



Photograph by Dustin Booksh



## EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH UPDATE

### *In the Slow Blink of an Alligator's Eye: Wetlands Vanish*

There is nothing more threatening to the future of children in coastal Louisiana than the disappearance of the wetlands. According to U.S. Census estimates for 2006, nearly 50 percent of the state's population lived in coastal parishes. The wetlands define life in Louisiana. Restoring healthy wetlands is not only important to preserving the economy for the state but is also vital to national industries, such as fishing, navigation, oil, and gas. Hope for coastal restoration hinges on awareness, educated decisions, and actions.

The education department at The Collection is launching an innovative oral-history and wetlands-awareness project in five schools in Lafourche and Terrebonne parishes, communities whose livelihoods depend upon the survival of Louisiana's coastal wetlands. The participating middle schools—Lacache, Grand Caillou, Montegut, Larose—Cut Off, and Golden Meadow—are all located within 30 miles of the open waters of the Gulf of Mexico. The "Slow Blink" project will preserve and document the 20th- and 21st-century history and culture of these wetland communities.

The project, which began in January 2010, comprises a series of teacher-training workshops for the social studies and science teachers from each school. Panels of leading educators in related fields will train teachers in the gathering and processing of oral histories, provide an overview of the causes of and proposed solutions for wetlands loss, and offer extensive field options for experiential learning in the wetlands. The teachers will come away with recording equipment, bundles of educational materials supplementing their training, and a curriculum guide for a six-week intensive teaching unit.

Fifty students from each school will participate in the project. They will learn about the history of the wetlands and the importance of preserving them for present and future generations. And they will conduct intergenerational interviews with family members and community elders in order to learn about the role of the wetlands in their own lives.

Through the "Slow Blink" project, The Historic New Orleans Collection's education department hopes to build an informed corps of young environmental stewards, while

documenting the culture of the people living in or near Louisiana's wetlands. Transcripts of the oral history interviews will be preserved at the Williams Research Center. The project is funded by The Collection with support from British Petroleum (BP) through the Barataria-Terrebonne Estuary Foundation (BTEF). Susan Bergeron, an educational specialist with the U.S. Geological Survey National Wetlands Research Center, is codirecting the project with The Collection's education department.

—Sue Laudeman

### **The Collection Salutes the "Slow Blink" Community Partners**

*These partners are providing educational materials, lesson plans, and support for the project.*

Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program  
Louisiana Department of Education  
Louisiana Department of Natural Resources  
Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries  
Louisiana State University

Louisiana Sea Grant Program  
Louisiana Coastal Roots Program  
T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History

Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium (LUMCON)  
Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve

Barataria Preserve  
French Quarter Visitor Center

Nicholls State University  
University of New Orleans

Pontchartrain Institute of Environmental Services (PIES)

U.S. Geological Survey National Wetlands Research Center