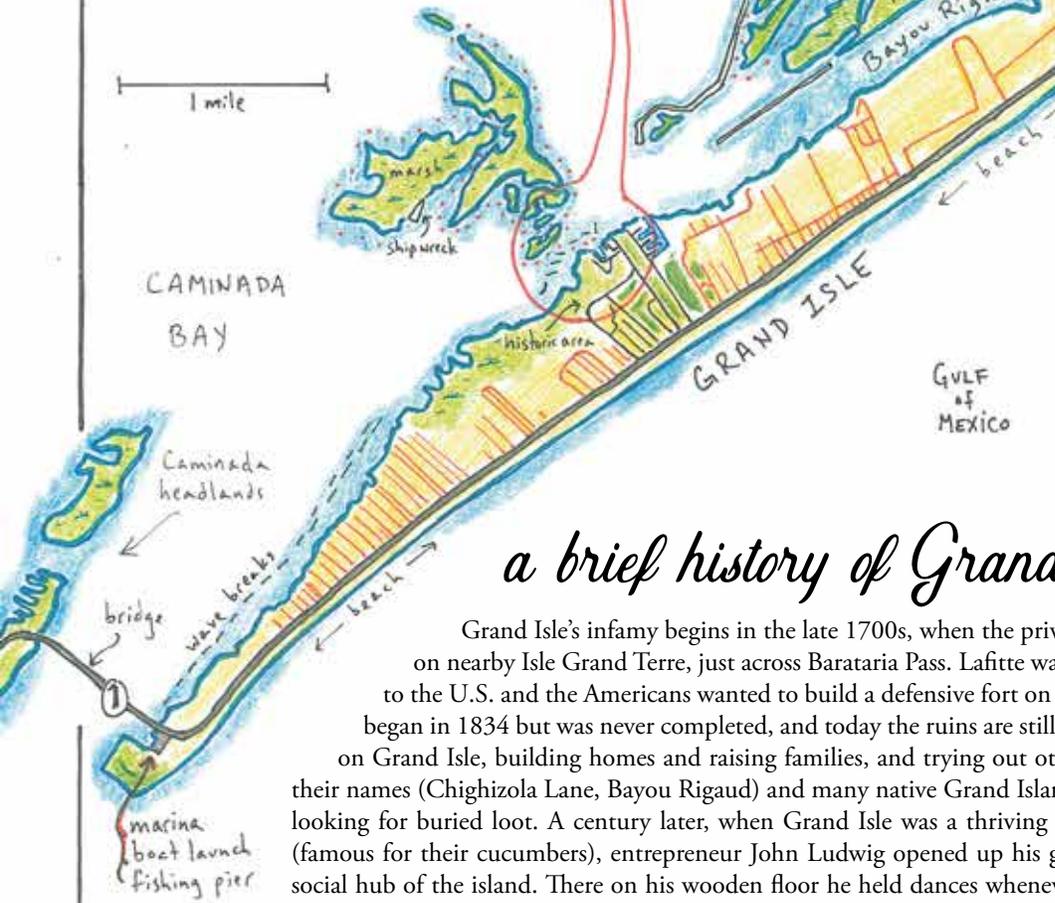
Grand Isle



shrimp trawler



Ludwig's old store



a brief history of Grand Isle

Grand Isle's infamy begins in the late 1700s, when the privateer Jean Lafitte made his headquarters on nearby Isle Grand Terre, just across Barataria Pass. Lafitte was forced to leave after Louisiana was sold to the U.S. and the Americans wanted to build a defensive fort on his island. (Fort Livingston construction began in 1834 but was never completed, and today the ruins are still evident.) Some of Lafitte's men resettled on Grand Isle, building homes and raising families, and trying out other occupations. Several places still bear their names (Chighizola Lane, Bayou Rigaud) and many native Grand Islanders claim pirate ancestry – and are still looking for buried loot. A century later, when Grand Isle was a thriving community of fishermen and gardeners (famous for their cucumbers), entrepreneur John Ludwig opened up his general store and bar, which became the social hub of the island. There on his wooden floor he held dances whenever a Cajun fiddler passed his way. As of this writing the store still stands, barely, on Ludwig Lane in the old chenier of the island. (You pass the store on the way to the kayak launch.) Ludwig made his fortune in the turtle business, buying diamondback terrapins from local fishermen, holding them in pens on the backside of the island, and shipping them by the thousands to the market in New Orleans where they were common on the dinner menu!

