



2026 LMNA Rendezvous Presentation Descriptions

Locations Primary Point of Contacts

- **Max's Pool Hall**
Caitlin-Neal Jones: (423)-741-0916
- **ULL Ecology Center**
George Aoyagi: (704)-502-8063
- **Homewood Suites**
Martha Garner: (337)-804-2487
Mara Bass: (337)-303-6445
- **Atelier de la Nature**
Brandon Ballengee: (646)-726-1387
- **Cypress Island Preserve (Lake Martin)**
Jim Parker: (337)-278-3804

Scan QR Code for interactive Google Map of workshop locations and other points of interest



Friday, April 10, 2026

2:00 – 4:00 PM

Max's Pool Hall

The World of Viruses: New Horizons and Possibilities

Unwind from your drive and kick off the weekend with this engaging Happy Hour session presented in partnership with Science on the Bayou. From a human perspective, we view all viruses as pathogens. The reality is that viruses are everywhere, infecting every single species, and some of these interactions can have beneficial purposes. Dr. Ian Patterson will share his research on developing a use for viruses that only infect mosquitoes to prevent disease transmission. Dr. Joseph Richards will discuss his work observing and describing attributes of red algae at the cellular level, and the potential for using microscopy to search for viruses and describe their function within the algae. Happy Hour begins at 2:00. Presentations begin at 2:30.

6:00 – 7:00 PM

Homewood Suites Ballroom

***Louisiana Grass Roots* Documentary Screening and Q&A**

Enjoy a private screening of the documentary *Louisiana Grass Roots*, produced by Dr. Phyllis Griffard and directed by Jillian Godshall. The coastal prairie is an imperiled ecosystem in our backyards here in Southwest Louisiana. Louisiana Grass Roots tells the story of our forgotten prairie lands and the people working to save them. This film explores how the region's Cajun and Creole identity — its music, food, language, even the way ancestors lived — is rooted in the prairie ecosystem that once covered southwest Louisiana. Since its premier in 2025, this documentary has been shown to audiences across Acadiana, often alongside seed-collecting and restoration events. After the screening, producer Dr. Phyllis Griffard will join us to share the inspiration behind the documentary, the stories that moved them most, and why community-driven action matters now more than ever.

8:00 – 10:00 PM

Atelier de la Nature

Friday Night Field Adventures: Moths, Herps, Bats & Stars

Experience Louisiana after dark! Rotate through guided activities including moth sheeting, herping, bat observation, and stargazing. This immersive nighttime adventure offers a unique look at nocturnal wildlife and the night sky alongside expert naturalists.

Saturday, April 11, 2026

7:00 – 9:30 AM

Cypress Island Preserve - Nature Conservancy Visitor Center

Prothonotary Warbler Urban Native Green Project and Bird Walk

Volunteer Tad Guidry will share his volunteer work with a hands-on citizen science project supporting prothonotary warblers at the Nature Conservancy - Cypress Island Preserve visitor center. Shortly after, Patti Holland and Jim Parker will guide you along the adjacent nature trail and help you spot and identify a number of native bird species. While birding, you will also be able to observe the prothonotary warbler nest boxes and see how they are monitored. With the proper training, you can participate in this citizen science conservation effort at home. Bring your binoculars and camera!

9:00 – 10:00 AM

Homewood Suites Ballroom

Citizen Science Tools for Naturalists

This workshop, led by Dr. Bette Kauffman, will introduce a number of online platforms that naturalists can contribute to, then will take a deeper dive into using eBird and iNaturalist. If internet service allows, it will include looking at examples from Dr. Kauffman's 76 eBird lists and 6,700 iNat observations.

10:00 – 10:30 AM

UL Ecology Center

UL Ecology Center & Native Seed Bank Tour

Go behind the scenes of native seed conservation with Andre Daugereaux, the Operations Manager of the University of Louisiana at Lafayette Ecology Center. Discover how seeds are collected, processed, and distributed to support restoration efforts across Louisiana.

