

# LOS NEWS



NEWSLETTER OF THE **Louisiana Ornithological Society**

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**Submission Deadline Date for  
Winter LOS News is Jan. 7, 2005.**

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## 2004 LOS Fall Meeting

Cameron, Louisiana

Friday, Saturday and Sunday, October 29-31, 2004

Can't believe that summer is nearly gone. Some of our feathered friends have already begun the long haul back to the tropics. As we haul ourselves back to the coast, we can only hope that a few wrong turns (birdwise, not peoplewise) will spice up our gathering. The LOS will hold its 2004 Fall Meeting on October 29-31 in the seaside community of Cameron. Our Friday and Saturday evening activities will be held at the Knights of Columbus Hall. Registration will begin at 6:00 pm on Friday and a hospitality table will be set up so you can come and enjoy a snack before the evening program begins at 7:00 pm. Please complete the attached registration form and return it, along with your registration fee, to Marianna Tanner-Primeaux at the address listed on the form.

Registration for the Saturday evening meeting will also begin at 6:00 pm. The KCs will provide a tasty buffet dinner on Saturday night for the modest price of \$12. Please add that cost to your registration fee if you plan to take advantage of this great bargain. The buffet will open at 6:30 pm. No food will be served after 8. The program will begin at 7:30 pm and the reading of the bird sightings list and business meeting will follow. The birding around Cameron is excellent, which is why we make the semiannual pilgrimage to the land of the cheniers. Hope you can join us!

### Friday night presentation:

*"Natural Colors: a High Speed Survey of Birds, Insects and Reptiles"* by Dennis Demcheck from Baton Rouge.

There it was, with its two clear, beady eyes raised on stilts staring directly at me. The underbelly was sky blue and the spindly legs were brilliant scarlet - a stark contrast from the black lava rock. This picture of a Sally Lightfoot crab, taken by Dennis on Isla Espanola, was so stunning, I prevailed on Dennis to show us a sampling of his favorite slides taken on birding trips or even a chance encounter in his yard. Whatever struck his fancy. So tonight, Dennis will regale us with his most colorful encounters with nature. He has been birding for more than twenty years and has had a keen interest in photography for even longer. If you have ever birded with Dennis, you quickly discover he has many talents and interests including astronomy, geology, botany and even the sugar content of nectars. And, he does a terrific job as our newsletter co-editor and resident cartoonist (let's hear it for Sluggo!!).

### Saturday night presentation:

*"Birds and Butterflies of the Texas Big Bend; What, Where and When"* by Ro Wauer from Victoria, TX.

Tonight we will travel to one of America's premier national parks, Big Bend. At Big Bend, the Rio Grande River forms the distinctive outline that gives Texas one of the most recognizable borders in the world. It also forms the southern border of a huge national park that is mostly known in birding circles as the only nesting locale for the Colima warbler in the US. But the park is much more. The scenic beauty is breathtaking, especially when the desert is in bloom. And the park is home to many more unique species of plants, reptiles and insects.

Ro Wauer is uniquely qualified to take us on a tour of the park. Ro retired from the National Park Service in 1989, after a 32-year career as a park ranger, working at Crater Lake, Death Valley, Pinnacles Natl. Monument, Zion, Great Smoky Mountains, the Caribbean and, of course, Big Bend National Park. He was also the Southwest Region Chief Scientist and Chief of Natural Resource Management in Washington, DC. Since retirement Ro has served on the National Academy of Science Committee on Science in the National Parks, the Board of Trustees of the National Parks Conservation Association, and is currently on the Board of Scientists of the Chihuahuan Desert Research Institute and Advisory Board of the Big Bend Natural History Association. Ro has authored more than 170 nature articles for magazines and journals and 21 books, including *Birding the Southwestern National Park* (2004 - Texas A&M Univ. Press), *Butterflies of West Texas Parks and Preserves* (2002 - Texas Tech Press), and *A Field Guide to Birds of the Big Bend* (1996 - Gulf Publ.).

His current projects include completing a book on the butterflies of the Lower Rio Grande Valley (to include 350+ photos), developing a manuscript on a butterfly site guide for Texas, completing a manuscript on the American Kestrel, and visiting Mexico every few months to photograph butterflies that eventually will be incorporated into a Mexican butterfly book. Ro is a very active birder and leads tours for several organizations including Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, so we are very happy to have him tonight to discuss one of his favorite places to look for birds and butterflies.

*Submitted by Karen Fay, LOS President*

## Minutes of the LOS Spring Meeting

### Cameron - April 23, 2004

The meeting was called to order at 7:11 p.m. by Vice President Bill Fontenot.

He expressed thanks to Marianna Tanner Primeaux, Judy Fruge, Judith O'Neale, Joelle Finley, and Elouise Mullen for their work at the registration and sales tables and Janis Harrison for arranging the hospitality table.

