

## ANNUAL REPORT

### LOYOLA CHAIR IN ENVIRONMENTAL COMMUNICATIONS

2001-2002

Environmental Communications is a nationally emerging speciality in the field of Communications. There are presently fewer than ten such endowed chairs in the United States. Most are held by persons with a Ph.D. in Communications or a related field or people who have served a distinguished career in the journalism private sector. At Loyola University, the holder of the Loyola Chair in Environmental Communications has a Ph.D. in Vertebrate Zoology and has spent the majority of his career as an environmental educator as Founding and Executive Director of the Louisiana Nature Center. In this role, he has focused his attention on communicating complex environmental issues to the breadth of the Greater New Orleans community - from five year olds through school age to adults. He has developed means of communicating environmental information to those who are highly educated and those with less academic success.

The field of Environmental Communications is an increasingly important element in the state of Louisiana. No other state is so dependant on its natural resources and their direct and indirect use as is Louisiana. Much valuable time and effort is spent dealing with poorly understood and/or false information. It is, therefore, crucial that our state=s professional communicators (especially print and broadcast journalists) refine their abilities to communicate the often very complex and vitally important information relative to the impact of human use of natural resources on the environment. The co-existence of economic and environmental well-being is vitally important to Louisiana. If the citizens do not understand the implications of the use of natural resources and exposure to the by-products of their use, then the state will never reach its economic and human potential.

An environmentally educated citizenry will make the right choices for our state=s economic and environmental health.

One of the foci of the Loyola program is to improve communications among stakeholders in environmental issues in the State of Louisiana. This is done by LUCEC staff working on environmental intervention programs (such as the EPA=s Common Sense Initiative) and hosting the Institute for Environmental Communications (a program that brings together citizens from business/industry, environmental activism, government, science, and the media to have an open discussion of the issues).

Another is to work with environmental communicators in Latin America (Belize and Trinidad at this time) and the Caribbean (the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States) to solve their problems. The economic linkage between Louisiana and Latin America is obvious and is part of economic plans throughout the state.

The Loyola Chair in Environmental Communications sponsors the only program in this arena in the state. It is one of only eight of its kind in the nation, and the only with the holder of the chair being a scientist and having a background in environmental education.

The endowment funds available to the Loyola Chair in Environmental Communications have served as the cornerstone for the activities of the Center for Environmental Communications (LUCEC), and its subsidiary program - the Institute for Environmental Communications (IEC).

The following are activities directly funded by the endowment proceeds:

- \$ General operation of the office was guaranteed.
- \$ The web site was maintained and continually updated (<http://www.loyno.edu/lucec>). During this academic year, a new AChair@ site was produced: <http://www.loyno.edu/lucec/chair/chairweb.htm>.
- \$ The chair holder was able to be active in the International Federation of Environmental Journalists (serving as General Secretary), thus networking with international colleagues.
- \$ LUCEC maintained communications projects in the tropics. This year a project (Caribbean Environmental Communications Initiative) was funded by USAID (through the University of New Orleans Foundation) that is training environmental journalists and ecotourism businesses in the Caribbean.
- \$ Hosted a number of national and international environmental journalists.
- \$ The LUCEC traveling exhibit was updated to reflect changes in the program.
- \$ Magazines and other publications were made available for students.
- \$ Student workers were hired to work on LUCEC projects.
- \$ New software was purchased to maintain efficient communication.
- \$ The IEC held its third program with 25 graduating Fellows (for further information, see <http://www.loyno.edu/lucec/fellows.html>).
- \$ Developed the capacity to do digital and analog video taping and editing.
- \$ Distributed back issues of the LUCEC newsletter, *EnviroDecisions*, to libraries statewide.
- \$ Performed a statewide telephone survey of citizens regarding their attitudes about coastal wetlands loss.
- \$ Hosted the leadership conference for the Society for Environmental Journalists, thus introducing this group to Louisiana environmental issues.
- \$ Implemented a cardboard box reuse program at Loyola University that is intended to result in providing an annual scholarship in environmental communications. The program will be shared with other universities in the state.

## ENHANCEMENT OF CONTINUING/NEW AREAS OF RESEARCH/INQUIRY

The funds allowed the Chair to attend meetings, visit with colleagues, and gather extensive research materials for his environmental communications research program.

