

## Louisiana Bayou

land  
an area the size of  
connecticut, the whole  
southern land area of  
Louisiana - three million  
acres - is washing out  
to sea to the Gulf of  
Mexico.

as big as the  
everglades

25% of America's total coastal  
wetlands  
40% of the nation's total salt  
marshlands

The Mississippi River, more than  
a half mile wide and 200 feet  
deep, carrying water from the  
Rockies and the Alleghenies and  
all points in between at a rate of  
600,000 cubic feet per second.  
Land is in that flow, 160 million  
tons per year, so much of it that  
ones hand disappears just one  
foot below the surface.

Forest dwelling songbirds alone are  
disappearing at a rate of 1 to 3 percent each  
year, and over a 10 year period at least nine  
types of Gulf shorbirds declined to half or  
less of their former numbers. Most  
disturbing, the total number of birds  
detected by radar crossing the Gulf of  
Mexico each year has decreased by half  
within the last twenty years.

For 7,000 years the mighty Mississippi River, more  
than a half mile wide and 200 feet deep, carries a  
vast watershed from parts of three Canadian  
provinces and 2/3 of the continental United States. It  
is the world's third-longest river carrying sediments  
for thousands of miles and depositing it all along  
coastal Louisiana either through annual flooding  
along its lower stretches or in creating new land at  
the mouth of the river called deltas. This land flow  
equals to 160 million tons per year ravaging at a rate  
of 600,000 cubic feet per second.  
It took 7,000 years to create 6,000 square miles of  
wetlands and just over a century to reduce it close to  
death.

Every thousand years or so, the  
Mississippi sediments blocked and  
rerouted the river towards the path of least  
resistance, the shortest route to the Gulf  
of Mexico. A new delta would be built.  
spreading new land along a wide  
coastline, the bayou region of Louisiana.

The barrier islands, only 12  
remaining today are the old  
remnants created by the  
Mississippi River, left behind  
long ago when the river delta  
used to push father out into  
the Gulf of Mexico.

Coastal Louisiana by itself, accounts for  
an astonishing 30 percent of America's  
annual seafood harvest, measured by  
weight.

Oysters harvested from these  
rich beds produce more than  
10 million pounds of oyster  
meat per year, more than any  
other state in America.

Wetland habitats are the most biologically  
productive areas on earth, in Louisiana's coasta  
zone there are no fewer than 353 species of  
birds residing here. It is an avian dreamland.  
20% of all the ducks in North America, 4 million  
of them, overwinter in coastal Louisiana. It is  
the Mississippi "flyway" that area in the  
migratory path between north and south  
America.

Crabs, just one small part of this massive  
estuarine waterscape of fresh, brackish, and  
saltwater habitats spread across endless  
bays, lagoons, inlets, and marshes shaped  
by the Mississippi River and more than half of  
the shrimp caught in Louisiana is in these  
waters. The shrimp are here entirely because  
of the land.