

Louisiana Purchase Historic State Park



The Journey Began
In Arkansas





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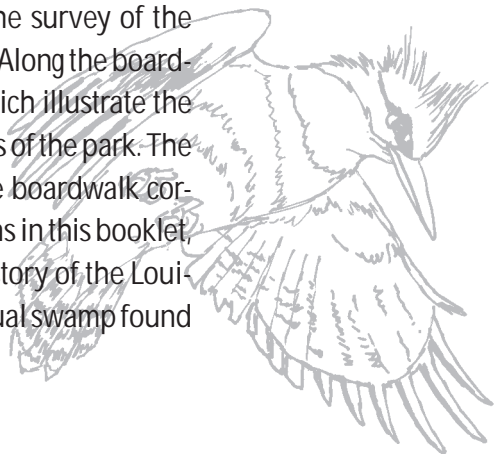
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Louisiana Purchase Historic State Park

Welcome to Louisiana Purchase Historic State Park—a National Historic Landmark. This state park and natural area protects and interprets the point from which land surveys of the Louisiana Purchase Territory began in 1815. Located at the intersection of Lee, Monroe and Phillips Counties, 22 miles south of Brinkley off Highway 49, the park protects 37.5 acres of headwater swamp that represents a fast-disappearing ecological setting in eastern Arkansas.

A 950-foot boardwalk leads to the granite monument in the swamp’s interior, which marks the initial point for the survey of the Louisiana Purchase Territory. Along the boardwalk you will find panels which illustrate the historical and natural features of the park. The numbered stations along the boardwalk correspond to numbered sections in this booklet, providing insight into the history of the Louisiana Purchase and the unusual swamp found here.



Belted kingfisher

*Left: Bald cypress and cypress “knees”
Cover: water tupelo, pileated woodpeckers, replica 1815 surveyor’s compass*

Please follow these regulations so that others may also have the opportunity to enjoy the park.

- For your safety, please stay on the boardwalk.
- It is unlawful to collect, deface, or destroy any plants, wildlife, or public property.
- Cans and bottles are not permitted on the boardwalk.
- Preserve the scenic beauty of the area—don't litter!
- Horses, motorcycles and bicycles are not allowed.

NOTICE: To preserve scenic beauty and ecology, fences and warning signs have not been installed in some park locations. Caution and supervision of your children are required while visiting these areas.

The largest headwater swamp remaining in the entire Mississippi River Valley

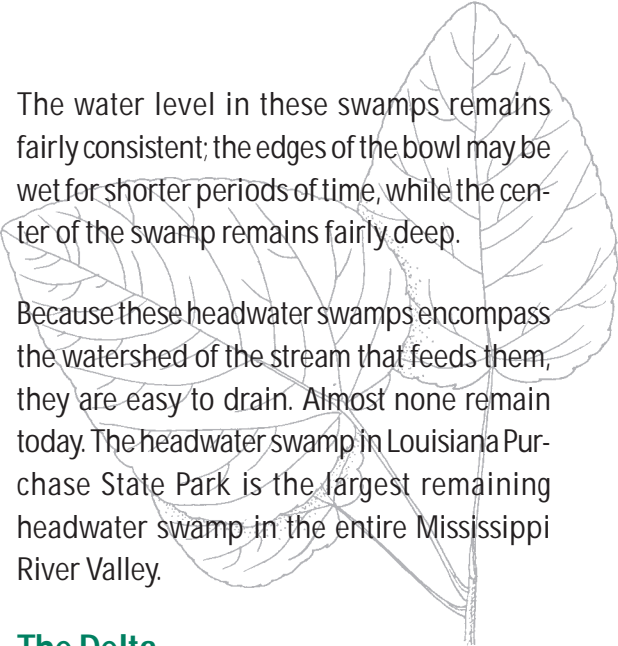
The small state park and natural area that surrounds the Louisiana Purchase marker has ecological significance as well as historical importance. The marker is in a wetland in east Arkansas's delta region. The wetland is formed by Little Cypress Creek. This is an unusual type of wetland called a **headwater swamp**.

Headwater Swamps

Headwater swamps occur in ancient glacial outwash channels similar to shallow basins or bowls. These swamps are unusual because they are self-contained within these “bowls.”

Below: Bald cypress swamp habitat





The water level in these swamps remains fairly consistent; the edges of the bowl may be wet for shorter periods of time, while the center of the swamp remains fairly deep.

Because these headwater swamps encompass the watershed of the stream that feeds them, they are easy to drain. Almost none remain today. The headwater swamp in Louisiana Purchase State Park is the largest remaining headwater swamp in the entire Mississippi River Valley.

The Delta

The region known as the Delta is actually part of the Gulf Coastal Plain that has been extensively modified by the Mississippi and Arkansas Rivers and other flowing waters. It occupies most of eastern Arkansas. The active streams running through the Delta include floodplains subject to frequent overflows, as well as broad backwater areas, oxbow lakes and shallow depressions.



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Wetlands

Wetlands are areas where the periodic or permanent presence of water controls the characteristics of the environment and associated plants and animals. Today wetlands cover only eight percent of Arkansas's land surface. The vast expanse of wildlife-filled wetlands at the time of the 1803 Louisiana Purchase and the 1815 survey have been dramatically reduced by flood control, drainage projects and agricultural development.



