

The **BARRED OWL**

Newsletter of the Baton Rouge Audubon Society

Volume XXXIV, Number 3

3rd Quarter, 2007



Message from the President: *Harriet Pooler*

Dear Members of Baton Rouge Audubon,

It is an honor and a pleasure to be elected as the new 2007-08 Baton Rouge Audubon Society President. A president is only as good as the people he/she is surrounded by and with that said I'd like to introduce the new slate of officers: Past President Chris Carlton, Vice-President Helaine Moyses, Secretary Donna LaFleur, Treasurer Jay Guillory, Conservation Chair Cathy Coates, Education Chair Jane Patterson, Membership Chair Dorothy Prowell, Sanctuary Chair Victoria Bayless, Fieldtrip Chair Robert McLaughlin, and board members at

large: Robb Brumfield, Richard Gibbons, Melanie Driscoll, Paul Kemp and Dave Cagnolatti. Special thanks go to Chris Carlton and his board for their past 2 years of service. Becoming president at the time Hurricane Rita hit the Peveto Woods Sanctuary was a daunting start, but Chris rallied the troops and kept the Baton Rouge Audubon ship afloat. We appreciate his efforts.

The board will have a board retreat in October to discuss our goals for the coming year. One goal I have is to increase the visibility of the Baton Rouge Audubon Society in the Baton Rouge area:

- Birding classes for the family have started at Hilltop Arboretum, and our education chair has begun presentations in the classroom.
- Our conservation chair is closely following issues affecting us at the local and state level, writing officials and notifying us Audubon members how we can help.



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LA Important Bird Areas Make Progress

By Melanie Driscoll

Well, the IBA program has taken a new turn, and is headed forward quickly on this new track to make progress on site identification. Let me explain how this came about. In most states, the IBA process starts with identification of sites that are important at the state level. Eventually, if the bird population data indicate that populations are of global or continental importance, then sites are put in front of a National Technical Committee for identification as sites of global or national importance.

Here in Louisiana, we decided to start with these higher priority sites first. This is great, but the global and continental criteria are the most stringent, meaning our data need to be convincing to a group of people who may have less familiarity with Louisiana birds and habitats than our own technical committee of ornithologists. The real bene-

fit is that others will soon learn the real value of our habitats in Louisiana.

However... this also means that site identification has to be based on more certainty about habitat types and amounts, threats, and birds. Doing this process site by site in a state where there is so much good habitat that no single site manager has all the data has been slow and challenging. I decided that using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) as a technological tool would speed up the process and make it more efficient. GIS uses data layers, or a variety of maps containing different information, to answer questions. I will use habitat maps with bird population data overlaid on them to help the technical committee identify sites and draw approximate boundaries around them. Then I can 'ask' the GIS to tell me how large the area is and what the relative amounts of each

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Birding with the Family

The first in a series of five beginning birding classes being offered jointly by BRAS and Friends of Hilltop Arboretum was attended by 24 budding birders, parents and children, all enthusiastic to start a new hobby. Most also participated in the follow-up field trip at Hilltop. While we didn't see a great abundance of birds, we got great looks at many of our summer residents, including a Mississippi Kite that practically posed for us. If you know of an organization that may be interested in a class, please contact Jane Patterson at braseducation@cox.net or 753-7615.

Participants can attend individual classes. They are recommended for children 8 to 15 with an accompanying parent. People 16 and up may attend alone. Each topic will include a hour-long classroom session to be held at Hilltop Arboretum on Monday evenings at 6:30pm. The following Saturday morning we'll have a field trip related to the class at various locations in the Baton Rouge area. The leaders are Jane Patterson of BRAS and Keri Bryan, a senior at U High. Classes are:

Hummingbirds – Monday, Sep 10 and Saturday, Sep 15

Fascinating facts about the tiniest of our feathered friends. The field trip will take us to St. Francisville where we should see swarms of hummingbirds during migration.

More than Wal-Mart Birds – Monday, Oct. 15 and Saturday, Oct. 20

You know those little brown birds you see at Walmart, and the black birds you see hanging out in the parking lot? Yeah, we won't be talking about those. Come find out about the cool birds you can find right here in the Baton Rouge area, if you just know where to look.