For a historic and colorful account of a tum-of-the-century, three-month-long adventure by pirogue in the Barataria-Terrebonne basin (including most of the areas covered in this guide), read The Fountain of Youth. C.T. Jackson. 1914.

Glossary of the Barataria–Terrebonne

English is currently the most common tongue of the B-T, peppered heavily with the languages of Choctaw and French, which dominated the swamplands in tandem until the 20th century. Louisiana being a great melting pot, other languages have also left their legacies upon the landscape. This section is worth noting, especially for pronunciations, since you will be reading maps and talking with people you meet. B-T natives may be interested in the etymology offered here. For further language study and to listen to pronunciations, see www.choctawschool.com and <https://sites.google.com/site/louisianafrench>.

Abbreviations are as follows: Caj., Cajun (Acadian French); Carib., Caribbean; Ch., Choctaw; Eng., English; Fr., French; Gr., Greek.

AMPHIUMA: am-fee-YOU-ma, Gr., amphi (as in amphibian) + umen (membrane) = a large salamander with tiny, vestigial legs.

ATAKAPAS/ATTAKAPAS: ah-TAH-ka-pah, Ch. = literally "man-eaters," a Choctaw term for the indigenous Ishak people (Atakapas Landing).

ATCHAFALAYA: uh-tcha-fah-LIE-yuh, Ch. (from hacha + falaya) = long river (The Atchafalaya, or Atchafalaya River).

BAIE: BAY, Fr. = bay, lagoon.

BARATARIA: bahr-rah-TAHR-ree-ya, from Fr., baraterie = illegal behavior by a vessel's crew at sea, orig. a fictional island in Cervantes' *Don Quixote* (Bayou Barataria, the Baratarians)

BARBUE: bar-BOO, Fr. = river catfish.

BATEAU: BAH-tow, Fr. = boat.

BATEAU DE BOIS: BAH-tow de BWA, Fr. = wooden boat, as in the Bateau De Bois Festival, held every April in Lockport.

BAYOU: BAH-yoo, Ch. = flat, slow stream (Bayou Choupique).

BEAUCOUP: boo-KOO, Fr. = many, plenty.

BIENVENUE: bee-YEN-ven-OO, Fr. = welcome.

BLEU: BLOO, Fr. = blue.

BOEUF: BUFF, Fr. = buffalo, bison (Bayou Boeuf, Lake Boeuf).

BOGUE: BO-guh, Ch. = creek (Bogue Chitto, Bogue Falaya).

BORROW: BOR-row, Eng. = a ditch or pit dug to use or "borrow" the extracted material to construct nearby land or a road (as in a borrow canal).

BOIS: BWA, Fr. = tree or wood (Bayou Mauvais Bois).

BREAM: BRIM, Eng. = sunfish or panfish, such as bluegill and goggle-eye (warmouth).

CAJUN: KAY-jhun, Caj. = Acadian, descriptive of the people, music, cuisine, and folkways in Acadiana, roughly spanning the distance from Bayou Barataria to Lake Charles. Acadians arrived in Louisiana from Nova Scotia in the 1700s.

CALCASIEU: KAL-ka-shew, Atakapas = crying eagle (Calcasieu Lake, Calcasieu Parish).

CANAL: ka-NAL, Latin = an artificial man-made waterway.

CANOE: kahn-OO, Carib (Arawak/Taino) = slender, tapered watercraft, open-topped, often tandem, forward-stroked, single-blade paddled, designed for all purposes and all waters.

CARPE: CARP (pl. carpes: CARPS), Fr. = buffalo fish, a native carp-like fish in the sucker family (Bayou aux Carpes)

CHACKBAY: CHUK-beh, Ch. = town near the community of Choctaw on Bayou L'Ours.

