

## SESSIONS AND SPEAKERS



**ROBERT A. THOMAS, SYMPOSIUM MODERATOR**

**LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CENTER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL COMMUNICATION**

**ROBERT A. (BOB) THOMAS** received his PhD in vertebrate zoology (herpetology) from Texas A&M University. He is professor of mass communication and adjunct professor of biological sciences at Loyola University, where he holds the Loyola Chair in Environmental Communication. He also directs Loyola's Center for Environmental Communication and was the founding director of the Louisiana Nature Center.

Thomas engages in many activities relating to coastal-issues communication, working in the realm of environmental intervention where industry and communities collide, environmental communication programs in tropical areas, nature-based tourism, and environmental education and landscaping. He fervently believes that environmental solutions will be the result of open and honest communication, coupled with trust and integrity, among stakeholders.



**ROBBIE ETHRIDGE, UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI**

***American Indians and Natural History: Managed Landscapes***

In our imaginations, the first Europeans to step onto American shores entered a pristine, untouched wilderness wherein native people lived in harmony with nature. Ethridge's presentation challenges this commonly held idea through an examination of the ways in which native people along the lower Mississippi River valley during the Mississippian Period (900 AD–1600 AD) altered their landscape through active management of plant and animal life. Ethridge argues that American Indians in the lower South, like humanity across the world, affected and transformed their environment in important ways.

**ROBBIE ETHRIDGE** is professor of anthropology at the University of Mississippi. In addition to writing several articles and book chapters and compiling three edited volumes on the ethnohistory of the Indians of the American South, she is the author of *Creek Country: The Creek Indians and Their World, 1796–1816* (2003) and the Mooney Award-winning *From Chicaza to Chickasaw: The European Invasion and the Transformation of the Mississippian World, 1540–1715* (2010), both published by the University of North Carolina Press. She is also editor in chief of the journal *Native South*, published by the University of Nebraska Press. Her current research is on the rise of the world of the prehistoric Mississippian chiefdoms, the seven-hundred-year history of this world, and its collapse with European contact.



**GILLES-ANTOINE LANGLOIS, NATIONAL SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE AT VERSAILLES,  
UNIVERSITY PARIS-EST CRÉTEIL**

***François Lemaire and Bernard Alexandre Vielle:  
The First Observers of Natural History in Colonial Louisiana***

François Lemaire, who was born in Paris ca. 1675 and died in present-day Thailand in 1748, was a missionary in Louisiana from 1706 to 1720. By 1709 he had sent to France several maps, reports on American Indians, plant specimens, and observations on natural history. Bernard Alexandre Viel, born in Paris ca. 1690, went to Louisiana in 1720 as appointed surgeon for the St. Catherine plantation near Natchez. In 1721 he wrote an accurate study on the wax myrtle, explaining how to produce wax for candles. Viel was appointed surgeon at the fort at Natchitoches (1722) and surgeon major of New Orleans (1724), where he founded the first botanical garden of Louisiana. He died in the city in 1764.

**GILLES-ANTOINE LANGLOIS** obtained a PhD in history from the Sorbonne and a PhD in urbanism from the Institut d'Urbanisme de Paris. He is assistant professor at the National School of Architecture of Versailles and lecturer at the University Paris-Est Créteil. His research is focused on the process of urban development and its social

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and architectural impacts. For twenty years he has developed historical studies concerning New Orleans and the Mississippi Valley and their relationship with Europe. He has participated in several exhibits and projects with The Historic New Orleans Collection, and he created the bilingual website [www.louisiana.culture.fr](http://www.louisiana.culture.fr) for the Ministry of Culture of France.



**BORIS TESKE, LOUISIANA TECH UNIVERSITY**  
*Enlightenment Science in French Colonial Louisiana:  
The Royal Physician Botanist Jean Prat and the Wax Myrtle*

The overseas bioprospecting enterprise administered by the minister of the navy and the colonies, in cooperation with the Royal Academy of Sciences (Académie des Sciences) and the Royal Garden (Jardin du Roi)—called by historians the scientifico-colonial machine—engaged the governors, commissaries, royal physician-botanists, and planters of the Louisiana colony. Its operation is exemplified by a specific case of economic botany: the discovery of the Louisiana wax myrtle (*Myrica cerifera*), the cultivation of this shrub, and the commercial production from the resin coating its berries of a vegetal wax suitable for making candles for the French market.