STOP 1 Louisiana Purchase Historic State Park History

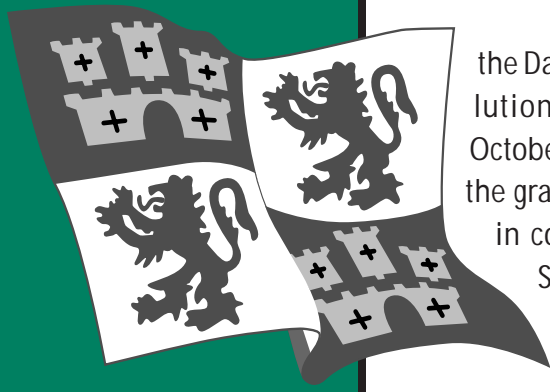
For over 100 years this historic site went unnoticed until rediscovered by Tom Jacks and Eldridge P. Douglass of Helena, Arkansas, who were resurveying the Phillips and Lee County line in 1921. While retracing the baseline, these surveyors discovered the two large trees, which had been blazed as witness trees during the 1815 survey.

The historical significance of this discovery was recognized by the L'Anguille Chapter of

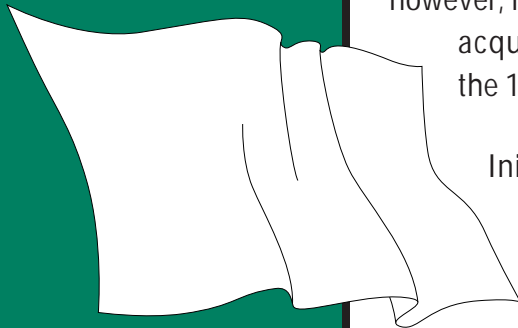
Opposite page: Granite monument marking the base from which the Louisiana Purchase lands were surveyed

This page: Closeup of granite monument

Drawings: Swamp cottonwood leaves and fruit



the Daughters of the American Revolution of Marianna, Arkansas. On October 27, 1926, the D.A.R. dedicated the granite monument you see today in commemoration of the United States' acquisition of the Louisiana Territory. The General Assembly passed legislation in 1961 designating the area a state park; however, no funds were appropriated for acquisition or development until the 1970s.



Initial development of the park was made possible with the aid of local citizenry groups through the Green Thumb Program. Then in April, 1977, the Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission, recognizing the swamp's special natural quality, added it to the Arkansas Registry of Natural Areas and supplied funds for purchasing the 37.5 acres. Arkansas State Parks, in turn, granted the Natural Heritage Commission a conservation easement that provided additional legal protection for the natural and historical features of the site. Development of the present park facilities began in 1977 and was completed in 1980.



One hundred seventy-five years earlier, historical events leading to what is probably the most incredible real estate deal of all time involved diplomacy, intrigue and highwaymanship on an international scale which pitted the United States, a fledgling nation, against Old World powers France and Spain. The purchase of the Louisiana Province from France was more than an incident in world history. It was a major event that shaped the destiny of a new nation, ended Napoleon's dreams of a French empire in the New World and confirmed Spain's greatest fears concerning the possibility of America's westward expansion.

The Spanish: Explorers

Spain was the first of the European powers to send explorers into the vast region west of the Mississippi River. Hernando De Soto led the first expedition in 1541. The conquistadors came as treasure seekers rather than colonizers.

The French: Colonizers

In 1682, one hundred forty-one years after De Soto crossed the Mississippi River, the French explorer La Salle discovered the mouth of the river in the Gulf of Mexico. This territory was held and colonized by France until ceded to Spain in 1762 as a result of the Seven Years' War.

Opposite page: Flags of Spain (top), France (middle), and the United States (bottom), as they appeared at the time each country took possession of the Louisiana Territory

In 1800 King Charles IV of Spain agreed under pressure from Napoleon Bonaparte, First Consul of France, to return this territory to France. Before the agreements of this treaty had been fully honored by France, and much to the dismay of Spain, Napoleon decided to sell New Orleans and the entire territory to the United States. The Spanish flag was lowered at New Orleans for the final time on November 30, 1803. France governed the province until the Americans arrived in December of that year.

STOP 2

Louisiana Purchase Historic State Park is situated in a headwater, or high, swamp which seldom floods deeply yet rarely dries up. The unique plant and animal communities found in the swamp form an unusual environment.

Swamp areas such as this one often posed hardships for early explorers, surveyors and settlers but today are fast becoming rare. Intensive land reclamation practices are causing these swamps to be drained and cleared for agricultural purposes. Herein lies one significant reason why the Natural Heritage Commission preserved this tract for the educational and aesthetic benefit of present and future generations.

STOP 3

The Louisiana Territory: 1682–1800

On April 9, 1682, La Salle placed a column and cross painted with the Arms of France at the confluence of the Arkansas River and the Mississippi, claiming the vast territory drained by these rivers for France in the name of King Louis XIV. With a handful of travel-worn French Canadians and Indians as witnesses, La Salle read this proclamation:

“In the name of the most high, mighty, invincible and victorious Prince, Louis the Great, this ninth day of April, One Thousand Six Hundred and Eighty Two, in virtue of my commission of His Majesty, have taken and do now take, in the name of His Majesty and of his successors to the crown, possession of this country of Louisiana, the seas, harbours, ports, bays, adjacent straits and all the nations, peoples, provinces, cities, towns, villages, mines, minerals, fisheries, streams and rivers, within the extent of the said Louisiana, thereby protesting against all who may thereafter un-