## PUBLICATIONS: PEER REVIEWED

- Thomas, R.A., Julio Cesar de Moura-Leite, Sérgio Augusto Abrahão Morato, and Renato Silveira Bérnils. (Submitted). *Ditaxodon taeniatus* (Hensel, 1868): Its Variation, Relationships, and Distribution in Southeast Brazil (Serpentes, Colubridae, Xenodontinae). *Herpetologica*.
- Thomas, R. A. submitted (recommended by reviewers). A revision of the South American snake genus *Philodryas* Wagler, 1830 (Serpentes, Colubridae, Xenodontinae). *Tulane Studies in Botany and Zoology*.
- Thomas, R.A., M.B. Harvey, and L. Dirksen. In press (2001). A reconsideration of the systematic status of *Philodryas aestivus levisquamus* Thomas 1998 (Serpentes, Colubridae, Xenodontinae). *Tulane Studies in Botany and Zoology*.

## PUBLICATIONS: NON-PEER REVIEWED

- Thomas, R. A. 2001. *Winning the War, but Missing the Target*. *EnviroDecisions* 4(1):1, 6.
- Thomas, Bob. 2001. *Information Access, Internet, Advocacy Are Discussed at IFEJ Congress*, *The Planet=s Voice*, Oct 2001: 1-3.
- Thomas, Bob. 2001. *Critter Report: Few Birds, but Good Smells and Mushrooms*. *The Planet=s Voice*, Oct 2001: 6 & 10.
- Thomas, R. A. 2001. *Member Reviews Urethral Parasites* (letter to editor), *Alert Diver*, Nov/Dec 2001: 4.
- Thomas, R. A. [ed.]. 2001. *The State of Air Monitoring in New Orleans*. *Occas. Pap.*, Loyola Univ. New Orleans Center for Environmental Commn. (2):1-4.
- Thomas, R. A. 2002. *Stressful Lives of Louisiana Environmentalists*. *Misc. Publ.*, Loyola Univ. New Orleans Center for Environmental Commn. (1): 1-6.

## PRESENTATIONS

- National Wetlands Research Center, U.S. Geological Service, Lafayette, LA, *Environmental Communications: Good science, proper motives, intelligent listening, evaluating context, truth, and a modicum of trust*, August 7, 2001.
- Louisiana Gulf Coast Herpetological Society, New Orleans, LA, *Herpetology as a means of communicating science*, August 7, 2001.
- Association for Nature Center Administrators Annual Meeting, Cleveland, OH, *What we would have done differently*, August 24, 2001.

- University of Southern Mississippi, Department of Biological Sciences Departmental Seminar, *Environmental Communications: Good science, proper motives, intelligent listening, evaluating context, truth, and a modicum of trust*, August 31, 2001.
- Friends of the Cabildo, New Orleans, LA, *Louisiana=s Coastal Erosion: Implications for the Future*, September 10, 2001.
- Workshop for a group of Nigerian government oil/gas regulators, New Orleans, LA, *EPA=s Common Sense Initiative and its Relevance to U.S. Industry*, September 11, 2001.
- Society for Environmental Journalism Annual Meeting, Portland, Oregon, *Environmental Journalism Ethics - from Moyers to Stossel*, Luncheon Roundtable Discussion Leader, October 19, 2001.
- Mississippi River Basin Alliance Annual Meeting, New Orleans, panelist, *The New Orleans Greenways Vision: Bayou Sauvage, Jean Lafitte, the LaBranche Wetlands, and Beyond*, September 22, 2001.
- International Federation of Environmental Journalists Annual Conference, Lage-Hoerste, Germany, *Shark Frenzy or Media Frenzy: 2001 Coverage of Shark Attacks in the United States*, October 1, 2001.
- Society for Environmental Journalists Annual Conference, Portland, OR, panelist and speaker, *Will Both the Environment and Environmental News Become Casualties of Terrorism, Too?* [ my discussion was about how to present the news accurately while not terrifying the reader/viewer/listener], October 20, 2001.
- Society for Environmental Journalists Annual Conference, Portland, OR, Leader, Luncheon Discussion Table: *Environmental Journalism Ethics: From Moyers to Stossel*, October 20, 2001.
- University of New Orleans and Governor=s Office of Coastal Activities, AGetting the Louisiana Coastal Land Loss Message Out to the Nation@ Conference, *Communicating the Impacts of Louisiana=s Wetlands Loss*, UNO Navy Technical Training Center, November 16, 2001.
- Motiva Enterprises, Equilon, Equiva executives and plant managers biannual safety meeting, *Improving Communications Between a Company and its Neighbors: A Logical Process and Model*, The Woodlands, TX, November 27, 2001.
- Sierra Club conference, *Reconciling the Urban Sprawl Debate: What Others are Saying*, Baton Rouge, December 8, 2001.
- Leadership New Orleans (the Chamber and MetroVision), *Communicating the Economic Importance of Environmental Quality*, afternoon workshop, Mandeville, December 12, 2001.
- Gulf of Mexico Program Communications Committee, *Coastal Communications Project*, New Orleans, January 15, 2002.
- Gulf of Mexico Program Grants Committee, *Coastal Leadership Program*, Baton Rouge, January 16, 2002.
- Wetland Forum, Tulane University, *Public Opinions re Coastal Wetlands Loss*, New