**BORIS TESKE**, College of Liberal Arts liaison librarian and assistant professor at Louisiana Tech University, earned his MA in history and MS in library science at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. His recent archival research on the royal physician botanists in French colonial Louisiana has resulted thus far in two papers for the Louisiana Historical Association: the first, on Jean Prat and the wax myrtle, was given two years ago and has been abridged for this presentation; the second, on Louis Prat's cotton gin, will be read at the next meeting of the LHA, in March.



**NEIL SAFIER, UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA, VANCOUVER**  
*From Peru to the Bayou: Antonio de Ulloa and New Orleans Nature*

Neil Safier will discuss some aspects of the South American career of Antonio de Ulloa, Spanish governor of Louisiana in the late eighteenth century. Before his career took a North American turn, Ulloa was a member of an important scientific expedition to Quito, Ecuador, that set out to measure the shape of the earth along the equatorial line. Along with his fellow naval officer Jorge Juan, Ulloa penned an important historical account of his journey that included many observations on the native populations of the Andes. This part of his account brought recriminations from unlikely corners, including one particularly virulent attack in manuscript form that will serve as the focus of this talk.

**NEIL SAFIER** is associate professor of history at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver. He received his PhD from Johns Hopkins University and has held teaching and research appointments at the University of Michigan and the University of Pennsylvania. He is the author of *Measuring the New World: Enlightenment Science and South America* (2008), which was awarded the 2009 Gilbert Chinard Prize from the Society for French Historical Studies and the Institut Français d'Amérique. He has a wide collection of published books and articles, including essays in *Isis*, *Book History*, the *Huntington Library Quarterly*, and *Annales: Histoire, Sciences Sociales*. He is currently researching the environmental and ethnographic history of the Amazon River basin.



**CHRISTOPHER W. LANE, THE PHILADELPHIA PRINT SHOP**  
*Fledgling American Naturalists Mark Catesby and Alexander Wilson*

Despite the Comte de Buffon's dismissal of New World species as inferior, in the eighteenth century there was great curiosity about the natural history of America. Mark Catesby played a pivotal role in satisfying that curiosity, for the first time documenting the flora and fauna of America. He was followed in the next century by Alexander Wilson, who produced the first study specifically about American birds. The story of the efforts of these two men, and the publication of their seminal works, offers an interesting look at the earliest days of the study of American natural history.

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**CHRISTOPHER W. LANE** is co-owner of the Philadelphia Print Shop, managing its Denver branch, the Philadelphia Print Shop West. During his thirty years in the map and print trade, Lane has written numerous articles and books, including *Panorama of Pittsburgh*, winner of the Ewell Newman Award from the American Historical Print Collectors Society. He has curated exhibitions in the United States and abroad, and he has lectured widely at national conferences and symposia. Since 1997 Lane and his partner, Donald Cresswell, have appeared as the regular print and map appraisers for public television's *Antiques Roadshow*.



**JOEL OPPENHEIMER, JOEL OPPENHEIMER, INC.**

*Audubon in Louisiana*

Joel Oppenheimer will discuss John James Audubon's relationship to Louisiana and the three distinct periods he spent in the state. The discussion will include details of Audubon's artistic accomplishments and personal experiences during these periods. In all, ninety-four of the original watercolors in *The Birds of America* were executed in Louisiana; these will be presented in a slide show.

**JOEL OPPENHEIMER** is responsible for assembling one of the largest privately held natural history art collections in the world. Currently the collection comprises over ten thousand original works of art, including approximately two hundred double-elephant-folio Audubon engravings. As president of Oppenheimer Editions he has pioneered the field of replicating museum collections utilizing digital-imaging technologies. Among participants in this endeavor are the Chicago Field Museum, the American Museum of Natural History, the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew in England, the American Museum of Natural History, the Newberry Library, and the New-York Historical Society. Joel Oppenheimer, Inc. occupies the ground floor of the historic Wrigley Building on Michigan Avenue in Chicago and includes an art-conservation lab; there are two other locations, in Charleston, SC, and Greenwich, CT.