Opposite page: Swamp chestnut oak leaves and fruit

This page: top, beaver lodge; bottom, raccoons climbing bald cypress

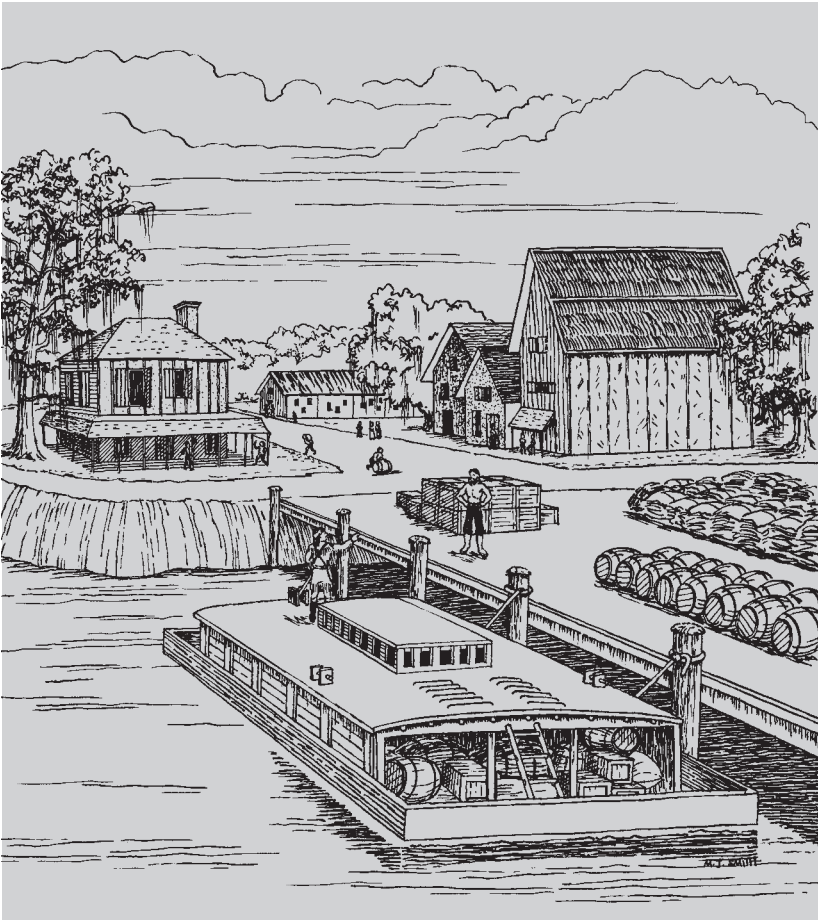




*Above: Beaver
Below: Mink*

dertake to invade any or all of these aforesaid countries, peoples, or lands, to the prejudice of the rights of His Majesty, acquired by the consent of the nations dwelling there. Of which and all else that is needful, I hereby take to witness those who hear me."

As the years passed, the cities of Mobile, Natchez, New Orleans and Arkansas Post were colonized and the Mississippi River became an outlet for a booming trade in skins, pelts, bear oil and other frontier products. By 1721 there were 8,000 people in the French colonies, and rivalry between France and England intensified as Anglo-Saxon traders infiltrated the Mississippi Valley. Both countries established military alliances with the Indians during the French and Indian War. By 1760 this bloody frontier war had ended, and in 1762 France ceded New Orleans and the Louisiana Territory to Spain in return for services rendered against England during the war. In the following years, Spain feared the advancing American frontier and attempted to protect her territory by controlling commerce on the Mississippi River. This created hostility between the two countries. Despite the con-



control measures, American commerce on the river increased and Spain's hold on the Territory weakened. In July of 1800, Napoleon opened negotiations with Spain for the return of Louisiana to France. A provisional treaty was signed in October of that year. This treaty, stipulating that France would never sell or otherwise dispose of the Territory to any third party, provided Spain with a false assurance

Flatboats used in frontier trade on the Mississippi



Photo: Persimmon fruit and leaves

Drawing: Opossum

that the United States would not gain possession of the Louisiana Territory.

Though much of the terrain along the Mississippi River has proved unsuitable for settlement, it has produced and is still producing, abundant wildlife including several valuable furbearers. France was quick to recognize this potential and established a fur trade with the Indians along the Mississippi River and its tributaries immediately after La Salle's visit to the region.

The fur market in Europe provided financial incentive. The first Anglo-Americans to enter the area which later became Arkansas came after furs rather than land. The beaver fur trade is often credited for opening the West.

Some of the mammals which fed the early explorers and clothed the Europeans of that period are still thriving in the remaining wetlands of eastern Arkansas. Several of these species live in the swamplands of this park. Beaver, mink, raccoon, swamp rabbits, opossum, gray squirrels and occasional deer have adapted to the wet conditions and tend to inhabit the area year round.

STOP 4

An International Crisis: 1801–1803

Soon after taking office as the third president of the United States, Thomas Jefferson was informed that Spain had signed a secret treaty retroceding New Orleans and the Louisiana Territory to France.

The United States did not fear normally docile Spain as a neighbor, but had great reservations about the occupation of the Mississippi Valley by a major world power with strong imperialistic tendencies. President Jefferson sent Ambassador Robert Livingston to Paris in September, 1801, with instructions to warn the French that the United States expected to have an outlet to the sea and that it was unwilling to see Spanish land in America transferred to any government other than the United States.