Orleans, January 19, 2002.  
South Louisiana Grantmakers= Forum, *The Needs of the Environmental Community*,  
New Orleans, January 30, 2002.  
Environmental Grantmakers= Association, *Swamp Tour and discussion about the need  
for national communications re Louisiana=s coastal wetlands loss*, Westwego &  
Marrero, LA, February 5, 2002.  
Atchafalaya Basin Program, Living Resources Committee, *Amphibian Decline and  
Policy Development*, Baton Rouge, February 21, 2002.  
Loyola Admissions Office, Swamp tour for high school guidance counselors, Westwego,  
LA, February 23, 2002.  
Managers of 14 St. James Parish chemical plants, *Social Responsibility of the Chemical  
Industry*, Convent, LA, March 12, 2002.  
Governor=s Coastal Meeting, *Coastal Communications Project*, Baton Rouge, March  
14, 2002.  
Leadership Slidell, Impact of Coastal Wetlands Loss in Louisiana, Slidell, LA, April 3,  
2002.  
Mayor-elect=s transition meeting, *Co-facilitated the Environmental Industry  
Subcommittee*, New Orleans, April 14, 2002..  
Southern Forest Products Association (Government Affairs Conference), *Communicating  
Honestly with the Public*, New Orleans, April 18, 2002.  
Council for a Better Louisiana, Leadership Louisiana, *State Policy and the Loss of Our  
Coastal Wetlands*, Fouchon, LA, April 19, 2002.  
Utilities Communicators International annual conference, *Environmental Stewardship:  
The Next Responsible Step*, New Orleans, June 13, 2002.

#### **PRESS COVERAGE/INTERVIEWS:**

Government Communications, Vol. 9, No. 3, p. 3, 2001, LUCEC and Thomas mentioned  
in article.  
WWL Radio, Cheryl Hart, news regarding recent shark attacks, August 20, 2001.  
WWL TV, Eric Paulsen, news regarding recent shark attacks, August 21, 2001.  
Daily Comet, Houma, Katina Gaudet, interviewed and quoted re shark attacks, *Shark  
Attacks: Researchers say Louisiana coast relatively safe*, 1A, 5A, August 21,  
2001.  
WNOE Radio, Ray Romero, interviewed re shark attacks, August 27, 2001.  
Loyola (Magazine), Faye Felterman, *The wetlands: Saving the lifeline of Louisiana*,  
interviewed and quoted, Vol. 11, No. 3, pp. 6-10, Fall 2001.  
CityBusiness, Publisher=s Notes, Carolyn McLellan, *Congratulations are certainly . . .*,  
p. 3, August 27, 2001.  
Maroon, Bob Wardlaw, *Thomas receives award for environmental work*, p. 3, September  
7, 2001.  
Loyola Today, *Chair of Environmental Communications at Loyola receives professional*

*leadership award*, p. 6, September 14, 2001.  
Loyola Today, *Students recycle*, p. 5, September 14, 2001.  
Directions, *Second Annual Leadership Award goes to Bob Thomas*, p. 1, July-Sept, 2001.  
City Business, Stephen Stuart, *Let Nation know what=s eating at La., experts say*,  
November 26, 2001, pp. 1, 52-53. Quoted.  
Forest Operations Review, Photo of Thomas and Lisa Boe presenting at Society for  
Environmental Journalists annual conference, Winter 2002.  
Watermarks, personal interview on work on coastal communications, September, 2002  
issue.

## **AWARDS**

The chair holder received the second annual Professional Leadership Award for distinguished service to the field by the Association for Nature Center Administrators.

## **DISPLAYS AND SHOWS**

Sponsored showing of Thom Scott=s photos from the John P. Oakes Environmental Journalism Award winning series *Unwelcome Neighbors*, a five part series in the Times-Picayune, Summer, 2001.  
Table top displays re LUCEC: Society for Environmental Journalists, Portland, Oregon, October 19-22, 2001; International Federation of Environmental Journalists, Germany, November 13-17, 2001; Tulane Environmental Law Conference, 2002.

## **MENTORING OF STUDENTS**

The Chair works with many students in mentoring various aspects of their professional development. They use LUCEC as a source of information and resources, and he mentors students as they pursue their professions, theses in the honors and biology programs, and independent studies projects.