Oppenheimer holds a degree in fine arts from the Art Institute of Chicago. He is a past chair of the steering committee for the Friends of the Library at the Field Museum, and he also serves on the boards of directors for the American Friends of Kew and for the Barrington, IL, historical society, chairing its conservation committee. His forthcoming book, *The Birds of America: The Bien Chromolithographic Edition*, will be published by W. W. Norton and Co.



**GAY GOMEZ, MCNEESE STATE UNIVERSITY (RETIRED)**

*Land, Life, and Living: Ecology of the Louisiana Coast*

The Louisiana coast is a place of beauty, vulnerability, and resilience. Land, people, wildlife, and a variety of natural forces have interacted to shape the coastal region we know today. This presentation examines the coast's dynamic natural history, its Deltaic Plain and Chenier Plain, and the diversity, abundance, and challenges of life in this working wetland environment.

**GAY GOMEZ**, a New Orleans native, was educated at Tulane University, the University of Texas at Austin, and on the Louisiana coast. She holds degrees in history and geography and served for fourteen years as a professor of geography at McNeese State University in Lake Charles, Louisiana. She is author of two books, *The Louisiana Coast: Guide to an American Wetland* and *A Wetland Biography: Seasons on Louisiana's Chenier Plain*.

## DISCUSSION

### *COLLECT GLOBALLY, CONNECT LOCALLY: INSIDE TWO OF LOUISIANA'S NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUMS*

**HENRY L. (HANK) BART JR., TULANE UNIVERSITY MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY**

#### *Tulane University's Role in Natural History Exploration in Louisiana, 1885 to the Present*

Tulane University's tradition of supporting natural history collections dates to the 1880s. The university's original natural history museum was an exhibit-oriented facility established in 1885 by a special grant from Paul Tulane, who earlier that year had provided the endowment that transformed the University of Louisiana into the private, nonsectarian Tulane University. Bart's presentation chronicles the study of natural history at Tulane, from the earliest collections, which were displayed in the style of "cabinets of wonder," to the collection-based research of the modern era, established after World War II.

**HENRY L. (HANK) BART JR.** is professor of ecology and evolutionary biology at Tulane University, director of the Tulane University Biodiversity Research Institute, and curator of the Royal D. Suttkus Fish Collection. A New Orleans native, Bart earned his BS and MS degrees from the University of New Orleans, and his PhD in zoology from the University of Oklahoma. He held faculty positions at the University of Illinois and Auburn University before joining Tulane's faculty in 1992. His area of research specialization is ecology and systematics of freshwater fishes. He is also involved in biodiversity informatics research and actively promotes new uses of natural history specimens and specimen data in research.



**PROSANTA CHAKRABARTY, LSU MUSEUM OF NATURAL SCIENCE**

#### *Adopted by Louisiana: Ichthyology at LSU's Museum of Natural Science*

LSU hired Prosanta Chakrabarty in 2008 to revive the languishing ichthyology section of its otherwise very productive Museum of Natural Science (MNS). The MNS is one of the most productive research museums in the world and has millions of specimens of birds, mammals, fossils, reptiles, amphibians, and fishes. These specimens are used to study evolution, natural history, and Earth history. Chakrabarty will explain how his research on fishes, which initially concentrated mainly on Central America and the Indo-West Pacific, became refocused in Louisiana mainly through events related to the 2010 Gulf of Mexico oil spill.

**PROSANTA CHAKRABARTY** is an ichthyologist and evolutionary biologist working as an assistant professor and curator of fishes at Louisiana State University. He has a BS degree from McGill University and a PhD from the University of Michigan. His current research interests include the systematics and biogeographic history of Central American freshwater fishes, deep-sea fishes, and blind cave fishes. He has published more than thirty scientific articles and one book, *A Guide to Academia: Getting into and Surviving Grad School, Postdocs and a Research Job*. For more information visit <http://www.prosanta.net> or follow Chakrabarty on Twitter, @LSU\_FISH.