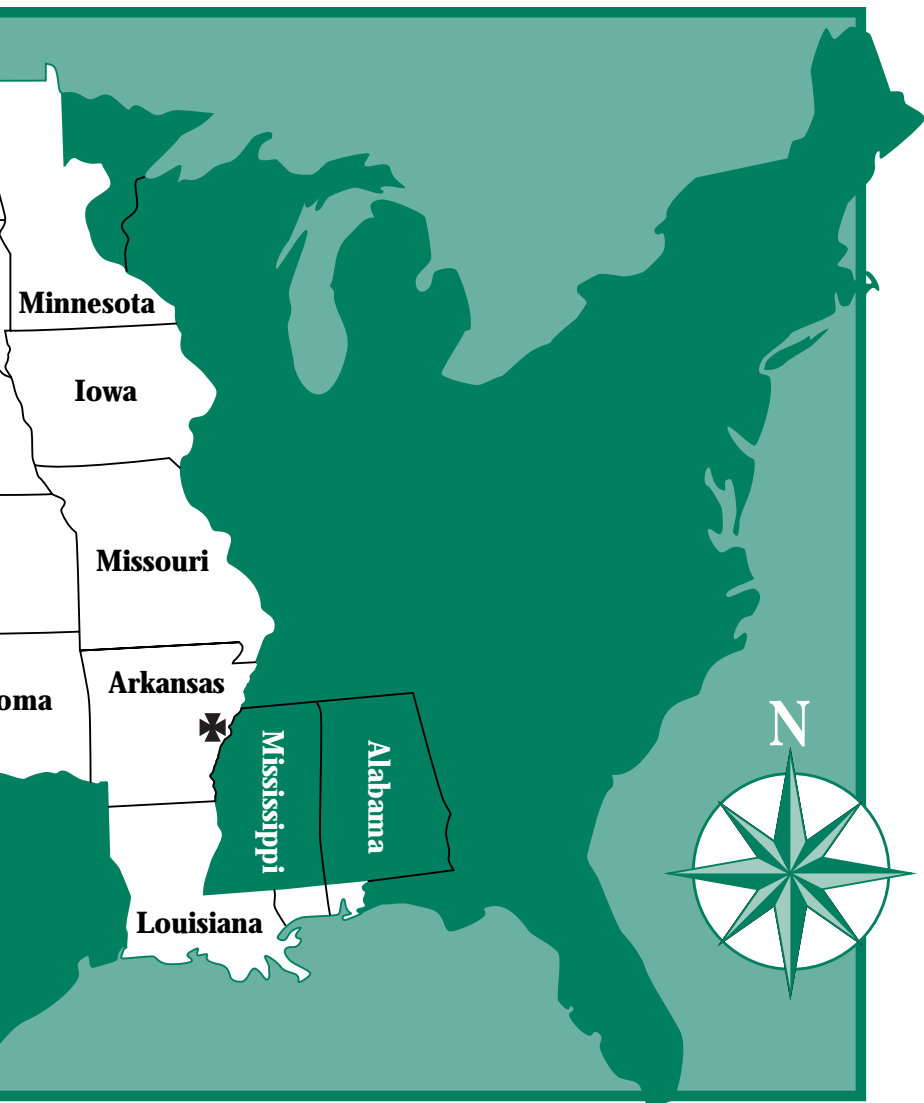
In 1802, as Napoleon was planning to send troops to New Orleans, President Jefferson sent his friend, Pierre du Pont de Nemours, to



Persimmon: can reach heights of 20–50 feet



The Louisiana Purchase



Minnesota

Iowa

Missouri

Arkansas

Louisiana

Mississippi

Alabama

N

France. Du Pont was to inform France that if it annexed Louisiana the United States would form an immediate military alliance with England. Jefferson's feelings concerning the importance of New Orleans to the security of the United States were expressed further in a letter to Ambassador Livingston in April, 1802.

"There is on the globe, one single spot, the possessor of which is our natural and habitual enemy... Every eye in the United States is now fixed on the affairs of the Louisiana... The day that France takes possession of the New Orleans fixes the sentence which is to restrain her forever within her low-water mark, from that moment we must marry ourselves to the British fleet and nation."

Due to the growing threat of French occupation, President Jefferson sent James Monroe as Ambassador Extraordinary to Paris with \$2,000,000 and authorization to purchase the port of New Orleans and West Florida for \$9,375,000. Ambassadors Monroe and Livingston were instructed to negotiate for a peaceful settlement of this issue; but they were to leave immediately for England to cement a military alliance if serious resistance was met in Paris. Considering Napoleon's views on world conquest and the strategic importance of New Orleans, there seemed to be little

chance that he would relent. However, on April 11, 1803, Napoleon announced to his finance minister his plans to cede the Louisiana Territory to the United States.

The French position was blunt: take all or nothing. During the next 21 days Monroe and Livingston concluded treaty negotiations that committed the United States to the purchase of the entire Louisiana Territory for \$15,000,000. On April 30, 1803, they initiated a treaty that doubled the holdings of the United States.



Monroe and Livingston sign the Louisiana Purchase treaty.

Historians have pondered the reasons for Napoleon's sudden decision to sell the Louisiana Territory. Some have proposed that he needed money to finance the war with England or that he had certain sentimental feelings for the United States. Actually, his logic was based on a calculated understanding of international affairs.