10:30 – 11:00 AM

UL Ecology Center

Oyster Sustainability & Aquaculture Innovation

Dive into The LO-SPAT project, a state-funded applied research project seeking to implement novel approaches and techniques to promote oyster sustainability in the face of ongoing and future environmental challenges. Dr. Beth Stauffer and Ann Fairly Pandelides will share insight into how scientists are addressing these challenges through aquaculture and selective breeding techniques.

10:30 – 11:30 AM

Homewood Suites Ballroom

Alligator Talk with Mark Shirley

Explore how Louisiana became a global model for alligator conservation. This session highlights the balance between economic use, habitat preservation, and the ecological importance of this iconic species.

11:00 – 11:30 AM

UL Ecology Center

Acadiana Native Plant Project Greenhouse Tour

Visit a thriving native plant greenhouse and meet with members of Acadiana Native Plant Project to learn how local species are propagated to restore habitats and support biodiversity across the region.

11:30 AM – 12:30 PM

UL Ecology Center

Native Pollinators

Larry Allain and Kimberly Hamm lead this workshop on the essential role of native pollinators and their connection to Louisiana's ecosystems. Learn practical ways to support pollinators through native plantings and habitat restoration.

~12:30 – 2:30 PM

Homewood Suites Ballroom (Tabling)

Firefly Habitat Restoration

Bri Carpenter will be tabling for the LSU ag center extension to promote a new program that is aiming to teach our communities about native firefly habitat loss and how it can be restored.

1:30 – 2:30 PM

Homewood Suites Ballroom

Prehistoric Louisiana

Step back in time with Chris Kingwill to explore Louisiana's ancient landscapes and wildlife through the lens of biogeography. This engaging session combines science, storytelling, and visual interpretation to bring the past to life.

2:00 – 3:00 PM

Atelier de la Nature

Prairie Walk & Forest Walk with Sculpture Activity

Explore a restored prairie and learn about native plant communities, land management practices, and long-term restoration strategies with Steve Nevitt and Matt Boutte. Then adventure through the art sculpture installation forest with artist Carey Hamburg.

3:00 – 3:30 PM

Atelier de la Nature

Masters of Adaptation: Fish Specimen Drawing with Brandon Ballengée

Fishes are by far the most successful group of vertebrates to ever occupy Earth. Fish are marvels of adaptation and resilience, occupying almost all bodies of water on our planet, with over described 35,000 species and the Gulf of Mexico is home to 78 endemic fishes, found nowhere else in the world. Join artist and biologist, Dr. Brandon Ballengée for an art-science workshop on Gulf fish species diversity, natural history, and specimen drawing.

3:00 - 4:00 PM

Homewood Suites Ballroom

Roots and Quills: Nature as a Writer's Tool

Explore activities and generative writing prompts that encourage creative expression and nature-based learning. Experienced workshop facilitators Caitlin Neal-Jones and Martha Garner will lead participants through guided exercises that integrate art and environmental appreciation, which can be replicated at Master Naturalist community events and workshops.

3:30 – 4:00 PM

Atelier de la Nature

Gyotaku Fish Printing with Susan David

View a demonstration of the traditional Japanese method of transferring fish print to paper. Create your own fish print while learning about its history and technique from artist Susan David.

4:00 – 5:00 PM

Homewood Suites Ballroom

Insect Talk and Display

Get an up-close look at noteworthy arthropods and learn about their biology, diversity, and ecological importance in this interactive session with Steve Barney of Scarab Lab.

4:00 – 5:00 PM

Atelier de la Nature

Drawn to Nature: Artist Naturalists Celebrating Louisiana's Biodiversity

Art Exhibition Reception

Celebrate the intersection of art and nature with an inspiring exhibition of works by regional Master Naturalists/ Artists alongside historic artworks by artist/ naturalists like John James Audubon, Mark Catesby, Rex Brasher and others, accompanied by a wine and cheese reception.