

LOS NEWS



www.losbird.org

NEWSLETTER OF THE

Louisiana Ornithological Society

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*Submission Deadline Date for
Spring LOS News is
March 1, 2008*

Journal of Louisiana Ornithology
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2008 LOS WINTER MEETING

Clarion Hotel, Alexandria, LA

January 25 - 27, 2008

Come join us in central Louisiana for winter birding. New birding sites (see field trips below) are on the agenda in addition to the traditional Cheneyville Sandhill Cranes and Catahoula Lake. Registration will be at the Clarion Hotel on Friday evening, and the banquet Saturday evening will be at the Cajun Landing restaurant close by. **Mail in your registration (back page) by January 18.**

Friday, January 25, 2008

6:00 pm Registration – Clarion Hotel (Cash bar and snacks provided.)

7:00 pm Meeting begins

Speakers: Laura Palasz – Presents her research on Henslow's Sparrows in the state of Louisiana.

Jonathon Valente – Presents his research on King Rails in the state of Louisiana.

Saturday, January 26, 2008

6:30 pm Buffet banquet at Cajun Landing (two doors south of the Clarion Hotel)

7:30 pm Meeting begins

Speaker: Steve Shunk – Naturalist and Trip Leader for Paradise Birding, Mr. Shunk's presentation will discuss the conservation and ecology of woodpeckers locally and range-wide, including the Red-cockaded Woodpecker and other woodpecker species.

Accommodations:

Make your room reservations by calling 318-487-4262 or 800-540-1880 and ask for LOS. Room rates are \$79.99 + tax. Book early to assure your room reservations.

Clarion Hotel

2716 North MacArthur Drive
Alexandria, LA 71303

Other Accommodations:

Next door and south of the Clarion is:

Best Western

318-445-5530

2720 N. MacArthur Dr.

Next door and north of the Clarion is:

Holiday Inn Express

318-487-9898

2340 N. MacArthur Dr.

FIELD TRIPS:

Sat 7 am - noon, Sat 1 - 5 pm

Cheneyville – The Sandhill Cranes should be easy to find in the plentiful corn fields. Other possible stops include the lock and dam and the Watkins backyard. White-crowned Sparrows are usually a treat and if we're lucky a Vermillion Flycatcher.

Sun 7 am - noon

Catahoula Lake – This site includes waterfowl on one of the most popular duck hunting lakes in the state. Eagles, hawks, and ducks galore. This Lake is also a designated international migratory bird location, one of the few RAMSAR sites in the U.S.

Sat 1 - 5 pm, Sun 7 am - noon

NSU Aquaculture Research Center – This site is located between the Cane and Red Rivers (Lock and Dam #3) and always holds surprises in what you can find. Waterfowl, shorebirds, gulls, pelicans, and sparrows would be expected.

continued on page 2

Minutes of the LOS Annual Meeting

Saturday, October 27, 2007

Cameron

President Bill Fontenot welcomed members and guests.

Bill thanked Marianna Primeaux and Judith O'Neale for organizing the meeting.

He also acknowledged the help of Elouise Mullen, Roselie Overby, Judy Fruge and Joyce Bennett for help with registration and sales.

Bill introduced the officers and board of directors of LOS: President Bill Fontenot, Vice-President Nancy Menasco, Treasurer Judith O'Neale, Secretary Joelle Finley (not present), Past-President Karen Fay (not present), Board members Ed Wallace, Joan Brown and Jackie Duncan, and Jim Ingold (not present), JLO editor and Bob Hamilton (not present) LOS News Editor.

This weekend marks the 60th anniversary of the beginning of LOS and Bill welcomed James Stewart from The Woodlands, Texas. Jim joined LOS in 1953 and was President in 1958-1959.

Bill then asked other past presidents to stand. David Muth, Dan Purrington, Marty Guidry and Rosemary Seidler were acknowledged.

Bill presented the recommendations of the nominating committee Nancy Menasco, Joan Brown, Ed Wallace and Jackie Duncan.

LOS officers 2007-2008:
 President Nancy Menasco
 Vice President Linda Stewart Knight
 Treasurer Judith O'Neale
 Secretary Joelle Finley
 North LA Board Member Joan Brown.

Make a note ...

Upcoming Meeting

Winter Meeting – Alexandria January 25-27, 2008

DEADLINE

Submission deadline date for Spring LOS News
 is March 1, 2008

Bill asked if there were any nominations from the floor. There were none.