LUCEC annually offers a workshop on environmental journalism for local high school newspaper journalists. The workshop is held in Loyola=s Department of Communications and is intended to interest local students in covering the environmental beat in their high school newspapers.

## **TEACHING ENHANCEMENT**

LIST OF COURSES TAUGHT (the first two are unique in the state):

CMMN A370. Environmental Communications. 3 credits. Fall 2001.  
CMMN A371. The Environmental Beat. 3 credits. Spring 2002.

CMMN A499. Special projects. 3 credits (several students.) Fall 2001.  
BIOL A118. Tropical Ecology. 3 credits. Spring 2002.  
BIOL A345 & 346 - Herpetology. 4 credits. Spring 2002.

GRADUATE STUDENTS AT OTHER UNIVERSITIES:

Amelia Ballew, University of New Orleans, December 2002.

OTHER: See activities listed under AMentoring of Students.@

**CURRICULUM INNOVATION/DEVELOPMENT**

The following course, directed at students in the fields of Advertising, Public Relations, and Business, was taught for the first time in Fall 2001 and is also unique:

CMMN A496. Management and Communications of Environmental Relations. 3 hr.

**Course Description:** The focus of this course is to identify environmental expectations of environmentalists regarding the activities of business/industry, and of the latter regarding the role played by the former. Students will meet and hear discussions by a number of leading representatives of the environmental community, business, and industry. Students will then develop strategies for overcoming the challenges they learned about, and orally present their findings to one another in class. Additionally, students will produce a newsletter (to be mailed to the guest participants and organizations related to theirs) detailing student findings and recommendations.

NEW COURSE BEING DEVELOPED FOR SPRING 2003: Environmental Audit of Loyola University (will offer real life opportunities for a variety of students - e.g., the plan is to have weekly columns in the *Maroon* as the work progresses, and a magazine-type publication reporting findings and recommendations as the final product).

OTHER EDUCATIONAL INITIATIVES:

Placed class notes for Mississippi River Delta Ecology on the LUCEC website.

Placed Spring courses on Black Board and preparing to do so for Fall courses.

Scanned some 3500 slides for use on Black Board.

Developed a program for using *Diversity* (a whole brain model system) for classroom activities (we also administered it to the *Maroon* editorial board and Prof. Henley=s ad team).

## **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

During the past year, the Chair has attended a number of training programs regarding the use of computers, and he has attended professional meetings. Additionally, he visits with colleagues and hosts visitors in his profession.

## **SEEKING EXTERNAL FUNDING**

Shell Foundation, \$10,000 in support of the Center for Environmental Communications. Awarded. Assisted in acquiring additional funds for other functions in the university.

USAID/UNO Foundation: \$500,000. Caribbean Environmental Communications Initiative. During the 18 month duration of this project, our team (which includes several of our faculty) will 1) train Caribbean journalists to cover the environmental beat; 2) establish structure for the existing Caribbean Environmental Reporters= Network (we will hire an Executive Director, set up an office with supplies, and otherwise stabilize a Secretariat); 3) produce a series of radio shows that will air throughout the Caribbean and certain areas of the U.S. and Europe, provide public relations for the Organization of American States= program that encourages small hotels to become sustainable in their operations and to orient toward ecotourism; 4) survey Media House Managers (editors) re their positions and attitudes about the value of environmental news coverage (we will present the results at their annual professional conference); and 5) publish a book on environmental communications/journalism for Caribbean professionals. Funded.

Ella West Foundation: \$10,000. To support a statewide survey of voters= attitudes about coastal issues. Funded.

Gulf of Mexico Program: \$95,000. To organize and present a program (Coastal Leadership) that will develop future leaders who will continue to work to sustain Louisiana=s coastal wetlands. Pending.

Koch Industries, \$125,000 to present four national workshops that explore successful local solutions to challenging environmental issues. Pending.

## **ENHANCEMENT OF PROGRAM/DEPARTMENT QUALITY/REPUTATION**

As LUCEC develops, its reputation is building. The department and university are becoming widely known as a place where people can discuss environmental issues in a constructive atmosphere.

## **UNITING UNIVERSITY, COMMUNITY, AND BUSINESS/INDUSTRY**

The principal portion of LUCEC that answers this need is the Institute for Environmental

Communication (IEC). IEC is held each fall semester. Its purpose is to bring together environmental stakeholders and to stimulate conversations among them. IEC participation has a balance of people from business/industry, the environmental community, government, the media, and the scientific arena. This activity, taking place at the university, creates opportunities that do not exist elsewhere.

