

Field Trips to Turtle Cove Environmental Research Station

Turtle Cove Environmental Research Station provides field trips 1-2 days per week (usually Fridays and one other day, Mon-Thurs) to schools and other groups interested in the history, science, and human culture of the wetlands in the Lake Pontchartrain Basin. Field trips can include a pontoon boat ride down Pass Manchac or guided tours in nearby wetland canals via canoes. The boat ride down Pass Manchac is provided by a covered 40' x 12' commercial-grade pontoon touring boat, which seats approximately **35 people of 175 lbs or less, including the boat driver**. (Total capacity is 10,000 lbs comprised of motors, fuel, goods, and passengers). Canoe trips are down smaller wetland canals only with 10 available canoes that hold 2-3 people each. Professional scientists and/or Turtle Cove graduate students serve as field trip guides.

Subject areas discussed through lecture and visual observation include: natural history of the physical environment; environmental history (social, economic, and cultural aspects); impacts of cypress deforestation and restoration; physical and socioeconomic impacts of wetland loss and coastal erosion; and solutions to wetland loss. Groups may expect to see a variety of wildlife including alligators, snakes (broad-banded and diamondback water snakes are most common), birds (great blue heron, great egret, cormorant, brown pelican, osprey, bald eagle, red-winged blackbird), small mammals (nutria, rabbits, wild hogs), fish, and invertebrates (crustaceans and aquatic insects), as well as wetland vegetation, including baldcypress.

IMPORTANT: The following forms must be completed, signed, and given to the Southeastern-Approved Captain prior to departure (for copies of the forms, visit <http://www.selu.edu/turtlecove> “Forms & Policies”):

1. A standard “Hold Harmless” waiver (each participant signs this form).
2. The “Rules for Group Field Trips” (the Authorized Group Representative signs this form and reviews the rules with the group prior to the trip).

SUGGESTED SCHEDULE FOR PONTOON BOAT TRIPS

A field trip of approximately 3 hours, which may vary with weather and other time limitations, uses the following schedule that can be adjusted depending on requirements/requests from groups. Because the Turtle Cove lodge is undergoing reconstruction post-Katrina, groups cannot visit the lodge or its boardwalks. Instead, the opening lecture is given at the Galva Canal Classroom, followed by a ride on the Pontoon Boat down Pass Manchac.

- 9:30am Listen to a 45-60 minute lecture on local environmental issues at the Galva Canal Classroom (restrooms are available).
- 10:30 Depart on Pontoon Boat down Pass Manchac toward Turtle Cove lodge (observe birds and reptiles, old logging canals and pull-boat ditches, and changes in wetland characteristics). Perhaps sample along trip if a biologist (or biology graduate student) is leading the trip.
- 11:15 If weather permits and waters are calm, arrive at Manchac Lighthouse to view coastal erosion first hand.
- 11:30 Visit North Pass and/or Stinking Bayou waterways and continue discussing environmental issues.
- 12:30 Return to Galva Canal Classroom (Lunch on your own on Pontoon Boat, at Galva Canal picnic table area, or at local restaurants—Fat Boy’s Seafood Kitchen and Middendorf’s Restaurant are just down the road).

For canoe trips, various routes and schedules are available. Arrange the trip details with Turtle Cove staff.

COST OF FIELD TRIP

There is no required cost for a one-day field trip to Turtle Cove; however, donations are accepted. (Groups that donate usually do so at \$10 per person). Such donations **should not** be seen as payment for field trips. Any donation made should be by cash or check, payable to “Southeastern Development Foundation,” and should be given to the field trip guide on the day of your visit or mailed anytime before or after (*Turtle Cove ERS, Box 10585, Hammond, LA 70402*). Note on the check “Turtle Cove Programs” to ensure the money goes to further Turtle Cove programs. Under special circumstances, after the lodge is repaired, groups of 16 people or fewer may stay overnight for a required charge of \$20/person/night for station use only (not transportation). Such stays require adult supervision to complement the Turtle Cove staff.

DIRECTIONS TO GALVA CANAL CLASSROOM/BOAT SHED

The field trips begin at the Galva Canal Classroom/Boat Shed, which are south of Pass Manchac in St. John the Baptist Parish, off US Hwy 51. Galva Canal is approximately one hour from New Orleans and Baton Rouge or 25 minutes from Hammond. The official address is 87 Alligator Lane, Akers, LA 70421 (GPS Coordinates: 30° 16' 35.4" N and 90° 23' 53.4" W).

1. From New Orleans/LaPlace, travel north on Interstate-55. From Baton Rouge or Hammond, travel south on I-55.
2. From I-55, take Exit 15 toward Manchac.
3. Turn right (south) onto Hwy 51. Pass Middendorff’s Restaurant on your left.
4. Cross the bridge over Pass Manchac, taking you to the south side of the Pass.
5. After the bridge, travel about 1/4 of a mile and turn left onto an asphalt road that crosses over the railroad tracks (it’s the second left possible). You’ll see a “Bait Alley” sign hanging on a fence just beyond the tracks in front of you.
6. Stop and look both ways as you approach and cross the railroad tracks.
7. After crossing the tracks, turn right immediately. This road curves and takes you to a yellow iron-pipe gate, which should be open when you arrive.
8. Enter into the Manchac Wildlife Management Area/Southeastern Turtle Cove Boat Shed Area at Galva Canal.
9. Continue 100 yards from the gate until you come to Southeastern/Turtle Cove section of the property marked with green “Parking” signs in front of the boat shed. Overflow parking is against the marsh still further right.

WHAT TO BRING ON THE FIELD TRIP

Among other necessary items, remember to bring your own water, food, and mosquito spray and to dress appropriately for the weather (hat/sunscreen for hot; jacket for cold). Binoculars are helpful for viewing wildlife. While on the pontoon boat, children age 15 and younger must wear life jackets. Everyone wears life jackets while in canoes and other vessels. Alcohol, smoking, and behavior detracting from a safe and meaningful educational experience are prohibited.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Contact Robert Moreau to schedule your trip as far in advance as possible. The other staff contacts may be useful on the day of your field trip.

Robert Moreau (Manager)
Office: 985.549.5008
Cell: 504.231.1067
rmoreau@selu.edu

Fred “Mars” Stouder
Office: 985.549.5355
Cell: 985.507.2856
fstouder@selu.edu

Hayden Reno
Cell: 985.507.7710
hreno@selu.edu