David Muth moved to accept the slate of officers as presented. Seconded. Motion passed with none opposed.

Bill introduced tonight's speakers, Donna Dittmann and Steve Cardiff. Donna gave a slide program on the Chandeleur Islands and the storm impacts on the nesting birds. It was a good history of the islands and their rise and fall.

Vice President Nancy Menasco read the checklist with a total of 192 species seen in Cameron Parish on Saturday.

Judith O'Neale thanked Bill for his two years as President and gave him an Ivory-billed Woodpecker pin.

Marty Guidry asked people to send him names of people to be considered for the LOS awards next spring.

Eleven door prizes were given out, courtesy of the Cameron Parish Tourist Commission.

Meeting was adjourned and Bill requested that everyone turn in their name badges.

Submitted by Judith O'Neale, Treasurer

2008 LOS WINTER MEETING *continued from cover*

Sat 7 am - noon, Sun 7 am - noon

Lost Bottoms Bayou and Kincaid Lake – These locations are in Kisatchie National Forest in Rapides Parish. The bottoms area should find sparrows. The Kincaid lakeside walk leads to the Bald Eagles and nest. Both of these walks include about ½ mile easy walk to get to the destinations. If it's been raining, bring your boots.

Sat 7 am - noon

Catahoula Hummingbird Garden/RCW Clusters/Stuart Lake - The locations are in Grant Parish on national forest land. Target species is the Red-cockaded woodpecker. Steve Shunk, our Saturday night guest speaker, will co-lead this field trip.

Swallow-tailed Kite Population Monitoring: Briars and the 2007 Breeding Season

By Jennifer Coulson

The amount of time and effort it takes to find each nest has increased astronomically in the Pearl River Basin since its forests were ravaged by Hurricane Katrina. I will delve into this issue a little because it radically changed our work plan for the 2007 nesting season. The 2007 field season was even more challenging than 2006 because the briars benefited from another year's growth. My words imply war between us and them (the briars), so let the truth be told.

The search for the "Sticker" nest was indeed a battle. Mike Collins reported a Swallow-tailed Kite carrying nest material over the Pearl River Wildlife Management Area ATV trail that ends on English Bayou. During our first visit to the area, Tom found a nest near the trail while I identified several areas where I suspected nests. I flagged one spot along the trail from which I heard distant kite calls. On a later visit, I assigned Tom to search here. A few hours later I returned to find poor Tom in a terrible state. Frustrated to the point of exasperation, he yelled something about knowing where a nest was but not finding it. His bloody forearms were absolutely shredded, his hair and T-shirt drenched in sweat. We drank water, laughed a little, and then fought our way down his freshly bush-whacked trail. It meandered quite some distance through particularly malicious briars, curving to the right around a downed tree canopy and sharply to the left around another. After scrambling over multitudes of downed tree trunks and branches, we stopped at a slough. Here Tom described the kites' behaviors, pointing to particular stands and tree fall gaps. At this point we split up. I continued along the mosquito-infested slough, and Tom, following a hunch, tackled more briars. Much to my dismay, there were plenty of briars lurking even along the slough. These thorny creatures captured me by the top of my head more than once. I had to tear out some of my hair with a chunk of scalp to escape. My shirt came off next--I was getting dangerously hot, and the backpack wasn't helping. At last I reached a point where the small slough emptied into a larger one. Here a gentle breeze greeted me -- air, oxygen! From this vantage point, I caught a glimpse of a kite flying. I scanned the sweetgums with spiky tops first. As my binoculars passed over a dark blob high in the canopy of a gum I thought "Oh please, let it be a nest." The moss-draped nest rested in an upper fork of a sweetgum about 70 yards away. I called Tom over and we worked for about 20 minutes to find a view of the nest contents. After observing the Sticker nest for what seemed like an eternity, we determined that it contained two young and turned for home.

We had hoped to field test three conservation methods during the nesting season in 2007. We planned to install predator guards on nest trees to deter climbing predators (e.g., raccoons and rat snakes). In 2006 in several hurricane-damaged areas kites selected spindly, isolated trees for nesting, and these nests failed when high winds tossed the eggs out. In 2007 we planned to put up artificial nest platforms if kites returned to nest in these areas in hopes of attracting them to sturdier nest trees protected by the surrounding stand. We also planned to put up catch nets under any nests built

in spindly, isolated trees. Due to the confines of working in a post Katrina environment, we would have needed a small army to accomplish the conservation measures we had proposed. The "Sticker" nest story is by no means our worst, and thus time constraints forced us to abandon any conservation goals beyond locating and monitoring nests.