LOS officers and Board Members were introduced:

Secretary Joelle Finley, Treasurer Judith O'Neale, Past President Rosemary Seidler, Board Members David Booth and Lee Ellis. Also introduced were LOS News Editors Kay Radlauer and Dennis Demcheck and JLO Editor Jim Ingold

Absent: President Karen Fay was unable to attend because of a prior birding commitment.

Bill acknowledged David L'Hoste for his continued great work on the LOS webpage and online store. You can buy bird books, binoculars and lots of birding needs at the online store. [www.losbird.org](http://www.losbird.org)

It was announced that the annual LOS Awards presentation will be Saturday night.

Bill Fontenot will lead the Saturday field trip and participants should meet at the Cameron Motel parking lot at 7 a.m. This will be an all day trip starting at the west end of Cameron Parish and working eastward.

#### OTHER ANNOUNCEMENTS:

The pink ticket that is included in your badge holder will allow free entry into the East Jetty on Saturday only.

Bill introduced LOS Secretary Joelle Finley who presented a slide show entitled "Birding in Vietnam with Ben King." She traveled this past January to Vietnam with Kingbird Tours.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted by Joelle Finley, Secretary*

### Cameron - April 24, 2004

Vice President Bill Fontenot opened the meeting at 8:00 p.m. giving thanks to Marianna Tanner Primeaux, Judy Fruge, Judith O'Neale, Joelle Finley and Elouise Mullen for their work at the registration and sales tables. Janis Harrison was thanked for the Friday night hospitality table along with the Light House Bakery, Dauphin Island, Alabama, for their donation of 2 cinnamon rings.

The officers and board members of LOS were introduced:

Secretary Joelle Finley, Treasurer Judith O'Neale, SWLA Board Member David Booth, SELA Board Member Lee Ellis and Past President Rosemary Seidler. Also introduced were the JLO Editor Jim Ingold and the LOS News Editors Kay Radlauer and Dennis Demcheck. Bill acknowledged David L'Hoste for his great work on the LOS webpage and online store. You can buy bird books, binoculars and lots of birding needs at this online store. [www.losbird.org](http://www.losbird.org)

Bill asked that all new LOS members please stand to be recognized and welcomed. Carolyn Bergeron of River Ridge was welcomed.

The following special guests were welcomed:

Richard DeMay, Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program  
Carolyn Lynn and Andy Loker, daughter and son-in-law of the late George H. Lowry.

Bill introduced Marty Guidry who announced the 2004 award winners.

The recipients of the President's Award for spring 2004 were as follows:

1. David L'Hoste for his dedicated work on the LOS website
2. Richard DeMay for his work with the Barataria Estuary Program

The George H. Lowry Award for 2004 was presented by Marty Guidry and Caro Lynn Lowry Loker to Donna Dittmann and Steve Cardiff for their continued efforts to educate ornithologists and promote field ornithology.

Bill announced a proposal by Steve Cardiff to change the check list to a "List of Record." The list would include all birds seen Friday, Saturday and Sunday in Cameron and Calcasieu Parishes. The "List of Record" would contain date, time, location and number of individuals seen. "Out of date" or uncommon species would require a 3x5 card.

An argument against the "List of Record" was made based on the fact that one could no longer compare the current list with the lists from past years.

Steve Cardiff said that this would be an experiment for now and the bugs would have to be worked out. Someone would have to volunteer to compile the list.

Bill called the checklist and Judith O'Neale tallied the results. 201 species were seen in Cameron Parish on Saturday and a total of 211 species were seen in Cameron and Calcasieu Parishes on Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

Bill introduced Juan Carlos Calvachi from Quito, Ecuador, who presented a video program entitled "Ecuador: a Birding Paradise". Beautiful scenes of Ecuador and its bird fauna graced the two video screens. Juan Carlos also owns a Bed and Breakfast outside Quito and his own tour company.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted by Joelle Finley, Secretary*

**Make a note . . .**

### Upcoming Meetings

**October 29 - 31, 2004 • Cameron**

**February 18 - 20, 2005 • Lafayette**

**April 22 - 24, 2005 • Lafayette**

**Louisiana Ornithological Society**

**[www.losbird.org](http://www.losbird.org)**

### Proposed LOS Dues Increase

The LOS Board of Directors would like to propose the following dues increase for LOS Membership starting with 2005 to be voted on at the October meeting:

Regular: .....	\$20.00
Family: .....	\$25.00
Junior (under 14): .....	\$7.50
Student: .....	\$10.00
Senior (over 65): .....	\$15.00
Senior Family: .....	\$20.00
Library .....	\$15.00 (Please add \$2.00 for foreign subscriptions)
Contributing: .....	\$50.00
Sustaining: .....	\$100.00
Life: .....	\$300.00
Family Life: .....	\$500 (Installments may be arranged for Life memberships)

## MARK YOUR CALENDARS

February 18-20, 2005  
**The LOS Winter Meeting**  
 in Lafayette

Because Mardi Gras is February 8<sup>th</sup>, the winter meeting was moved to a later date.

