

## Who Is Ready to Go Botanicalizing in South Mississippi?

The Mississippi Native Plant Society is sponsoring a guided botanical walk at 10 am on Saturday, November 18, 2023, in southeast Mississippi at the **Ward Bayou Wildlife Management Area** located near Vancleave, MS. Participants will meet at the trailhead of the Judy Toups Birding Trail in the



Management Area (See the attached directions to the site.) “The Ward Bayou Wildlife Management Area is largely a complex of bottomland hardwood forest and bayous on the western boundary of the Pascagoula River basin. The bottomland components begin at the base of an 80-foot bluff transition zone (slope) of southern mixed hardwood forest that contains some native plants uniquely associated with slopes. The top of this transition zone consists of an area of longleaf pine forest restoration. The Judy Toups trail begins at the base of the slope directly adjacent to Ward Bayou and traverses the slope component of the site.” (Audubon Mississippi Coastal Birding Trail). Some unique native plants that the group might encounter include the Needle Palm, Pyramid Magnolia, and Silky Camellia.

The activity will be led by Dr. Mark LaSalle. Mark, as he likes to be called, is a local naturalist and wetland ecologist, providing expertise on wetlands, water quality and environmental impacts of humans. He has developed and conducted several environmental education programs and workshops for youth, teachers, realtors, and the general public on a variety of subjects including wetlands, natural history, botany, and environmental landscaping. Mark is a graduate of the University of Southwestern Louisiana (B.S. and M.S. degrees) and Mississippi State University (Ph.D.). Mark is the recipient of the Chevron Conservation Award, the Mississippi Wildlife Federation Conservation Educator Award, the Gulf Guardian Award, and the Boy Scouts of America Silver Beaver Award. Mark will guide us through the variety of habits pointing out native plants and demonstrating how to identify trees in late fall and winter by examining buds and leaf scars.



**This field adventure is limited to the first 20 people who sign up.** As of now, all participants must possess an Annual Wildlife Management Area User Permit (\$15) unless they are exempt from the requirement. This permit can be obtained from the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks either online or from a certified license vendor such as Walmart. We will petition for an educational exemption for the group, but we may not have time. This easy to moderate level activity takes place along a rustic trail that is not handicapped accessible. Participants should dress for the weather and wear closed-toed shoes (or boots if it has rained recently—Ha!) Also, because it is hunting season, although hunting is not allowed adjacent to this trail, we advise you to wear something orange. There are no restrooms or drinking water onsite, so be prepared.

To register for the activity or for more information, please contact your local host, Jennifer Buchanan, at [jenbuck3@gmail.com](mailto:jenbuck3@gmail.com).

**Ward Bayou Wildlife MGT Area, 1600 Ward Bayou Rd, Vancleave, MS 39565-8653**

**From the North:**

Turn left onto U S Highway 98 (US-98 E)  
Then go 43.1 miles  
Take ramp toward MS-63/Leakesville/Moss Point.  
Then go 0.4 miles  
Turn right onto Highway 63 S (MS-63-BYP S) toward MS-63 S.  
Then go 22.6 miles  
Turn right onto Wade Vancleave Rd (MS-614).  
Then go 4.0 miles  
Continue on MS-614. Go for 1.9 mi.  
Turn left onto Old River Rd. Go for 3.2 mi.  
Turn left onto Old River Road Loop. Go for 1.0 mi.  
Turn right onto Ward Bayou Rd. Go for 0.6 mi.  
Then go 0.6 miles

**Call Jennifer if you get lost:**

**228.860.5763**

**Check out:**

[mscoastbirdingtrail.audubon.org](http://mscoastbirdingtrail.audubon.org)

**Ward Bayou WMA**

**From the South:**

From I-10 Take exit 57 North toward MS-57/Vancleave/Gautier. Go for 0.3 mi.  
Turn left onto MS-57 N. Go for 0.2 mi.  
Continue on Highway 57 (MS-57 N) toward Vancleave. Go for 364 ft.  
Continue on MS-57 N. Go for 456 ft.  
Continue on Highway 57 (MS-57). Go for 6.7 mi.  
Turn right onto Old River Rd. Go for 0.4 mi.  
Turn left onto Old River Rd. Go for 0.3 mi.  
Turn right onto Mounagers Creek Rd. Go for 295 ft.  
Turn left onto Old River Rd. Go for 2.7 mi.  
Turn right onto Old River Road Loop. Go for 1.0 mi.  
Turn right onto Ward Bayou Rd. Go for 0.6 mi.