CHARDRON: SHA-dron, Caj. = thistle.

CHAQUI: shaow-WEE, Ch. = raccoon.

CHALAND: sha-LAN, Fr. = square-bottomed ferryboat used to cross a bayou (Bay Chaland, Pass Chaland).

CHENIERE/CHENIER: shen-YEER, Fr. = a thin ridge of land or natural levee, usually characterized by a row of oak trees (from chene: SHEN, Fr. = oak).

CHITIMACHA: chit-eh-MACH-ah, Chitimacha(?) = the people who lived in the B-T when the Europeans arrived, whose modern landholdings are based around the community of Charenton, St. Mary Parish.

CHOCTAW: CHOK-taw, Ch. (originally CHA-tah) = descriptive of a large native population of the southern Mississippi basin; there are several Choctaw communities dispersed in south and west Louisiana, as well as Oklahoma, etc.

CHOUPIQUE: SHOO-pik, Ch. = muddy or dirty, also a primitive fish possessing lungs and a single undulatory dorsal fin, a popular backwater game fish; elsewhere called bowfin or grinnel.

CHEVREUIL: chev-ROO or chev-RILL, Fr. = deer (Bayou Chevreuil, Baie Chevreuil).

CHRISTMAS TREE: KRIS-mus tree, Eng. = a branching multi-valve structure capping a petroleum well (slang).

COCODRIE: KO-kuh-dree, Fr. = alligator (lit.: crocodile, but alligators are the only crocodylians in Louisiana)

COTEAU: KO-toe, Fr. = a rise of land.

COULEE: koo-LEE, Fr. = a sporadic natural drainage, as in a slough (Cutgrass Coulee).

CREOLE: KREE-yol, Fr. = a person of mixed ancestry incl. French, also cultural description (all things creole).

CREVASSE: kre-VASS, Fr. = a low spot of land alongside a river where the river has broken through, or is likely to break through during a major flood event (Caernavron Crevasse).

CYPRIERE: sip-ree-AIR, Caj. = bald cypress swamp.

FÊTE: fet, Fr. = festival

FLATBOAT: FLAT-boat, Eng. = a square-cornered, shallow draft motor boat usually aluminum, 14-17 feet long, a common everyday inshore boat in the tradition of the putt-putt bateau.

GOUJON: GOO-ZHON, Caj. = catfish, especially mud catfish (bullheads and madtoms)

GRAND/GRANDE: GRAHN, Fr. = big (Isle Grande Terre, Little Grand Bayou, Grand Isle).

GROBECK: GROW-beck, Cajun = night heron (lit. grosse beck = big beak).

GROSSE TÊTE: GROS TATE, Fr. = fat head (a town in Iberville Parish).

HURRICANE: hur-ih-CAYN, Carib = big wind.

ÎLE, ÎLETTE: EEL, eel-LET, Fr. = island, islet (Bay des Îlettes).

KAYAK: [S]KY-yak (without the [s]), Inuit/Eskimo = light, narrow, shallow, skirted (covered) canoe, often solo, forward-stroked with a two-bladed paddle, designed for open, seaward waters (see canoe, above).

LAC DES ALLEMANDS: lock dez-AHL-mun, Fr. = lake of the Germans

LAFOURCHE: la-FOOSH, Fr. = lit. "the fork," a major distributary of the Mississippi River (Bayou Lafourche, Lafourche Parish).

L'EAU: LOW, Fr. = water (Bayou L'Eau Bleu).

LOUP GAROU: LOOP guh-ROO, Fr. = werewolf (also Rougarou or Rougaroux).

L'OURSE: LOORS, Fr. = bear (Bayou L'Ourse, Bayou L'Ours).

MACHOIRON: mah-shwa-RON, Caj. = flathead catfish (lit. Fr. "round mouth")

MARAIS: mur-AY, Fr. = swamp (see swamp)

MARSH: MARSH, Eng. = a wetland characterized by grasses rather than trees. Can be fresh, brackish, or saline.