Persons completing IEC are named Fellows of the program. There are presently 69 IEC fellows, all of whom are connected via a LUCEC supported listserv. A new class of 30 participants will begin in August.

LUCEC works diligently to convince industry and business that sound environmental planning and consideration is a wise investment, for the company and for the citizens of Louisiana.

LUCEC is presently collaborating with the University of New Orleans Foundation as developer and subcontractor for the Caribbean Environmental Communications Initiative, a project funded by the United States Agency for International Development.

## **SERVICE TO COMMUNITY**

### **ENVIRONMENTAL:**

Member, Top 10 by 2010, an initiative of MetroVision.

Member, Governor=s Environmental Task Force

Member, Greater New Orleans Foundation Environmental Committee

Member, Shell Oil Bayou Trepagnier Task Force

Board, Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana.

Member, Strategic Planning Committee, Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana.

Board, Environmental Research Consortium of Louisiana, a not-for-profit organization that will do research, communications, and educational projects on the environment of Louisiana

Board, J. Bennett Johnston Science Foundation, a not-for-profit foundation that will fund environmental research in Louisiana

Board, Asa Wright Nature Centre, Arima, Trinidad

Board, Save Our Lake Endowment

Member, Environmental Committee, New Orleans/River Region Chamber of Commerce

Member, Outdoor Activities Advisory Committee, City of New Orleans Recreation Department.

General Secretary, International Federation of Environmental Journalists Representative, Society for Environmental Journalism

### **OTHER:**

Board, Council for a Better Louisiana

Member, Archbishop=s Community Appeal Committee  
Member, Rotary Club of Metairie Sunrise

## **ORGANIZE EVENTS AND LECTURES BY AUTHORITIES IN THE FIELD**

Hosted visits by the following environmental professionals:

## **COLLABORATIONS WITH OTHER SCHOLARS/PROGRAMS**

Serving on The editorial board of the Environmental Communication Yearbook, a new journal in the field of environmental communications.

Judged the Series section of the first annual Society for Environmental Journalists Awards Program.

Judged the Guyana entries in the Conservation International Biodiversity Awards Program.

Judged the entries seeking support to attend the World Summit on Sustainable Development to be held in Johannesburg, South Africa. The program is sponsored by the International Federation of Environmental Journalists and funded by the Global Environmental Facility.

Working with Mark Schleifstein, Times-Picayune, as Co-chair of the Society of Environmental Journalists annual meeting, 2003.

Serve on the Loyola Environmental Studies Faculty

Serving on the Chamber of Commerce Environmental Committee to help them open a dialogue with the local environmental community.

Advising management of Motiva Enterprises and Shell Chemical Company in Norco, LA, regarding the resoluion of environmental justice issues.

Speaking to Silver Scribe competition, chaired by Drs. Larry Lorenz and Leslie Parr.

Working with Shell Oil Refinery (Norco) and local environmental interests to reach an equitable decision on the fate of Bayou Trepagnier. I serve as the go-between.

Leadership role in the formation of the J. Bennett Johnson Science Research Foundation, a concept I developed in 1993 that is coming to fruition. Wrote the early drafts of By-laws and Articles of Incorporations. Worked with the attorneys and CPAs during the submittal of documents

Appointed to the Houston Toad (endangered species) Recovery Team by the Regional Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Training workshop for a group of Nigerian government petroleum regulators regarding how they might help resolve conflicts between oil companies and their neighbors .

Member of a team (based with Eskew+, and architectural firm) developing a master plan for the Bass Fishermen=s Hall of Fame, Hot Springs, Arkansas (I am doing the environmental communications/education component).

## **ENHANCE ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT OF PROFESSOR**

The Chair funds provide a base-line of support for the Chair=s work and allow time and necessary resources for basic programs and the ability to seek additional support.

### **ENHANCE RESEARCH EFFORTS**

As described in several places above, the funds allow the Chair to fund basic research needs and to travel to important meetings and resource locations.

### **PARTICIPATION IN PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND CONFERENCES**

The Chair participates annually in the meetings and activities of the Society for Environmental Journalism, the International Federation of Environmental Journalists, National Communications Association (Environmental Communications Commission), and the Association of Nature Center Administrators. Other meetings that are relevant are attended when possible. He recently attended the First Annual Green Hotels Conference & Exhibition in Montego Bay, Jamaica.

### **LEADERSHIP TO COLLEGE AND DIVISION**

The Chair makes the resources of LUCEC available to colleagues throughout the university. He is gradually including more departments in LUCEC activities.

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