It will be held at the Best Western Hotel Acadiana and details will be posted on the website after the fall meeting and be in the next LOS News.

Our Saturday night speaker will be Alain Clavette, Canadian film maker, who recently has been developing his own nature-documentary about the migration of birds through North America for French television, which will air next year. This movie was shot in part in Louisiana in 2004.

Please see the Registration Form on back page.



### New Members

Carolyn Bergeron, River Ridge, LA  
 Poppy Z. Brite, New Orleans, LA  
 Heather Carnocki, Livingston, LA  
 John K. Dillon, Baton Rouge, LA  
 Doty Kempf, Lafayette, LA  
 Jackie Landry, Slidell, LA  
 Bobby & Margo McGrath, Walker, LA  
 William H. Macklin, M.D., Alexandria, LA  
 John B. Saer, New Orleans, LA  
 Julie Talbot, Lafayette, LA  
 Ellen Tippett, Shreveport, LA

# LOS Awards

## DR. GEORGE H. LOWERY AWARD

The Louisiana Ornithological Society recognized and honored **Donna Dittmann & Steven Cardiff** on the 24th day of April 2004 for their positive influence on Louisiana birding and habitat conservation. For many years Donna and Steve have encouraged folks to pursue their interest in Louisiana birding by offering beginning birding classes and by providing educational field trips both to enhance their knowledge of birds and to help them acquire birding skills. Donna and Steve's leadership in Louisiana Christmas Bird Censuses has highlighted the diverse avifauna of Louisiana and the need to conserve critical habitats. Their work on the LOS Bird Records Committee and with the LSU Museum of Natural Science has had a strong, positive influence on Louisiana ornithology through their professional work and their publications.

## LOS PRESIDENT'S AWARD

The Louisiana Ornithological Society recognized and honored **Richard DeMay** on the 24th day of April 2004 for his innovative leadership of the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program that is educating the public about the critical need to protect bird habitat and that has been instrumental in protecting significant habitat throughout coastal Louisiana. Several projects that Richard catalyzed include the Grand Isle Migratory Bird Celebration Day, developing a kiosk poster display on ecotourism, promoting establishment of the Louisiana Coastal Birding Trail, encouraging woody plant utilization as neotropical bird habitat and publishing a brochure highlighting the importance of cheniers to migrating birds.

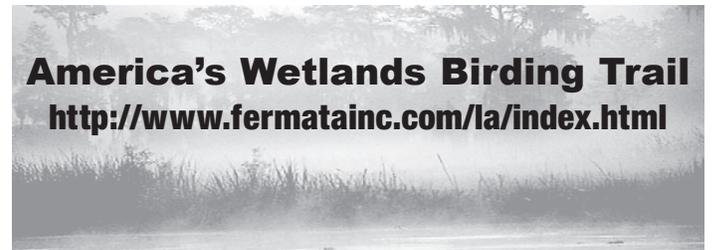
*Karen Fay, President, LOS*

## LOS PRESIDENT'S AWARD

The Louisiana Ornithological Society recognizes and honors **David L'Hoste** on this 24th day of April 2004 for leading the LOS into the electronic age during his tenure as Vice-President and President of the LOS - both through the effective use of e-mail and by developing the LOS website. As webmaster, David developed and enhanced the LOS website into an award-winning site that is one of the premier birding sites on the web. It showcases Louisiana birds and birding as well as important issues of LOS. This eye-appealing, easily navigable, functional website provides a focal point for anyone interested in Louisiana's avifauna. With over 70,000 hits since its birth in 1998 it opens Louisiana birding to the world and has introduced many folks to outstanding birding opportunities in Louisiana.

*Karen Fay, President, LOS*

**America's Wetlands Birding Trail**  
<http://www.fermatainc.com/la/index.html>



## Statewide Colonial Waterbird Survey: evaluation of temporal trends, visible indicator species and sampling biases.

Clay Green and Paul Leberg, Department of Biology, University of Louisiana at Lafayette

### What is your Colonial Waterbird Survey research?

We are conducting a statewide colonial wading bird and seabird inventory during 2004 and 2005. The purpose of our research is to identify and survey all known and newly discovered breeding colonies of waterbirds in the state of Louisiana. Our research will identify the locations of waterbird colonies as well as provide the approximate total number of nests in each colony and species composition. This information is important to the state for both waterbird conservation and to provide a necessary database for use in environmental impact reviews of proposed projects that could affect waterbird colonies. Our research will also provide a better understanding of temporal trends as we will survey a select number of colonies annually. Additionally, we will compare and assess different methodologies associated with aerial and ground surveys. Lastly, we will evaluate the use of "visible indicator species" to provide information on other less detectable species.