Bird Conservation – How You Can Help – Monday, Nov. 5 and Saturday, Nov. 10

Sharing ideas about how you can make a difference in the lives of birds. We'll discuss protection of bird habitat, participation in citizen science programs, and issues that affect birds that you can help with. Our field trip will include a tour of the Hilltop Arboretum where we'll point out native plants and talk about habitats.

Attracting Birds to your Yard – Monday, Dec. 3 and Saturday, Dec. 8

What you can do to bring all kinds of birds to your yard where you can enjoy them up close. For the field trip we'll visit yards that feature some of the elements discussed.

FEES: \$10 per session per adult (Hilltop and/or BRAS members), \$15 per session for adult (non-members), \$5 per session for child. Non-members will be able to join either organization at the individual sessions. (Session = Monday class plus Saturday field trip) Contact: Hilltop Arboretum 767 6916 or hilltop@lsu.edu.



Keri Bryan and Jane Patterson

Audubon Adventures

As of this writing, seventy-one 3rd through 5th grade teachers in the Baton Rouge area will be receiving Audubon Adventures environmental education resource kits for use in their classrooms thanks to the generosity of the BRAS. This year's kit is focused on the topic of endangered species.

Audubon Adventures is a wonderful way to promote environmental awareness in children at an early age and weave it into the fabric of their whole education and their lives.



Baton Rouge Audubon Society

BRAS 4-1-1

Officers

President
Harriet Pooler
225/291-0077

Vice-President
Helaine Moyse
225/343-3617

Secretary
Donna LaFleur
225/892-4492

Treasurer
Jay Guillory
225/927-2794

Committee Chairs

Conservation
Cathy Coates
225/767-9074

Education
Jane Patterson
225/753-7615

Field Trips/Activities
Robert McLaughlin
225/926-2223

Membership
Dorothy Prowell
225/387-0867

Sanctuaries
Victoria M. Bayless
225/757-1769

Newsletter
Cathy Coates
225/767-9074

Programs
Charles Fryling
225/766-3120

Rob Brumfield
225/202-8892

David Cagnolatti
225/769-5222

Richard Gibbons
225/578-6901

Paul Kemp
225/772-1426

Chris Carlton
225/578-0425

Melanie Driscoll
225/578-6901

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Baton Rouge
Audubon Society
P.O. Box 67016
Baton Rouge, LA
70896

Desk top publishing by:
Steven Mumford
dtp2web@yahoo.com

Our Man At National - Paul Kemp

It is mid-August and over 100 degrees yesterday on the thermometer at the Rainey Sanctuary camp. But the number of egrets, herons, cormorants and bitterns flying ahead of us in the window of sky over the canal was strangely refreshing. I will stay at the camp while Timmy Vincent, Audubon's sanctuary manager, takes LSU Professor Irv Mendelssohn and Sean Graham, his graduate student, out in the marsh during the short time that the grass is wet enough to get around.

Irv and Sean are looking for small ponds where the marsh has died back or was ripped up by Hurricane Rita. A grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the University of New Hampshire Cooperative Institute for Coastal and Estuarine Environmental Technology (CICEET) will allow them to experimentally test the use of a very small dredge on pontoons to get in and repair such areas and get marsh re-established before the denuded mud sinks too low.

The 26,000 acre Paul J. Rainey Sanctuary, across Vermillion Bay from Intracoastal City, was donated to the National Audubon Society in 1924, making it one of the oldest private wildlife sanctuaries in the country. It is truly one of our crown jewels. My hope is that all members will have a chance to experience Rainey during fall or spring migration. I will be organizing small groups through BRAS and Orleans Audubon.

During July, I had the pleasure of visiting Audubon's 12,500 acre Francis Beidler Forest (www.beidlerforest.com) in the floodplain of the Edisto River in South Carolina, about an hour northwest of Charleston. You should too. Like the NAS Corkscrew property in south Florida (www.corkscrew.audubon.org), nearly 2,000 acres of this beautiful swamp were never logged, so it was amazing to see the number of standing dead cypress and the profusion of nesting cavities. Because all of the cypress swamps in our state were logged by

the end of the First World War, trees we see today are very young, less than a hundred years old, a tenth of the lifespan of a species that commonly lives over a millennium. But at least there are still swamps. Elsewhere throughout the southern United States, these forests are gone completely.