MIDDEN: MID-n, Eng. = a raised mound of shells, pottery shards and other debris made by native Americans, sometimes found in the marsh and covered with oak trees.

MISSISSIPPI: mis-is-SIH-pi, from Ojibwe, misi-ziibi = great river (Mississippi River).

MAUVAIS: maw-VAY, Fr. = bad, evil (Bayou Mauvais Bois).

PALOURDE: pa-LOORD, Fr. = clam (Lake Palourde).

PIROGUE: PEE-row or PEE-rawg, Carib or Guaimi = a narrow, flat-bottomed canoe.

PLAQUEMINE: PLAK-ih-men, Atakapas (plakimin) = persimmon (Plaquemines Parish).

POINTE: POINT, Fr. = a point of land, tip of a peninsula (Pointe à la Hache).

PONTCHATOULA: pahn-tcha-TOO-la, Ch. = Spanish moss (also iti shumò, "tree moss"); (town of Pontchatoula).

POULE D'EAU: POOL-doo, Fr. = American coot (lit. "chicken of the water").

PORTAGE: por-TAHJ, Fr. = noun., a canoe trail between waterways, or verb, the act of carrying the boat.

PUTT-PUTT: PUT-PUT, Caj. = a certain antique flatboat and motor combination.

ROD: ROD, Eng. = 16 ½ feet, a standardized unit of length approximating a canoe. Used in the measurement of portage distances (ex: a 3-rod portage is about the length of three canoes).

SAC-AU-LAIT: SOCK-ah-lay, Caj. = black or white crappie (lit., "sack-of-milk").

SHONGALOO: shon-gah-LOO, Ch. = cypress tree (town of Shongaloo).

SLOUGH: SLEW, Eng. = a small slackwater channel which flows only during floods, i.e. coulee.

SPOIL: SPOYL, Eng. = leftover material from canal excavation or dredging, often used to build mounds, banks, or new land.

SANSBOIS: san-BWA, Fr. = without trees (Bay Sansbois).

SWAMP: SWAMP, Eng. = a forested wetland.

TERRER: TERR, Fr. = land (Grande Terre).

TERREBONNE: TERRA-bohn, Fr. = good land (Terrebonne Parish, Bayou Terrebonne).

THALWEG: THAL-weg, German = the deepest trench of the channel, or the single line on a map that represents the greatest flow of a river.

TRENASSE: tren-NAS, Fr. = a ditch dug as shortcut for small craft.

VACHERIE: VASH-er-ee, Fr. = cow pastures (Vacherie, Lower Vacherie).

WANIGAN: WON-eh-gun, Ojibwe = a trunk for storing food or dry goods in the hull of a canoe.

ZEPHYR: ZEF-fur, Gr. = a gentle west wind, also a god.

ZYDECO: ZYE-de-coh, Fr. = a Creole style of dance music blending Cajun, swamp pop, and R&B (possibly from Fr. "des haricots," lit. beans or peas, a reference to an early song in the style).

I was now in which I afterwards learned was the Great Pacoudrie Swamp. It was filled with immense trees – the sycamore, the gum, the cotton wood and cypress, and extends, I am informed, to the shore of the Calcasieu river. For thirty or forty miles it is without inhabitants, save wild beasts – the bear, the wild-cat, the tiger, and great slimy reptiles that are crawling through it everywhere. Long before I reached the bayou, in fact, from the time I struck the water until I emerged from the swamp on my return, these reptiles surrounded me. I saw hundreds of moccasin snakes. Every log and bog – every trunk of a fallen tree, over which I was compelled to step or climb, was alive with them. They crawled away at my approach, but sometimes in my haste, I almost put my hand or foot upon them. They are poisonous serpents – their bite more fatal than a rattlesnake's. Besides, I had lost one shoe, the sole having come entirely off, leaving the upper only dangling to my ankle.

