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Richard K. Speairs Jr.

Louisiana State University in Shreveport

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Ouachita Biological Station

RICHARD K. SPEAIRS, JR.

Department of Biological Sciences, Louisiana State University in Shreveport,
8515 Youree Drive, Shreveport, Louisiana 71115

A biological station has been established in the Big Fork Civil Township of Polk County, Arkansas, encompassing 300 acres. The area is in the Caddo Mountains of the Ouachita Province of the Paleozoic area. Topographically the area consists of steep, rocky mountain slopes forming narrow ridges running east-west, separated by narrow floodplains. Soils, developed in mixed material from alternate beds of shale, sandstone, and novaculite, are dry to droughty and have moderate erosion potential. The natural vegetation is predominantly oak-hickory on ridgetops and north slopes, and shortleaf pine on south slopes. Oak, beech, gums, sycamore, and wild cherry grow along drainages and near the base of north slopes.

Facilities include a 20 by 30 ft cinder-block building on a concrete slab which provides floor space for a laboratory, a food preparation area, a dining area, and a 200 sq ft dormitory. Two restrooms are included, one with shower. Electricity, propane gas, and water are available. Because the tap water is untreated spring water which will not pass Public Health Standards, drinking water must be brought in by all visitors. A floored attic of about 600 sq ft affords additional sleeping area for persons with sleeping bags or air mattresses.

It is hoped that the Ouachita Biological Station will serve as a center for in-depth study of the biota and ecology of the Ouachita Mountains of Arkansas and Oklahoma and, ultimately, compilation and synthesis of such findings.

Visiting biologists are welcomed and encouraged to use the facilities. Usage will be restricted to research or teaching. It is planned to grant use permits to full-time research or teaching staff members (including graduate students) of institutions of higher learning, or recognized private or public agencies and organizations. Undergraduate student usage will be restricted to groups accompanied by a full-time research or teaching staff member.