The results of our 2007 field season included locating and monitoring 25 nests (21 in Louisiana and 4 in Mississippi). The locations of these nests were as follows: 10 in the Atchafalaya River Basin, 5 in the Lake Pontchartrain Basin, and 10 in the Pearl River Basin. As in 2006 we found that in the Pearl, kites continued to nest in forests severely degraded by Hurricane Katrina.

I have a long-term study on reuse of neighborhoods (small nesting colonies) across years, and in 2007, 67% of 9 neighborhoods active in 2006 were reused. The 3 neighborhoods kites did not return to in 2007 experienced complete nesting failure in 2006. I found one nest area hitherto unknown to me, from the airplane. The "In Louisiana" nest was located in the extreme northeastern corner of Washington Parish, a stone's throw from the state line. On July 26, 2007, the last visit, I observed 6 kites roosting there, including the fledgling from the "In Louisiana" nest.

Of the 25 nests containing at least one egg, 80% succeeded in fledging at least one young. The 25 nesting pairs produced a total of 29 fledglings, resulting in average productivity of 1.16 fledglings per pair that built a nest containing at least one egg. We also observed two pairs that copulated and initiated nest-building but did not lay eggs. If the efforts of these pairs are included, then 74% of 27 nesting attempts succeeded and 1.07 young fledged per breeding pair. Five nests containing at least one egg failed: one failed due to weather, and we could not determine the cause of failure for the remaining four.

The Swallow-tailed Kite Conservation Alliance met in Ocean Springs, Mississippi, October 16-18, 2007. Jennifer Coulson presented demographic results from on-going research in Louisiana and Mississippi. Audrey Washburn presented results from her genetic study on kite populations: her work provides strong evidence that the northern subspecies is genetically distant from the southern, probably warranting species status. Ken Meyer of the Avian Research and Conservation Institute reported on his long-term satellite telemetry tracking research, kite migration, adult survival, and the timing and locations of greatest mortality. The group discussed plans to survey and monitor the northern subspecies of Swallow-tailed Kite by simultaneously conducting pre-migration roost surveys across the southeastern states at a time when the largest roosts in Florida peak. Even though some kites have left the U.S. by this time, the region-wide effort would provide a ball-park estimate of total population size for the northern subspecies.

The Orleans Audubon Society thanks the LOS Grants Program for providing \$1000 to help fund direct expenses for this 2007 Swallow-tailed Kite population monitoring research in Louisiana.

Whooping Crane Recovery Team Meets in Lafayette, LA

by Gay Gomez, Assoc. Prof. of Geography, McNeese State University

The U.S.-Canada Whooping Crane Recovery Team spent the week of 29 January –3 February 2007 in southwest Louisiana, holding meetings and participating in field trips to the La. Dept. of Wildlife and Fisheries' White Lake Wetland Conservation Area and Marsh Island State Wildlife Refuge. Recovery Team meetings on 1 February and the morning session of 2 February were open to the public, as was the Whooping Crane Conservation Association meeting on the afternoon of 2 February. Coordinating local arrangements for the meetings and field trips were LOS member Sara Simmonds, along with Mary Lynch Courville of Lafayette and Sammy King (USGS/LSU), assisted by staff of the La. Dept. of Wildlife and Fisheries. Everyone attending the meetings and field trips agreed that all these individuals did a superb job and expressed hearty thanks for their efforts.

Other LOS members participating in meetings and/or field trips included Judith O'Neale, Joseph Valle, Charlie Pfeiffer, Josephine Nixon, and Gay Gomez. Representatives of the La. Dept. of Wildlife and Fisheries, Audubon Nature Institute, La. Wildlife Federation, LSU, and a number of federal agencies also attended some of the meetings and events. News reporter Richard Burgess wrote a fine story for the Baton Rouge Advocate; it appeared on 3 February and is available at www.2theadvocate.com.

The Whooping Crane Recovery Team heard reports on each of the wild and captive populations of this species, and there were questions and discussion following the reports. This article lists whooping crane numbers as of 22 January 2007 and then turns to items relating specifically to Louisiana. The recommended sites at the end of the article provide additional information.