### What are the areas you are covering?

In 2004, we completed colony surveys for northern and central Louisiana. Next year (2005), we will survey all of southern Louisiana (south of IH-10). In addition, we are conducting annual surveys on a select number (~45) of waterbird colonies in southwestern and south central Louisiana. These annual surveys will be used to assess temporal changes or trends of colonies. Temporal changes that we might expect include change in number of nests, change in species composition, change in arrival or start of incubation dates, etc. We are also conducting intensive aerial surveys over the Atchafalaya Basin (2004) and Barataria Terrebonne Estuarine System (2005). These areas will be used to evaluate two aerial survey techniques used to locate new waterbird colonies.

### Who is doing the research?

This research is being conducted by myself (Clay Green) and Paul Leberg of the University of Louisiana at Lafayette in cooperation with Clint Jeske and Thomas Michot, biologists from the USGS National Wetlands Research Center. In addition, Maggie Luent, graduate student in the Department of Biology at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, is assisting in the surveys as well as conducting her own thesis research on nesting chronology at selected colonies in south Louisiana.

### How is research funded?

This research is funded through a grant to the University of Louisiana at Lafayette from the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Louisiana Natural Heritage Program.

### How is research done?

Our surveys are conducted both aerial using fixed wing aircraft and on the ground using ground count techniques. Aerial surveys have been the predominant method for censusing waterbird colonies. Aerial surveys can cover greater areas and are generally not restricted by access. Aerial surveys can be especially useful in locating new colonies and counting birds nesting in dense vegetation (e.g. white-faced ibis in bulrush). Aerial surveys are conducted by flying over a known colony and counting (estimating) the number of birds and identifying species. In large colonies, observers generally count clumps or groups of birds to give an approximation as opposed to actually trying to count individual birds.

We are also conducting ground counts on a subset of colonies to compare with aerial counts. Ground counts are conducted by actually counting every individual bird (nest) observed. While possibly more accurate, ground counts of certain colonies can be problematic due to dense vegetation, increased risk of disturbance, and accessibility. We use 2 observers on each ground count to provide an estimation of error by comparing both observers' counts.

### When are flights done?

Aerial flights and subsequent ground counts are conducted during spring months (April-June) to coincide with peak nesting season of colonial waterbirds. Although some species begin nesting earlier (e.g. great egret) and some later (e.g. white ibis), these months generally provide the highest density of nesting waterbirds.

### What is your research time line? When will results be available to the public?

The project runs through Sept 2005. The database is stored with Louisiana Natural Heritage Program. We have plans to publish the research side of the project (indicator species analysis, survey methodology, etc) but that may be over a year away from completion.

### What is "plasticity"?

Plasticity in regards to waterbird colonies refers to the tendency (or lack thereof) for a specific colony to temporally and spatially fluctuate in size, species composition and location. Some colonies tend to remain the same year in and year out while other colonies fluctuate dramatically over a period of years. Additionally, some colonies may shift spatially over time. Lake Martin appears to be a good example of this as birds are nesting closer to the boat landing and further away from the entrance to Rookery Road than they have in years past.

Currently, little light has been shed upon the underlying reasons for the plasticity of waterbird colonies. Long term studies of specific waterbird colonies suggest habitat changes both within and adjacent to a rookery probably influence size, species composition, and location. Habitat changes that affect waterbird colonies could be natural (e.g. drought, hurricanes) or human-induced (e.g. development). Disturbance may also influence the plasticity of waterbird colonies. Social interactions within and between species also probably influence the dynamics of a colony.

### Where are new rookeries?

Our aerial and ground surveys have located new rookeries throughout the areas surveyed. We have identified over 10 new rookeries in the Atchafalaya Basin as well as several new rookeries in southwestern Louisiana. Since northern and central Louisiana have not been aerial surveyed in its entirety for almost 30 years, we found numerous (~25) new colonies in our 2004 surveys.

### What is "visibility bias"?

Visibility bias, in the case of waterbird surveys, refers to the differences in detectability between white-plumaged birds (e.g. snowy egrets) and dark-plumaged birds (e.g. little blue herons). This bias is of concern in waterbird surveys because our eyes, either from an aircraft or on the ground, will generally sight the white birds first and may overlook the darker species. This bias can lead to possible underestimation of dark-plumaged species in our colony counts.

Because white and dark-plumaged birds differ greatly in their detectability, we are investigating "indicator species analysis" to determine if surveys of detectable species can be used to gain an understanding of less visible species. Indicator species analysis is a method often used to look at species associations or the tendency for certain species to be found together. For example, preliminary results suggest great blue herons and neotropical cormorants tend to nest together in the same colony. One of these species may serve as an indicator of the presence of the other species. It is our hope that our research will yield certain "indicator species" that can be used to infer the presence of less detectable species.

Further questions or comments are welcome.

Clay Green's email is [mcg7576@louisiana.edu](mailto:mcg7576@louisiana.edu)

# Where To Eat



First in a Series

## Dining Opportunities for Birders Along the Creole Nature Trail By Gay Gomez

Whether you are an ornithologist working in the field or a birder on a trek, being away from home usually necessitates seeking out places to eat. Is there not, after all, a limit to the number of cold sandwiches the body can tolerate?! If you find yourself getting hungry while traveling the Creole Nature Trail to one of southwest Louisiana's birding hotspots, here are a few suggestions.