Black willow leaves

Napoleon's occupation of New Orleans, originally scheduled for 1801 or 1802, was delayed due to the hesitancy of King Charles IV of Spain to sign the final retrocession treaty. By the time this treaty had been legalized, ice and the British fleet blockaded Napoleon's occupation army, garrisoned in Holland, whom he had hoped to send to New Orleans. Napoleon received word in 1802 that France had lost 50,000 troops in an unsuccessful effort to squelch an uprising in Santo

Domingo, thereby forcing him to give up the idea of using this island as a strategic point for occupying New Orleans.

Napoleon knew that hostilities with England would commence in the near future and hesitated to force a military alliance between the United States and his traditional foe. In addition, President Thomas Jefferson made it clear to Napoleon that anti-French feelings were so high on the American frontier that an attack on New Orleans could not be forestalled if it became known that French troops were on the way. Finally, it is said that Napoleon reasoned it would be better to sell the Louisiana Territory for whatever he

could get, rather than lose it in a hopeless war with the United States and England.

STOP 5

Before Lewis and Clark and Hunter and Dunbar explored the Louisiana Purchase Territory in 1804, little was known about the land or the animals of this vast region. President Thomas Jefferson was interested in the natural resources of this land and instructed his expedition leaders to collect specimens and to record their observations. Reports filed by these explorers did much to stimulate interest in this new land and its wildlife.

Now, 200 years later, we are still making observations and are becoming more aware of the complex relationships which exist between the plants and animals of a wildlife community. For example, every animal that lives within a community has a role to play in that community's ecology. Each species has developed physical and behavioral characteristics which enable it to fulfill this role.



Black willow: can reach heights of 30–40 feet

Bird-voiced treefrog

Hyla avivoca

The bird-voiced treefrog is a species of special concern in Arkansas. Threats to its survival include the clearing and draining of cypress-tupelo swamps.

Description

- Their average size is 1 3/4 inches long.
- Females are larger than males.
- Gray-brown or green, they have a dark "X" or star-shaped mark in middle of their backs.
- They live in cypress-tupelo swamps such as that at Louisiana Purchase State Park.

This small frog changes color from dark gray to light green depending on temperature,

moisture and background. The adult eats small insects and spiders that live high in hardwood trees in southern floodplain swamps.

Males call with a rapid succession of short, birdlike whistles from high up in trees or vines over the water.



Bird-voiced treefrog

A female will lay as many as 500 eggs in submerged packets. These hatch in a few days into dark brown tadpoles with 3 to 7 red

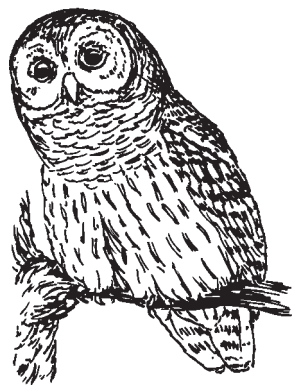
saddles and thin bronze head stripes. The tadpoles transform in about a month.

Birds and Trees of the Upland Swamp

Birds are usually the most conspicuous residents of this swamp. It is often possible to see them from the boardwalk. Take a moment and quietly observe the swamp area around you. Do you see or hear any of the birds pictured here?

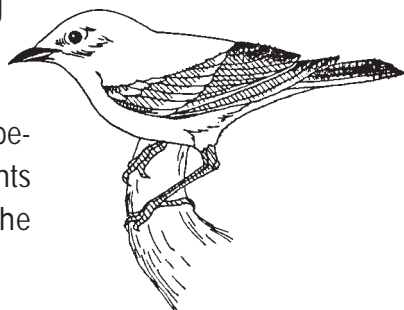


Trees and shrubs are also prominent features of the swamp. They provide food and shelter for other swamp residents. Note those around you. Look around; can you identify the three species pictured on page 31?



Reptiles of the Upland Swamp

It is ironic that some of the most interesting animals of the swamp are also the most feared by man, the least understood and the most vulnerable to man's predatory behavior. A study of these swamp inhabitants reveals their purpose and place in the swamp ecosystem.



American alligator

An endangered species for many years, the alligator is returning to areas of former abundance. It is the largest predator in most

*Top: Pileated woodpecker,
Middle: Barred owl,
Bottom: Prothonotary warbler*



swamps and feeds on snakes, turtles, beaver and muskrat. Although far from common, the alligator occurs in eastern Arkansas and they have been seen here.



*Photographs—Above: Turtle,
Below: Diamondback water
snake*

Cottonmouth

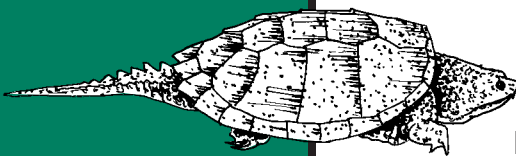
The cottonmouth, a poisonous snake, can occasionally be seen basking on logs and in low branches. It feeds primarily on frogs and fish and, contrary to popular opinion, is shy and unobtrusive unless molested.

Diamondback watersnake

One of several harmless snakes in the swamp, the watersnake is very similar to the cottonmouth in size, shape and habit. It also feeds on frogs and fish and can be distinguished from the cottonmouth by comparing the differences in its head shape and color pattern.