Whooping Crane Numbers

In mid-January, whooping cranes numbered 371 birds in the wild and 145 in captivity, for a total of 516 whooping cranes. On the final day of the meeting sessions in Lafayette, the group learned the shocking news of the weather-related deaths of the 17 birds that had successfully completed the ultralight-led migration to Florida only weeks before. One bird had survived and was located two days later, but the loss of 17 birds drops the total number of whooping cranes to 499.

The Aransas/Wood Buffalo population has a total of 237 birds, with 45 chicks, including 7 sets of twins—all record numbers. The Florida non-migratory population, one of two experimental flocks, has a total of approximately 53 birds (not all can be located regularly). The Wisconsin/Florida migratory population, the experimental flock that learns the migration route by following ultralight aircraft, numbered 81 birds in January but lost 17 as a result of the storms and tornado that struck the birds' wintering area on 1-2 February. This was devastating news, as the migration team had trained and led the 18 captive-reared juveniles to the west coast of Florida without loss of a single bird. On a more positive note, the Wisconsin/Florida population hatched twin chicks in summer 2006, the first whooping cranes to hatch in the wild in Wisconsin in over 100 years.

There is an additional item of note associated with the Wisconsin/Florida population. One of the birds led to Florida in 2005 is spending part of the 2006-07 winter in southeast Louisiana, in the company of a small flock of sandhill cranes on privately owned land in Tangipahoa Parish. LDWF requests that

the whooping crane's location not be disclosed and that the bird and the landowner not be disturbed.

In addition to the wild populations, there are a number of captive whooping crane flocks, including one in Louisiana. Megan Lauber of the Audubon Nature Institute described crane-related activities at the Audubon Institute's Species Survival Center (SSC) near New Orleans, where new whooping crane breeding pens are nearly complete and are scheduled to receive 5 birds later this spring. Audubon currently houses 8 whooping cranes at the SSC, including 1 breeding pair. There are 2 whooping cranes on display at the Audubon Zoo, and an "education bird" named Sara travels to donor functions and hopefully will be available for additional education and outreach work in the future.

Prospects for a Louisiana Reintroduction

No decision was made on a future crane reintroduction, but Louisiana's coastal wetlands are of obvious interest to the Recovery Team as potential habitat for an "experimental non-essential" population of whooping cranes. Two candidate sites for such a reintroduction are the White Lake Wetland Conservation Area and Marsh Island State Wildlife Refuge, both managed by the La. Dept. of Wildlife and Fisheries. LDWF representatives have expressed the department's interest in supporting whooping crane reintroduction in Louisiana, should the Recovery Team decide to pursue this course. The Recovery Team made clear, however, that a number of conditions would have to be met before this could become a reality.

Several years of study lie ahead to investigate habitat conditions at White Lake and Marsh Island, address concerns about potential mixing of reintroduced birds with Aransas/Wood Buffalo cranes and the possibility that diseases might be spread into the wild from captive-reared birds, conduct preliminary education and outreach efforts, assess advantages and disadvantages of the two candidate sites, and decide whether a migratory or non-migratory population would be more suitable.

As you can see, the process of returning whooping cranes to Louisiana wetlands is an involved process, and nothing is guaranteed, but the Recovery Team's continuing interest in Louisiana is reason for cautious optimism. Preliminary habitat studies have already begun, and education and outreach efforts focused on making Louisianians familiar with the history of whooping cranes in the state will commence soon. If you would like to learn more about these majestic birds and their historical presence in Louisiana, check out the following items. (The LOS website, www.losbird.org, will hopefully have the *Journal of Louisiana Ornithology* article available online.)

Gomez, Gay M. 2001. Whooping Cranes in Southwest Louisiana. *Journal of Louisiana Ornithology* 5 (2): 33-45.

www.whoopingcrane.com (Whooping Crane Conservation Association)

[Be sure to read their newsletter *Grus Americana*]

www.bringbackthecranes.org (Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership)

www.operationmigration.org (Operation Migration [ultralight team])

www.savingcranes.org (International Crane Foundation)

www.learner.org/jnorth/crane (Journey North)

LOS BOARD NEWS

LOS Elects New Officers

At the annual meeting of the Louisiana Ornithological Society the following members were elected to the LOS Board of Directors:

- President Nancy Menasco, Shreveport
- Vice President Linda Stewart Knight, Baton Rouge
- Secretary Joelle Finley, New Orleans
- Treasurer Judith O'Neale, Lafayette
- North Louisiana Board Member Joan Brown, Monroe

LOS Remembers Cameron Families

LOS has made a memorial donation in the names of Frankie Henry and Conway LeBleu. These two Cameron families have been very generous through the years in allowing birders to access their private property. We send our sincere sympathy to both families of these two Cameron patriarchs.