At the southeast edge of Lake Charles, along La. Highway 14, is **Hackett's Cajun Kitchen**, a small establishment with a large local following. Many customers order take-out meals, but there are a few tables for those who want to dine on the premises. Hackett's is well worth a stop, for here you will find some of the best boudin in the region, as well as excellent plate lunches that feature a choice of meats, vegetable dishes, and desserts. Hackett's closes about 5 pm.

After traveling southeast through ricefield and pasture country, birders pass an unassuming Citgo gas station on La. Highway 27 just north of the Cameron Prairie NWR visitor center. A closer look reveals that the Citgo is also **Chesson's Grocery**, the best lunch stop in the Sweet Lake area. Chesson's features a small dining area and a good selection of hot and cold sandwiches, plus boudin, fries, and two more unusual menu items: crab burgers and shrimp burgers. These very local specialties are homemade crab patties and shrimp patties served on a bun, with all the trimmings; I have always found them delicious. While you wait for your order, you can browse the wall of colorful fishing lures, another of Chesson's distinctive touches.

Across the Gibbstown Bridge lies the vast Big Burn marsh, and beyond it the highway's intersection with Little Chenier Road and the Creole road network. At Creole, near Cameron Parish's one and only spotlight, is the **Creole Seafood Restaurant**; it lies adjacent to Carlton's Lounge and was once the Creole Food Store. There have been some renovations in the past few years, and the restaurant is now larger and brighter. While the restaurant features occasional seafood buffets and boiled seafood specials, I ordered a menu item, stuffed shrimp with salad and baked potato, and thoroughly enjoyed my meal.

Further south, between Creole and Oak Grove, is **Gaspard's Conoco**. Here is another gas station that features a dining area, as well as snacks and convenience store items. Gaspard's fare includes breakfast, pizza, sandwiches, and fried chicken. The store also features a small selection of Louisiana gifts (including preserved alligator heads and other local alligator products), and an impressive variety of Zapp's potato chips.

Heading west along La. Highway 82 through Cameron, birders will pass **Brown's Grocery** at the turn for the KC Hall (our usual LOS meeting facility). Although I have not sampled their fare, a parish resident raved about sandwiches from the deli located at the rear of the store. Another good quick-stop is the **Cam-Mart Shell**, at the corner of Hwy. 82 and the road to East Jetty Park and Pier. Although you can't order a sandwich or plate lunch, this station features several crock pots from which you can grab a link of good boudin or hot sausage—even at breakfast time.

If you're in need of a more substantial meal, downtown Cameron now boasts two new restaurants, which give birders a choice beyond the familiar **Pat's, Outrigger, and Subway**. **Stella's Restaurant**, which is adjacent to Subway, is Cameron's most upscale restaurant, with a large and varied menu featuring full meals as well as lighter items. I enjoyed grilled marinated chicken with sautéed spinach and baked potato but was also tempted by the shrimp creole, fried seafood, and salads I saw on the plates of others around me. Stella's serves lunch and dinner and is open until 9 pm. Cameron's other relatively new restaurant is **Kim's**, a Vietnamese establishment located just east of the Courthouse. Kim's offers good Asian food (more in the style of Chinese cooking than Vietnamese) as well as

seafood po-boys and other Louisiana fare.

Beyond Cameron, the ferry across the Calcasieu Ship Channel carries birders west to Holly Beach, Constance Beach, and Peveto Woods. A few miles west of the Peveto Woods Sanctuary is **Young's Grocery**, another community grocery renowned for its cooking. Here you can order from a varied menu of breakfast sandwiches, boudin, salads, hot and cold lunchtime sandwiches, and fried appetizer items (including "poppers"). Be aware, however, that the "shrimp burgers" here are not in the style of those at Chesson's; they are breaded fried shrimp tails on a bun.

Returning to Holly Beach and the northbound trip along Hwy. 27 west of Calcasieu Lake, birders travel through Sabine NWR before reaching the next potential dining spot, **Brown's Grocery** in Hackberry. Brown's is a large grocery with a fine deli that offers nicely dressed sandwiches, as well as tasty boudin and bakery items. I always enjoy a turkey sandwich here, along with some homemade cookies.

The road north of Hackberry brings visitors to the Ellender Bridge over the Intracoastal Waterway and eventually into Sulphur, where a number of restaurants await. When I have guests, especially those wanting to eat alligator, I take them to **Cajun Charlie's**, located along Hwy. 27 just north of the interstate. Cajun Charlie's has a large buffet and good menu items (including the reptile), along with a well-stocked gift shop of Louisiana items. *Bon appetit!*

## Barataria-Terrebonne Bird Action Team

By Richard DeMay

You may or may not be aware of it, but over the last several years, the efforts of a dedicated group of people are beginning to produce results that benefit birds and birding in south Louisiana. These people serve on what is formally called the "Protection of Habitat for Migratory and Resident Birds" (PHMRB) action plan team. One of many such teams that help implement the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program's (BTNEP) comprehensive plan, this team is composed of ornithologists, birders, wildlife managers, tourism officials, researchers, and anyone else that has an interest in birds. The strength of this action plan team, and in turn the strength of the BTNEP program, is due solely to the passion and drive of the folks that have participated in the process.