So, because we care about birdlife particularly and conservation more generally, we want to come up with ways to show that the swamps are more valuable when the trees are still standing than when cut. But we cannot wait much longer. These second-growth forests are now in demand as a source for a cypress garden mulch product that has become fashionable in suburban landscaping. This new market is being supplied by putting whole young cypress trees through huge chippers. The problem, of course, in the Mississippi deltaic plain is that the land is sinking while levees prevent replenishment by river sediments. In many places close to the coast the land is now too low for the next generation of forest to get started even though mature trees could continue to survive and protect us from surges for many years to come. In other places, the cypress and tupelo that dominate the swamps may not be able to out-compete exotic species that come in once the land is clear-cut.

The Save Our Cypress Coalition (saveourcypress.org), a group of Louisiana-based environmental organizations which includes Baton Rouge Audubon, has been raising the issue and mapping clear-cutting operations in swamps that are unlikely to recover. Wal-Mart, Home Depot and Lowe's control a large portion of the market in the mulch made from young trees, and they have been asked to stop sourcing cypress from coastal Louisiana. All of these stores have policies in place to avoid buying wood from unsustainably harvested forests. Recently, in fact, Lowe's Corporation has approached us about getting things moving on scientifically



demonstrating where swamps can and cannot be sustainably harvested, and, further, have imposed a moratorium on their own suppliers for the delta area south of the I-10, I-12 corridor. We are trying to get the state to take a similar stance, and hope to report progress in the near future.

The other news is that the first funds to restore the coastal wetlands outside of the levees will likely be authorized this fall when Congress returns from recess, as part of the Water Resources and Development Act. There is a lot of money for levees too, but at least it seems that Congress recognizes that building levees in a landscape that is allowed to continue falling apart is not good policy. There are still appropriations battles ahead, and the President has said he will veto it, but the bill which has been bottled up for seven years now appears to have enough votes in the house and senate to override. Stay tuned.

Please get in touch with me at pkemp@audubon.org to discuss your vision of what Audubon should -- or perhaps should not -- be doing in Louisiana.

YOU'RE INVITED !

Baton Rouge Audubon board meetings are open to our members. We welcome your involvement. Please feel free to join us on September 11 at the home of Robert McLaughlin (20legend@cox.net) or November 14 at the home of Cathy Coates (cabr@cox.net). Please email for directions. Meetings begin at 7p.

Audubon launches Great River Birding Trail website

(excerpt from www.audubon.org, press release Vicksburg, MS, May 31, 2007)

The Mississippi River corridor is rich in birds and wildlife, and Audubon's new Great River Birding Trail website enables birders and others to discover many of the best places to see them. It offers in-depth information on parks, refuges and other natural areas, including site descriptions and photos, driving directions, and lists of species visitors may spot at each site.

Audubon is leading an aggressive ten-state initiative to address the multiple conservation challenges facing the Mississippi. Problems include loss of wildlife habitat, declining bird populations, and water quality degradation. Public involvement and concern is

making a difference. Program successes already include completion of a \$1 million marsh restoration project at Audubon's Rainey Sanctuary in southwestern Louisiana. A Mecca for birdlife, the sanctuary is Audubon's oldest and one of its most ecologically significant. Improvements were made with essential help from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources, and the Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana. A written agreement with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to promote sound management of lands and waters along the entire river has been completed and collaborative projects are beginning.

The Great River Birding Trail was born in 2000, when Audubon began

mapping birding sites from the Mississippi River's headwaters in northern Minnesota to the river's mouth at the Gulf of Mexico in Louisiana. Currently, website visitors can view birding locations in Arkansas, Mississippi, Tennessee, and parts of Louisiana. Work is underway to add additional sites up and down the river. Mitsui & Co., Ltd. is primary sponsor of the project, with additional support from Arkansas Delta Byways, Entergy Mississippi, the Mississippi River Parkway Commission, Mississippi State University, the Mississippi Division of Tourism, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency.

To view the Great River Birding Trail website, go to <http://www.greatriverbirding.org/>

LA IBA Making Progress

(Continued from page 1)

habitat are. This process will work well for areas in which we have a lot of data, such as the southwestern LA refuges which have aerial surveys each winter to count the duck populations. It will also allow me to take advantage of all of your efforts as birders from the Louisiana Winter Bird and Summer Bird Atlases, along with Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) and Christmas Bird Count (CBC) data.