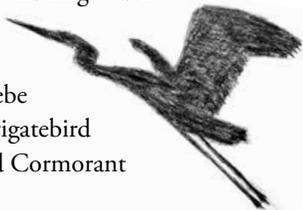
-Solomon Northrup, Twelve Years a Slave, 1853

Wildlife Checklist

This informal checklist, compiled from the author's notes taken while scouting the routes in this guide, gives an overview of some of the most common creatures you will encounter. By no means is this list intended to be regionally complete or taxonomically precise. Birds are the most numerous animals you will see, so keep a bird field guide in your canoe kit. A reptile and amphibian field guide would be useful, since herpetological taxonomy has undergone sweeping changes in the last few years. A copy of Louisiana's fishing regulation booklet from the Louisiana Department of Wildlife & Fisheries is a good reference for sport fish. Vernacular names in common usage are given in parentheses, and venomous animals are scribed in red.

Birds

- Black-bellied Whistling-Duck
- Wood Duck
- Mallard
- Pied-billed Grebe
- Magnificent Frigatebird
- Double-crested Cormorant
- Anhinga
- American White Pelican
- Brown Pelican
- American Bittern
- Least Bittern
- Great Blue Heron
- Great Egret
- Snowy Egret
- Little Blue Heron
- Tricolored (Louisiana) Heron
- Green Heron
- Black-crowned Night-Heron
- Yellow-crowned Night-Heron
- White Ibis
- Roseate Spoonbill
- Black Vulture (carencrow)
- Turkey Vulture
- Osprey
- Swallow-tailed Kite
- Mississippi Kite
- Bald Eagle
- Cooper's Hawk
- Red-shouldered Hawk
- Red-tailed Hawk
- Common Gallinule (moorhen)
- Purple Gallinule
- American Coot (poule d'eau)
- Killdeer
- Willet
- Least Sandpiper
- Wilson's Snipe
- Laughing Gull
- Ring-billed Gull
- Caspian Tern
- Forster's Tern
- Royal Tern



- Great Horned Owl
- Barred Owl
- Ruby-throated Hummingbird
- Belted Kingfisher
- Red-headed Woodpecker
- Red-bellied Woodpecker
- Northern Flicker
- Pileated Woodpecker
- Eastern Phoebe
- White-eyed Vireo
- Blue Jay
- American Crow
- Fish Crow
- Purple Martin
- Barn Swallow
- Carolina Chickadee
- Carolina Wren
- American Robin
- Brown Thrasher
- Northern Mockingbird
- Prothonotary Warbler
- Summer Tanager
- Northern Cardinal
- Red-winged Blackbird
- Boat-tailed Grackle

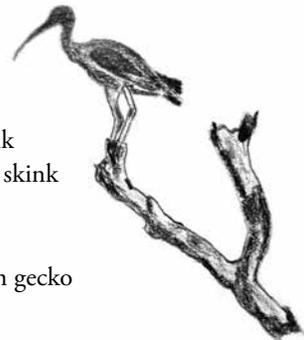


Snakes

- ribbon snake
- garter snake
- diamondback watersnake
- yellow-belly watersnake
- broad-banded watersnake
- crawfish snake
- mud snake (stingaree)
- black-masked racer (blue runner)
- cottonmouth water moccasin
- copperhead
- timber rattlesnake (canebrake)
- western rat snake (Texas rat snake, chicken snake)
- speckled kingsnake

Lizards

- green anole
- brown anole
- five-lined skink
- broad-headed skink ("scorpion")
- ground skink
- Mediterranean gecko
- glass lizard



Turtles

- mud turtle
- musk turtle (stinkpot)
- Gulf Coast box turtle
- three-toed box turtle
- red-eared slider
- mobilian (cooter)
- softshell turtle
- common snapper (cowan)
- alligator snapper (loggerhead)
- diamondback terrapin

Crocodylians

- alligator

Amphibians

- cricket frog
- bullfrog
- pig frog
- bronze frog
- leopard frog
- narrowmouth frog
- green tree frog
- grey tree frog
- Gulf Coast toad
- central newt
- amphiuma (conger eel, carne)



Mammals

- armadillo
- wild hog
- raccoon
- deer (chevreuil)
- mink
- opossum (rat du bois)
- skunk
- bobcat
- grey squirrel
- fox squirrel
- otter (loutre)
- muskrat
- nutria (coypu, nutra-rat)
- swamp/marsh rabbit (lapin)