Since 1999, this team has initiated numerous projects including:

- Developing educational information
- Monitoring bird populations
- Promoting avian tourism
- Restoring habitat
- Directing research projects

Each individual project has resulted in the development of partnerships. In some cases, these partnerships are quite large and include collaboration by many different organizations, both governmental and non-governmental.

Many of the efforts thus far have focused on the development of educational information that do two things: one, inform people of the importance of coastal Louisiana's habitats to birds; and two, encourage locals and others to experience the great birding opportunities that we have to offer. This information comes in the form of videos, posters, maps, brochures, documents, web sites, and the newest – a bird calendar for 2005. This information has been distributed free of charge at festivals, meetings, conventions, and directly through the mail to anyone who has requested them. You are likely to be familiar with some of these products, as they have received wide exposure and distribution. One example, "Wings Over the Wetlands" is a 30-minute documentary video on the

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## Birding On US Army Corps of Engineers Properties in Louisiana:

### I. ATCHAFALAYA BASIN - SOUTH FARM

By Christopher G. Brantley & Michael E. Stout

The Atchafalaya Basin Floodway in south-central Louisiana supports a diverse and productive freshwater ecosystem that is without parallel in this nation. Annual riverine overflow is the basis for this high diversity and productivity. As the river water spreads over the lower basin each year, it picks up detritus and nutrients from the forest floor and these serve as the food source for numerous plankton, bottom-dwelling organisms, crawfish, fish, amphibians, reptiles, mammals, and birds. These organisms are highly dependent upon the 350,000 acres of annually flooded forest habitat. Headwater and backwater lakes, non-flooded forests and open areas are also of vital importance to habitat diversity in this area.

The US Army Corps of Engineers has recognized the importance of this ecosystem to the region, both from an ecological as well as an economic viewpoint. In developing the Atchafalaya Basin Floodway System, Louisiana project, in concert with cooperating state and Federal agencies, a balanced approach to addressing water resources problems in the Atchafalaya Basin has been implemented, while providing for the safe passage of the project design flood in an environmentally-acceptable manner. Congress has authorized our agency to provide the following project specific objectives for the Atchafalaya Basin Floodway:

- 1) to implement a flood control system that will pass the project design flood in an environmentally-sound manner and reduce to the extent practical, deposition of sediments that reduce the ability of the floodway to pass the project flood,
- 2) retain, restore, and protect the unique environmental features of the floodway, and maintain or enhance the long-range productivity of the wetlands and woodlands,
- 3) control land-use changes, and,
- 4) maximize public opportunity to observe and utilize the fish and wildlife resources of the floodway, by providing public access and public recreation facilities.

Much of the final three objectives listed above are addressed through implementation of the authorized Public Access Feature, contained in the 1982 Atchafalaya Basin Floodway System Feasibility Study/Environmental Impact Statement. This feature provides for the Corps of Engineers to purchase approximately 50,000 acres within this large overflow swamp for the public to access for recreation and commercial activities, as well as to restore and preserve unique environmental values, and control land-use changes in the Atchafalaya Basin. Based on the 1982 study, the Atchafalaya Basin Floodway Project was partially funded by Congress in Public Laws 99-88 in 1985 and 99-662 in 1986. Congress considers fish and wildlife enhancement measures carried out as part of the Atchafalaya Basin Floodway System project as providing benefits that are national in purpose. As such, the public access feature was purchased at 100 percent Federal expense, and the Federal share of the resulting cost of operation, maintenance, repair, replacement, and rehabilitation of this feature is 75 percent. The non-federal project sponsor (State of Louisiana) is expected to bear the remaining 25 percent cost.

During the late 1970s, there was significant clearing of bottomland hardwood forests in the upper Atchafalaya Basin Floodway and conversion to agricultural developments. As additional sediment was anticipated to fill many of the aquatic areas of the floodway, conversion of these areas to agriculture was also predicted. Therefore, purchases under the public access feature proceeded in a general north to south progression in the Floodway.

Originally, after purchase of the initial property tracts, our agency worked closely with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries to oversee these tracts until management plans, staff and cooperation agreements were in place. A partnership was developed in 1994 between the Corps of Engineers, Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, Ducks Unlimited, Exxon, and the North American Wetlands Conservation

Council to construct and implement a wetland habitat management plan for South Farm, a 1,600-acre agricultural area surrounded by bottomland hardwood forests.

Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries currently has a long-term management agreement with the Corps of Engineers to provide habitat for migratory and wintering waterfowl and shorebirds. Wading birds and many species of passerine birds also utilize the various moist soil units on the area. During the summer and fall months, Wood Storks and Roseate Spoonbills can occasionally be sighted at South Farm.