Common snapping turtle

Though capable of catching fish, ducklings and other aquatic animals, this turtle primarily plays the role of scavenger, feeding on dead animals. It can be identified by its long neck, large head,



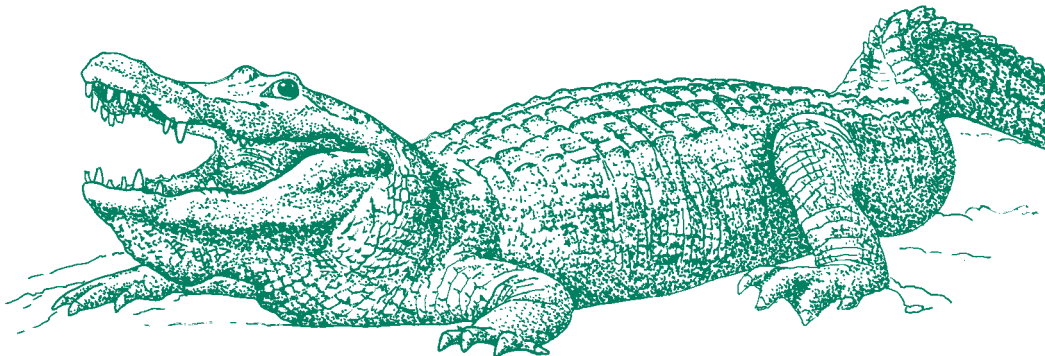
ridged shell and tong tail. As the name implies, the snapping turtle bites viciously when handled.

STOP 6 Hollow Tree

The interesting thing about the tree pictured on the next page is that the heartwood—the central support of the original tree—has rotted away, but the tree has continued to grow, producing two new trees. We don't know whether this was due to disease, lightning, insects or man; but when the protective covering (bark) was damaged, the non-living heartwood was exposed to the elements and began to rot away. However, a section of the living tree—the outer few inches—continued to grow.

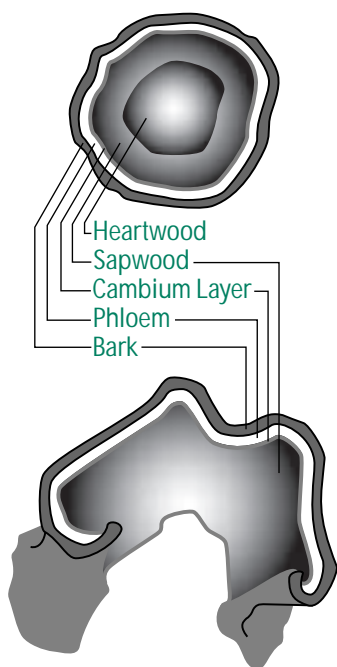
Drawings—Opposite page: Snapping turtle,