Thank You Bill!

The LOS Board of Directors and the LOS membership would like to thank Bill Fontenot for his service as President for the last two years. Bill will continue on the board as Past President.

Future Meetings:

It was great to be back in Cameron for the first time in 2 1/2 years and the board decided that all future fall and spring meeting will be held in Cameron/Creole.

LOS Financial Report October, 2007

Bank Accounts:

IberiaBank \$ 3,152.37

Cash Account:

Petty Cash/Post Office \$ 200.69

Certificate of Deposit:

Ted Parker Youth Fund \$ 2,600.00
 Life Member Restricted \$ 10,000.00
 Unrestricted Funds \$ 7,524.81

Total Assets \$ 23,477.87

Louisiana Ornithological Society

www.losbird.org

LOS New Members

- Steve Locke, New Orleans LA
- Allan and Roberta Thiele, Midland MI
- Bob Thomas, Metairie LA

Donations:

- Monique Wheeler – Chicago Illinois
- J. D. Guillory – Baton Rouge

LOS Membership Renewal Time

Membership renewals are due January 2008 for the coming year. Please check your label. If it says Dec 2006 - you owe for both 2007 and 2008 (this will be your last newsletter if you do not renew this month). If it says Dec 2007, your 2008 membership is due.

Thank you for renewing your LOS membership.

LOS MEMBERSHIP FORM

Please join today!

*Dues are payable January 1st of each year;
 Please check your mailing label for expiration date.*

Renewal New Member

Name: _____

Address: _____

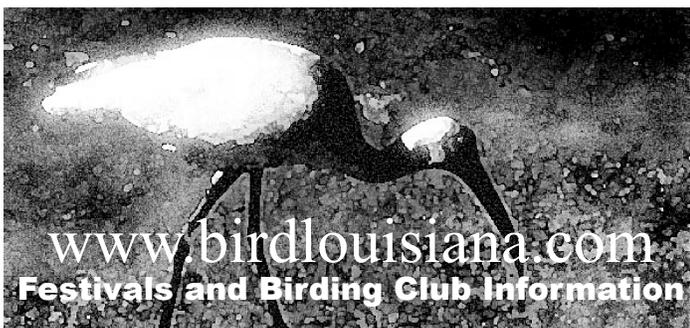
City, State, Zip: _____

Phone:(____)_____ E-mail: _____

DUES STRUCTURE:

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

Make check payable to: **LOS**
 Send to: Judith L. O'Neale, LOS Treasurer
 504 Whitebark Drive, Lafayette, LA 70508-6362





Judith O'Neale
Louisiana Ornithological Society
504 Whitebark
Lafayette, LA 70508

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Dues are payable in January of each year; Please check your mailing label.

- PRE-REGISTRATION FORM -

LOS 2008 WINTER MEETING – ALEXANDRIA, LA

JANUARY 25-27 • Clarion Hotel
PLEASE SUBMIT BEFORE JANUARY 18!

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Number registering for meeting _____ at \$10.00/person = \$ _____

Number for Landing banquet _____ at \$20.00/person = \$ _____

2008 Membership Dues = \$ _____

Total = \$ _____

PLEASE INDICATE THE TRIPS YOU ARE INTERESTED IN BY CIRCLING THE DATE:	
DATE	TRIP
Sat 7 am - noon Sat 1 – 5 pm	Cheneyville – Sandhill Cranes
Sun 7 am - noon Sat 1 – 5 pm	Catahoula Lake
Sun 7 am – noon	NSU Aquaculture Research Center
Sat 7 am - noon Sun 7 am – noon	Lost Bottoms Bayou and Kincaid Lake
Sat 7 am – noon	Catahoula Hummingbird Garden /RCW Clusters/Stuart Lake

Complete form and send with check payable to LOS by January 18 to:

Judith O'Neale, 504 Whitebark Drive, Lafayette, LA 70508-6362

JLONeale@aol.com or jduncan@fs.fed.us