To get to South Farm, take Interstate 10 to the East Atchafalaya Basin Protection Levee. Take the Ramah-Maringouin exit and proceed north on the paved road. Turn at the first left and travel along the levee for approximately 1.5 miles. On the left you will notice a road that crosses the levee. Proceed over the levee and park in the large parking area. Access to South Farm from the parking area is by ATV, bike, or by foot.

### Barataria-Terrebonne – cont'd from page 5

importance of coastal marshes, cheniers, bottomland hardwoods, and bald cypress/water tupelo swamps to south Louisiana birds. Another example is the "Louisiana: A Migratory Crossroads" poster that focuses on Louisiana and its importance to many migrating birds due to our location along major migratory routes.

One unique project that the PHMRB action plan team has been directly involved with is the maritime forest ridge/marsh restoration project currently being constructed just north of Fourchon, La. When completed, this project will result in the restoration of a chenier ridge and flanking marsh that is over two miles in length and over 400 feet in width, running from LA 1 westward to Bayou Lafourche. This restoration project largely is a result of the expansion of the Offshore Oil and Gas Port at Fourchon, La. The restoration effort, however, goes far beyond what the Greater Lafourche Port Commission is strictly responsible for in terms of mitigation.

As of August 2004, some 1,429,282 cubic yards of earthen material have been hydraulically pumped at a cost of \$1,772,816 to construct half (6,000 feet) of the proposed project. This fall, after the site partially dries, construction equipment will be used to shape the ridge and flanking marsh. Soon after, grass seeds will be aerially sown over the site to encourage plant growth and stabilize the ridge to reduce erosion. In early 2005, several different species of grasses including Saltgrass, Seashore Paspalum, and Smooth Cordgrass will be planted throughout the site. These plants were selected for their salt tolerance, as it is expected that soil salinities will initially be quite high. After soil salinities have moderated, woody plants will be planted, including Live Oak, Hackberry, Red Mulberry, Black Mangrove, French Mulberry, and Yaupon.

This area is planned to be a premier birding destination. Plans include the construction of foot bridges, interpretive kiosks, observation platforms, benches, etc. over much of the area. A small educational center next to LA 1 and the entrance to the site is also being considered. To promote this concept, the Greater Lafourche Port Commission has already set aside the entire property north of the Port as a wildlife sanctuary. No fishing, hunting, or any other take is allowed on the property.

In the not-too-distant future this site will be a true birder's paradise. In fact, this goal is already becoming a reality. Many birds, including Least Terns, Black Skimmers, Wilson's Plovers, and Common Nighthawks, are nesting throughout the area. Many other birds are foraging on the shallow hard-bottom edges of the ridge and the adjacent marshes.

Stay tuned as this project and others unfold. For more information, please visit the Barataria Terrebonne National Estuary Program's web site [www.btnep.org](http://www.btnep.org) and click on "birds" at the top of the site. If you are interested in receiving any of our free educational products, please call us at 800 259-0869.

# -BIRD CLUB- PROFILE

## Gulf Coast Bird Club

by Louise Hanchey

### History

The Gulf Coast Bird Club held its first meeting on April 13<sup>th</sup> 1983 in Frasch Hall, McNeese State University, Lake Charles. Sixty-three people attended the first meeting. The Club constitution and by-laws were completed and adopted in the Spring of 1984.

### Purpose

The Gulf Coast Bird Club is dedicated to promoting the knowledge and conservation of birdlife, other wildlife, natural habitats and natural resources; and to fostering an appreciation of our natural environment and the significance of its influence upon our lives.

### Meetings and Field Trips

We welcome all who are interested in birding and nature to attend our educational meetings and participate in our field trips. The Club meets September through May, on the second Thursday of the month, at 7 pm in Frasch Hall of the McNeese State University campus.

Field trips take place the Saturday after the Thursday meeting, leaving at 7 am from the parking lot of the Whitney National Bank, the corner of Ryan & College Streets in Lake Charles, off Hwy. 210, Ryan St. Exit. The field trip destination is announced at the Thursday night meeting.

**Newsletter/Web Site** <http://www.geocities.com/gulfbird01/>

The Club's newsletter, Pelican Papers, contains a report our field trip and club member's "Bird Sightings" of the previous month. It announces the program for our upcoming meeting. The Sept. issue includes a club membership list. Currently the club has ninety-seven members.

### Favorite Birding Areas

**In Calcasieu Parish** - Carlyss area: Hwy. 1133 (between Hwy 108 & Dave Dugas Rd.) ponds, bushes & trees for ducks, Anhinga, pipits, migrating songbirds; Roads west of Hwy 27 (Choupique, Gum Island, Fabacher, Gum Cove, Charlie & Ellis Moss) for hawks, Caracara, White-tailed Kite, Great Horned Owls, Ring-necked Pheasants, and migrating songbirds.

