

Sunday Schedule – 4/14/24

Get up when you want, head home by whatever route you prefer. Make observations and upload them to your iNaturalist account. IF you provided your iNaturalist handle when you registered for Rendezvous 2024, your observations will be automatically collected by the Headed Home Bioblitz project set up on iNat.

The Headed Home Bioblitz will begin collecting observations at 12:00 a.m. April 14, 2024 and will discontinue collecting observations at 11:59 p.m. the same day. It will collect observations only from iNat users who have been manually entered into the project's delimitations. It will collect all observations made by those iNat users for the designated 24-hour period regardless of where those observations are made. Thus if you go home via Mississippi, your observations made along the way in Mississippi will be collected by the project.

To participate in the **Fossil Hunt Hike – 10:45 a.m. until ~2:30 p.m.**

Please sign-up on the sheet provided or contact Bette Kauffman. Meet your hike leaders (me and Dr. Gary Stringer) in the northernmost parking lot of Richwood High School, 5901 Hwy 165 Bypass, Monroe, at 10:45 sharp.

As soon as those who have signed up have arrived, we will caravan south on 165. It is a 35-mile drive. Hats, bug spray, and sturdy foot gear are recommended. It is a somewhat steep incline down onto the old prairie, then another somewhat steep incline down from the prairie to where the fossils are. And then, you will have an opportunity to go all the way down to the creek, which might have water in it and will definitely have steep, muddy banks. Indeed, the best fossils are on the banks of the creek, but be forewarned: The creek runs over Yazoo Clay, which will suck down your foot and hold onto it for dear life. Believe me. I ended up soaking wet and covered with mud last time. If you have a drive on home after this hike, I highly recommend a change of clothes at the ready in your car. Pick your foot gear according to how wet and muddy you're willing to get. Waders would not be out of line.

Please also be informed that no one can leave early. *Before anyone can depart, we must rendezvous again at our cars to inventory what we are removing from the site. Dr. Stringer must lay eyes on everything and dictate a list to a scribe (a member of the Northeast Chapter). This is an absolute requirement or we will never be allowed on the tract again!*

Meeting us at the site is not possible. It is not marked because it is not open to the public. Parking at the site is limited. Car-pooling recommended. Also, plant lovers be aware that we will walk to the fossil sites through old prairie and in April, it should be beautiful. I have been there twice with Charles Allen just to look at plants.

For everyone else, here are some suggested routes home that we know will produce observations:

1. Of course, you can linger in Monroe and go back to Black Bayou Lake NWR.
2. **WEST:** If you wish to head west, we suggest Restoration Park or Kiroli Park in West Monroe, or go a short distance north of I-20 to visit D'Arbonne NWR or D'Arbonne State Park. Your GPS will get you to any or all of these places. The D'Arbonne Spillway on Highway 2 just southeast of Farmerville is especially good for birds.
3. **EAST:** If you wish to head east, you can visit Poverty Point World Heritage Site: Get on I-20 going east; drive about 35 miles; using exit 153, go north on Hwy 17/Hwy 134 about 18 miles. If you wish to make it a two-fer, stop at Poverty Point State Park & Reservoir along Hwy 17/134 on your way back to I-20 to continue home. It is also usually good for birds. (The Ranger will be on duty.?)
4. **SOUTHEAST:** To go southeast to Baton Rouge or New Orleans: Tensas River NWR is fabulous. The last confirmed sighting of an Ivory-billed Woodpecker happened here, so who knows, you might get lucky! This is also the home of the Louisiana Black Bear and it doesn't even take much luck to see one of them. Keep your eyes open for snakes on the road (also the home of the canebrake rattler), deer everywhere, turkey, raccoons, etc., etc.

To get there, travel east on I-20 to Exit 157, which is marked for both the town of Waverly and for Tensas River NWR. Turn left at the end of the exit ramp, and in the center of the town of Waverly, turn right on Hwy 80. Travel about 6.5 miles, turn right on Quebec Rd., go back over I-20 and travel straight south into the refuge. In about 6 miles, you will encounter a crossroads with a check-in station in the southeast corner of the intersection. Check in there.

You now have two choices. You can continue straight south and there's lots of good stuff to see: Headquarters is about 2.25 miles ahead and there's a great boardwalk trail behind the admin building. Just north of the entrance to the headquarters parking lot is the entrance to a Wildlife Drive Trail (11 miles). North of the Wildlife Drive is a parking lot for the Rainey Lake Trail (4 miles).

IMPORTANT: If you take this first choice and go straight south from the check-in station, you will need to return to the check-in station to exit the refuge. There's *no exit* from the refuge straight south of the check-in station. To exit the refuge, you must either go north back to I-20 via Waverly, or turn west at the check-in station refuge, which will take you in a giant arc west then south then east and finally deposit you on La. Hwy 65, where you will turn right (south) and be on your way home.

Your second choice is, of course, to turn west onto Mill Rd at the check-in station intersection. Mill Road takes you west along the upper end of the refuge past Africa Lake, which has a boat ramp with a parking lot and a bit further along, a trailhead with a parking lot (both off Mill Road to the right as you are traveling west). Past Africa Lake, Mill Road curves to the left (south) and travels southwest for a ways. Great birding along this stretch, including a wide trail into thick new tree growth with a parking area just off the main road to the left.

After a slight curve left, you will be traveling straight south and very soon will intersect with La. 577 Spur, which will take you further west to Indian Lake, should you care to check it out. But you will have to back track to this point to continue south. Mill Rd branches off to the right and

you will lean left onto Sharkey Rd. You will travel through some fields where I have seen red foxes. After awhile, Sharkey Rd will curve east (left). You'll cross a bridge at Alligator Bayou and there's a check-out station on the left. In a few more miles, you will arrive at Hwy 65, where you will turn south to head on home.

BTW, Hwy 65 intersects with Hwy 425 going east. You will soon be in Natchez, where you will take Hwy 61 toward BR and NOLA. And just south of Natchez is a wonderful place called St. Catherine Creek NWR. I highly recommend it.

5. **SOUTH:** Russell Sage WMA – You have two choices for accessing Russell Sage.

One: Get on I-20 going east, get off at Exit 124 (the Swartz exit), and turn right (south) at the end of the exit ramp. The road curves into the WMA and travel along the north edge. You will see sever ATV trails into the refuge. Park along the road at any of them and walk in.

Two: Go straight south on Hwy 165, then turn left (east) on La. Hwy 15. You'll find an entrance to the WMA with check-in station on the left side of the road. Depending on the condition of the dirt road, you might be able to drive back to an observation deck overlooking flooded areas.

Submitting observations to the project:

You do not need to do anything special. Just go to your own iNat account and post your observations. The project will collect them, providing you have been added to the project as a user.

If you did not submit an iNat handle when you registered, you may still do so. Just email your handle to bjkauffman@gmail.com.

The week following Rendezvous, we will post “winners” of the Bioblitz competition on the Rendezvous 2024 Facebook page, in the following categories:

1. First and last observations, using the time stamp of the observation, NOT when it was posted.
2. Individuals with most observations and most species.
3. Chapter with most observations and most species.

No prizes. Bragging rights only. Well, maybe we can manage a few certificates!