Fish

- alligator gar
- spotted gar
- sac-au-lait (crappie)
- barbue (blue/channel catfish)
- goujon ("mud catfish" - bull heads, madtoms, etc.)
- machoiron (flathead catfish)
- choupique (bowfin)

- shad
- killifish (cocahoe minnow)
- largemouth bass (green trout)
- bluegill (bream, sunfish)
- hardhead catfish
- stingray
- red drum (redfish)
- speckled trout
- croaker
- black drum
- mullet
- freshwater drum (gaspergou, goofish)
- buffalofish
- pinfish
- sheepshead
- flounder

Arthropods

- boat spider
- golden orb weaver (banana spider)
- paper wasp, hornet
- black widow
- brown widow
- wolf spider

- fishing spider
- lubber grasshopper (devil's horse)
- walking stick
- crawfish
- blue crab
- fiddler crab
- hermit crab
- brown shrimp
- grass shrimp
- dragonfly (darner)
- damselfly
- cicada
- ox beetle
- gadflies (deer fly, horse fly, biting fly)
- leopard moth caterpillar (wooly bear)



Other

- apple snail
- Christmas lichen
- Rangia clam
- Pearl River clam
- eastern oyster
- barking spider

WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE BITTEN BY A VENOMOUS SNAKE:

Stay calm. Are you sure it was a venomous snake? You'll know within minutes as the swelling begins; take a good look at the snake so that you can answer questions about it. Take a picture of it. Don't attempt to catch it or kill it, as this puts you in danger of another bite.

You need to get to the hospital as fast as possible to assess your situation. If you have a cell phone, call 911. This begins a chain reaction that alerts the nearest hospital to prepare antivenin, and mobilizes an emergency response to get you there as quickly as possible. Do not apply a tourniquet. Do not make any incisions. Do not attempt to suck the venom out. Do not apply ice or chemicals. Do remove all rings and bracelets. Do immobilize the limb.

If you have a partner, get in the canoe in a comfortable position with the bite wound below the level of your heart, and have your partner paddle towards the launch. Do not attempt to paddle or do anything to elevate your heart rate; remaining calm and immobile is the best thing you can do for yourself. Appeal to the first motorboat you see for a faster ride, and hopefully an ambulance will be waiting at the launch. Do not attempt to drive yourself to the hospital, as blacking out is a concern.

Read the current snakebite protocol at www.toxinology.com (for example, search: snakes, western cottonmouth).

The maker of the antivenin CroFab, which is used to treat the majority of snakebite envenomations, has produced an algorithm for doctors at www.crofab.com/Treatment-With-CroFab/Envenomation-ConsensusTreatment-Algorithm. Bring it up on your phone, review it if you wish, show it to EMT workers, and make sure the hospital is aware of the algorithm. There is also a cellphone app called **SnakeBite 911**, administered by CroFab, which is designed to assist a snakebite victim in real-time. *-information provided by Tim Borgardt Jr., venomous snake specialist*



a "Pandora's Box," where a snake could be hiding

Canoe Checklist

“It is useful to have an old dad or other creature of habit on board to remind one of the checklist and other things, and to observe the subtle changes in the land and perspective.”

-R Kay

- canoe
- paddles¹
- bowline and sternline
- life jackets²
- wannigan³ or drybox
- bucket⁴
- bail sponge/rag⁵
- map⁶ in waterproof bag

¹ Extra paddle? Always a good idea, never a bad one. A paddle can break unexpectedly when using force, such as paddling hard in rough weather or through thick vegetation, or knocking a stubborn partner on the head to make a point.

² Louisiana law requires one personal flotation device on board for each passenger, which must be worn at all times by individuals 16 years of age or younger.

³ See glossary.

⁴ A bucket is invaluable. You can store dry stuff in it, or wet stuff, or food. You can use it as a chair or table or sink, or put out fires with it. You can haul fish in it, or plant samples, or shells, or crabs, or dead things – if that’s your idea of a day’s catch.

⁵ A cheap grout sponge makes a great bail sponge.