This page: American alligator

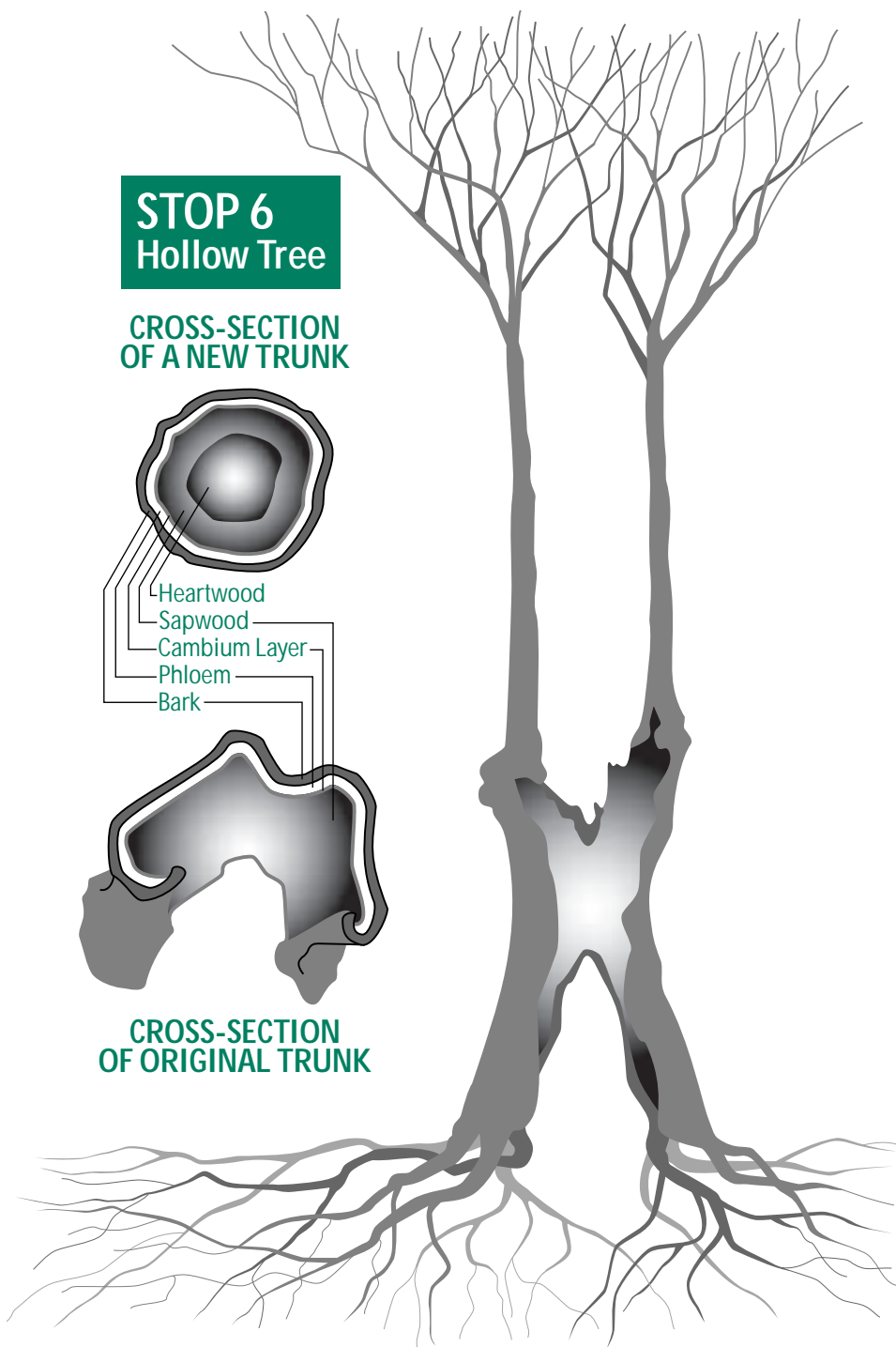


STOP 6 Hollow Tree

CROSS-SECTION OF A NEW TRUNK



CROSS-SECTION OF ORIGINAL TRUNK



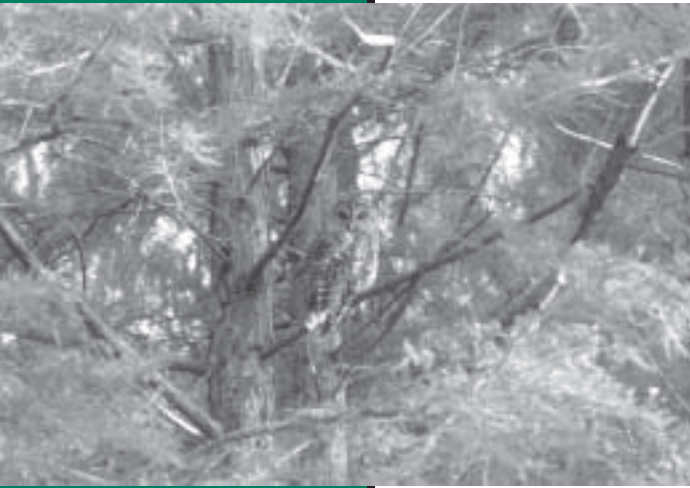
STOP 7

The Movement West: 1815

The movement of settlers to the Mississippi River and points farther west increased after the War of 1812. The official survey of the Louisiana Purchase, which began in 1815, was to aid in the orderly distribution of land to veterans of the war. The surveyor's job was vital to the opening of the American West.

Surveyors Prospect K. Robbins and Joseph C. Brown were commissioned by the United States to begin this survey by establishing an initial point in eastern Arkansas from which other surveys would originate. To establish an initial point it was necessary to survey a permanent north-south line, called a meridian and cross it with an east-west line, a baseline, the junction becom-





Barred owl

ing the initial point for all future surveys of Louisiana Purchase Territory lands.

Prospect Robbins' task was to establish the north-

south line, the meridian. The surveyor's job was not only to mark the exact line, but also to take notes on the land they surveyed. The first entry in his notebook was on October 27, 1815: "Set a post at the extremity point of land formed by the junction of the Arkansas and Mississippi Rivers, at which point commenced the Fifth Principal Meridian."

On the same day Prospect Robbins set the post at the mouth of the Arkansas River, Joseph Brown's survey party started west from the mouth of the St. Francis River to establish the baseline. The two survey parties met on November 10, 1815. They set a marker and marked witness trees establishing the 'point-of-beginning,' or 'initial point' for surveys of the Louisiana Purchase Territory.

Prospect Robbins surveyed a straight north-south line 55 miles, 60 chains and 50 links long, crossing Brown's baseline 26 miles west

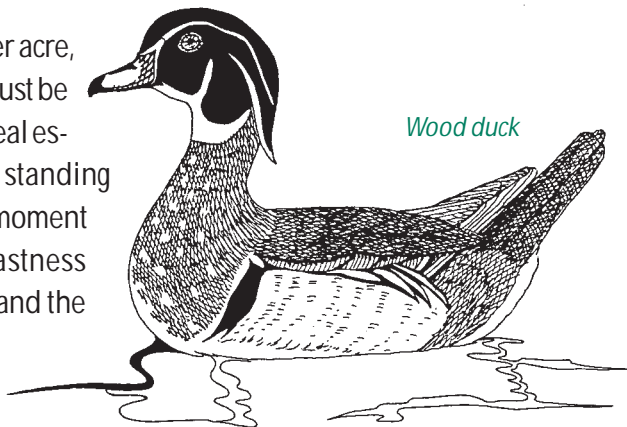
of the Mississippi River. The site was described as "...low and contained cypress and briars and thickets in abundance."

The baseline was continued west in 1818, eventually extending to the western border of Arkansas by 1841. The Fifth Principal Meridian was continued north to provide an orientation for the survey of most of Arkansas, Missouri, Iowa, the Dakotas and Minnesota.

The Louisiana Purchase added 830,000 square miles of uncharted wilderness to the United States. President Jefferson called it: "A transaction replete with blessings to unborn millions of men."

Henry Adams later wrote that the Louisiana Purchase was: "...an event so portentous as to defy measurement."

At less than three cents per acre, the Louisiana Purchase must be considered the greatest real estate deal of all time. By standing quietly at this site for a moment one can imagine the vastness and solitude of this area and the strengths of those people who explored, surveyed and settled it.