Lake Charles Airport area: Roads between Hwy. 385(Common St.) & Hwy. 27E. Flooded ricefields contain lots of shorebirds, and migrating songbirds can often be spotted in the trees. In these two areas after strong northwest winds have moved through, we have found western hawks and other small western birds.

In March, Yellow-headed Blackbirds may be seen at the Farmer's Rice Mill on the east side of Hwy. 397 below Hwy 90. In the Spring, the six parish parks are very birdy and have nice restroom facilities, but on weekends, count on lots of people and fewer birds. Alligator Park (N. W. corner of parish) has a pair of Swallow-tailed Kites that are sometimes seen there. We have seen them as far south as Fabacher Rd.

**In Cameron Parish**-We go to all NWR's and Peveto Woods. Sabine NWR's new one mile "Blue Goose Trail" north side of Headquarters with a large parking lot, is a good inland stop for migrating songbirds. Common Nighthawks also nest there.

**Texas Areas:** Sabine Pass-It is a 40 minute drive from Peveto. "Sabine Woods" owned by Houston Audubon, Texas Point NWR pilot station road and the "Willows" raised walkway on Hwy. 87, part of Sea Rim State Park (for migrating songbirds and shorebirds). Sabine Lake & Intracoastal Waterway (Jan.-Feb. for loons & ducks). Beaumont-Tyrrell Park & Cattail Marsh in Winter for ducks. In September Smith's Point

Hawk Watch tower is awesome! Thousands of hawks, Anhingas & kites pass over. We also have seen Magnificent Frigatebirds fly in over the tower from Galveston Bay. It is near Anahuac NWR.

Our club over the years has made trips out -of-state to Florida and Dry Tortugas, Trinidad & Tobago and all corners of Texas-

I was also asked what has been my best birding trip. All! Everyone I go on, I get excited with the anticipation of perhaps seeing a new bird. And my most exciting bird spotting? Everyone that is a new bird for me! When it happens, I can't talk, all I can say is Oh, Oh, Oh! I was lucky enough to be one of four to see the White Wagtail in Cameron and get it documented for the La. Bird List. The Red-faced Warbler I saw in the Cameron marshy woods and later saw on a mountain plateau in S. W. Arizona, that was exciting! Birding is just an exciting hobby.

### Projects

The Club has had different projects to promote bird watching. Different members have given talks to scouts, schools and garden clubs. One of our male members, a very good gardener, was kind enough to talk to several garden clubs on Gardening for Birds.

For seven years the Club had a monthly article published in the Southwest Daily News, titled "Birding Trails". The past four years our Club has taught an hour McNeese Leisure Learning birding class in the spring and fall. And for the past three years we have had a booth at the Ag. Extension Service's Spring Flower Show.

In the Fall of 1990 our club was asked to attend an environmental meeting at one of our local industries Olin Chemical Co. The meeting was to discuss the future of one of their former settling ponds which contained a Roseate Spoonbill rookery. As a result of these meetings the club was asked to conduct a weekly bird survey of their two ponds for one year. This was one of the most interesting projects I have ever done. Each week I had to sign in at the gate office, watch a 10-minute film on what to do in an emergency and how to use a gas mask. Then I was given a gas mask kit and assigned a guard who rode with me. We had to wind through the plant with all the pipes, valves, noise, and smell to arrive at the ponds which backed up against the Calcasieu River. There were Mulberry and other trees and long prairie grass growing around the ponds. I needed to have one person along to record what we saw while I drove. Before long, word got around how interesting it was and I had members calling me to go. One time while we were out at the ponds the emergency horn blew. The guard had a radio so he checked in, and then told me we couldn't go back. We had to stay at the ponds for about 30 minutes until the all clear sounded and he was told to come in.

In the 80s, Bruce Crider, Peveto Woods Sanctuary Chairman, came to our club to ask for help. He said he had to get wooden fences built quickly around all of the property before an upcoming court date. I asked how many people he needed to get the job done in two days. The job was done on time by people from Lake Charles, Lafayette, and Baton Rouge.

When Cameron Prairie NWR was created from a rice farm and hunting lodge, Paul Yakupzack became the manager. He came to our club and asked for help. He had a refuge with no employees. He wanted to tear down part of the hunting lodge that wasn't needed and was infested with termites. So in the winter about ten of us volunteered. The lodge had a commercial kitchen so we each took a hot casserole dish. The men tore down the building and the women removed nails and stacked the lumber. With some of that lumber from the lodge, several of the men built a bird watching blind on a sled so it could be moved where needed.

Another Sat. a group of us went to help Paul do a bird survey. He divided up the refuge and assigned two people to each area. I remember Glenn Lemoine and I had a two mile road to survey. Paul came along in a jeep and took us to the end and dropped us off. So we only had two miles to walk, not four.

We also took on the project of creating a refuge bird list for Paul. We have also compiled a bird list for Sam Houston Jones State Park at the request of the park manager.

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