⁶ Map and compass don’t need battery or signal, and they still work when wet. Always carry these if you are going into areas you don’t know, and make sure your map is a large enough scale to navigate by landmarks. Paper maps are becoming more difficult to find, but you can print your own off the internet – be sure to waterproof or ziploc paper maps. Study your route via satellite imagery beforehand in order to be prepared.

- canoe kit⁷:
 - bug dope
 - sun block
 - first-aid kit
 - pen/pencil
 - logbook/sketchpad
 - compass
 - duct tape⁸
 - boat knife⁹
 - multi-tool
 - lighter, matches
 - headlamp or
 - boat light¹⁰
 - extra batteries
 - emergency signal¹¹
 - field guides
 - binoculars
 - timepiece¹²

⁷ For the frequent canoeist, it is useful to keep a “canoe kit” of the bare essentials always ready to grab and go paddling. Use a small drybag or wannigan, or a bucket with a lid.

⁸ The uses of duct tape are unlimited, but it is included here as emergency boat repair. If you get a hole in your boat, you can make a temporary patch with duct tape. If not, you have to bail continuously or sink. Also a related tidbit of advice: if a snake falls in your canoe, don’t shoot it.

⁹ A boat knife has a folding handle that allows it to float.

¹⁰ Though not required by law on a canoe, a boat light may be useful for safety or in times of need. A flashlight fastened at the bow with duct tape works well enough, as does a headlamp worn on your head.

¹¹ Whistle, horn, mirror, flare.

- camera (in waterproof case)
- cell phone (fully charged)
- global positioning instrument (GPI, GPS)
- fishing gear
- fishing license
- ice chest
- ice
- water
- energy/hydration drinks
- high-calorie snacks
- bathing suit
- sun hat
- sunglasses
- rain gear
- well-fitting gumboots (for launches, breaks, portages)
- longsleeve shirt (for sun, storms, bugs)
- dungarees (for portages, nettles, bugs)
- tissue or toilet paper
- extra ziploc bags

¹² Though it may seem redundant, having a simple, separate timepiece is key – one you can glance at often without the effort of turning on a smartphone or worrying about running down a cellphone battery. A timepiece checked regularly helps the paddler measure distance and speed. In slack water at a casual stroke, a canoe travels at about walking speed, 2-3 mph, but conditions will vary. Using a timepiece combined with a map, the paddler can accurately measure travelling speed: simply choose two points on the map, paddle the distance, and clock how long it takes. The paddler can then make informed decisions concerning the scope of the trip.



R Kay is a native of New Orleans, with roots in that swampy place going back several centuries. He has paddled the area extensively since youth, and continues to do so today. Other paddling exploits include stretches of the Mississippi River, the Yukon, the North Slope of Alaska, the Arctic Ocean, the Mississippi Sound, the mangroves of Thailand, and the Boundary Waters of Minnesota, where he keeps a little solo canoe stashed for his convenience. As an author he has penned several titles of fiction, historical fiction, and magical realism; and also a cookbook, a Carnival archive, a Mardi Gras Indian ethnography, a pamphlet on the Pearl River system, and other works, most of which are available at www.rkbooks.com. Additionally, he has worked as a native species zoo keeper and swamp exhibits preparator in the Louisiana Swamp exhibit of the Audubon Zoo in New Orleans since 1996. When not at home in New Orleans he might be reading in his hermit's cabin, far, far away.

photo: Shiri Goldsmith-Graziani

The printing of this document was funded by the US Environmental Protection Agency, the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program, and the Barataria-Terrebonne Estuary Foundation. XXXX copies of this public document were published in this first printing at a cost of \$XXXX. The total cost of all printings of this document, including reprints, is \$XXXX. This document was published by (company name and address) for the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program, Nicholls State University Campus, PO Box 2663, Thibodaux, LA 70310, to provide the public with environmental information under the authority of LA R.S. 30:2001. This material was printed in accordance with standards for printing by state agencies established in R.S. 43:31. Printing of this material was purchased in accordance with the provisions of Title 43 of the Louisiana Revised Statutes.