STOP 8

As you look around, you can see three of the most common trees and shrubs found in the interior of the upland swamp. Where the water remains the longest each year are the bald cypress, the water tupelo and the buttonbush.

The **bald cypress** has a graceful tapering trunk, cinnamon red bark and needle-like leaves. Its fruit is ball-shaped, hard and scaly. Bald cypress are often surrounded by conical extensions of their roots above the water. These are called cypress knees. **Water tupelo** can be identified by the fissured brown bark, toothed leaves and deep purple, olive-shaped fruit. Both trees have flared, buttressed trunks to provide more stability in wet soil.

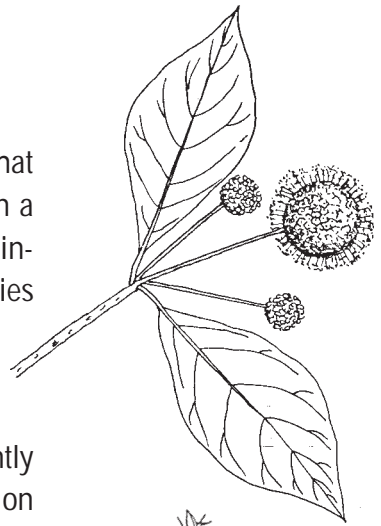
The **buttonbush** plays a major role in swamp ecology. When buttonbush blooms it triggers a chain of events that affects most of the animals around it. During blooming periods, thousands of insects are attracted to buttonbush flowers and other animals come as predators. This abundant food source results in higher insect populations, which in turn, provide food for other animals farther up the food chain, including frogs, snakes and alligators. The livelihood of many other swamp residents can be traced back to the button-

Opposite page, top: Buttonbush leaves and fruit;

middle: Bald cypress foliage and fruit;

bottom: Water tupelo leaves and fruit

bush, illustrating the interrelationships that exist between the plants and animals in a swamp community. Many of these events, including bees gathering nectar and dragonflies preying on insects near the flowers, can be observed from the boardwalk.



Louisiana Purchase Historic State Park is jointly managed by Arkansas State Parks, a division of the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism, and by the Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission, an agency of the Department of Arkansas Heritage.

For further information on Louisiana Purchase Historic State Park or any of Arkansas's other fine state parks and museums, contact:
Arkansas State Parks
One Capitol Mall
Little Rock, AR 72201
(501) 682-7777
Website: www.ArkansasStateParks.com
or

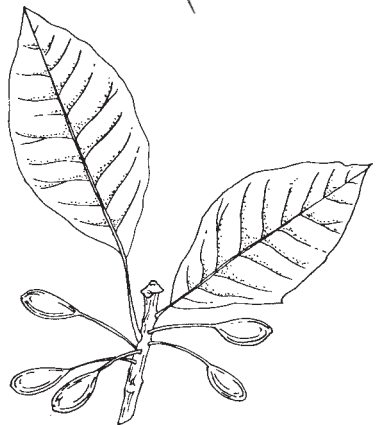


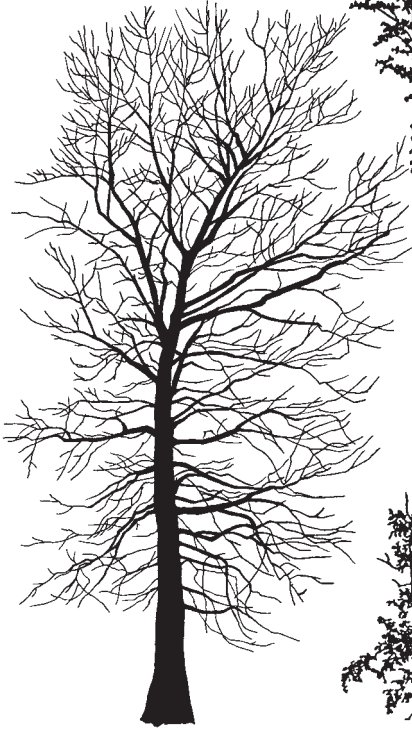
For more information about the state's natural areas, contact:
Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission
1100 North Street,
Little Rock, AR 72201
(501) 324-9619
Website: www.ArkansasHeritage.com

Photos: Carl Hunter, Don Simons, A.C. Haralson, Mike Redmer and Jay Miller

Illustrations and booklet design: Melissa Smith

Printed with soy ink on recycled paper

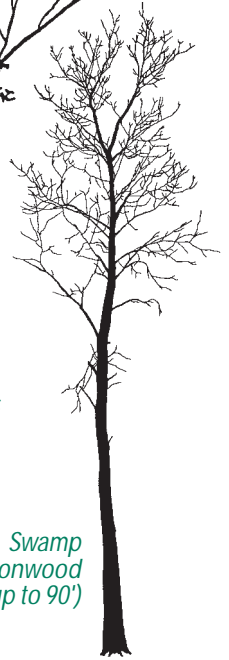




Swamp chestnut oak
(up to 100')



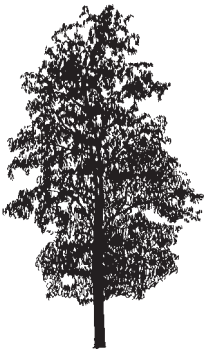
Bald cypress
(up to 120')



Swamp cottonwood
(up to 90')



Water tupelo
(up to 100')



Persimmon
(up to 50')



Black willow
(up to 50')