The final product will be, instead of a list of sites or dots on a map, a map of the state with the sites outlined. This map can be overlaid on census data, a stream layer, CWPRRA (Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act) projects, and other information to identify restoration opportunities, partnerships, and threats to sites. I am excited about the potential to push the IBA process quickly beyond site identification into conservation planning and habitat restoration.

Of course, any technological work requires resources, so there are already

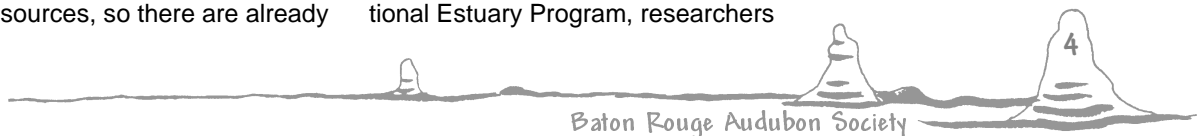
many people and groups to thank in helping to get this mapping project off the ground. Paul Kemp provided a new, faster desktop computer for the GIS analysis through our Gulf Coast Initiative. The National Wetlands Research Center (NWRC) has been an enthusiastic partner. When I outlined my idea their Director, Greg Smith, immediately invited me to join two trainings – a data mining workshop to learn about available maps and resources, and a two-day GIS training course. Steve Hartley, a NWRC GIS expert, has been a great help to the Audubon Louisiana and Mississippi River teams. I was also fortunate to meet Heather Thatcher, a new NWRC employee, and to thoroughly pick her brain about how to incorporate bird data as a map layer. I thank them all for giving me so much of their time.

I have already received bird data from many other groups in Louisiana, including the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, several National Wildlife Refuges, the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program, researchers

from several of the universities, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Natural Heritage Program, and independent researchers such as Jennifer Coulson, president of Orleans Audubon Society. I appreciate the willingness to share so much data, and also the hard work of all of the birders who provide such intensive data through the Louisiana Bird Atlas projects and the BBS and CBC.

Finally, we will be having the first IBA site recognition ceremony in October or November. Since the date is not yet confirmed, please keep an eye out for an announcement. I will post information on the LABIRD and BRAS listservs, and hope that there will be a newspaper article in a couple of papers in advance. Details will also be posted on the IBA website, <http://iba.audubon.org/iba/viewState.do?state=US-LA> and on the Bird Resource Center website, [http://appl003.lsu.edu/natsci/labirdweb.nsf/\\$Content/Important+Bird+Areas?OpenDocument](http://appl003.lsu.edu/natsci/labirdweb.nsf/$Content/Important+Bird+Areas?OpenDocument)

We'd love to see you at the ceremony!



BRAS FIELD TRIPS

Sat., Sept. 8th: We will head to Folsom, La. for the 2007 Butterfly and Hummingbird Festival at Mizell Farms. There is a \$5 admission fee. Some of the featured speakers include Gary Ross, one of America's foremost butterfly experts, who will dedicate the new butterfly flight house (9 am); Dennis Demcheck will give a presentation on digiscoping hummingbirds (10 am); Olga Clifton, a local wildlife expert, will present a hummingbird slide show (11 am) and a butterfly slide show (1 pm). The festival starts at 5 am and ends at 5 pm, so plan to make a day of listening to talks, touring hummingbird and butterfly gardens and observing banding sessions. We will meet at Coffee Call on College Dr. at 6 am and carpool from there. We will do the best we can to arrange trips home for those who wish to leave early, but if you have a tight schedule you may consider taking your own car. Driving time to Folsom is about 1 hour and 20 minutes.

Sat., Nov. 17th: Please join Harriet Pooler and Robert McLaughlin for a trip to the St. Gabriel area in search of early wintering hummingbirds and other fall migrants. Our first stop will

be the St. Gabriel property of noted LSU ornithologist, Dr. Van Remsen. Afterwards, we will visit the beautiful yard of Steve Cardiff and Donna Dittman with its wide variety of plants that attract hummingbirds and a plant sale by Richard Dufresne. Richard is a retired organic chemist with a special interest in salvias. His web page, *A World of Salvias* at http://www.eclectasy.com/gallery_of_salvias/, was created about six years ago, and is recognized as a web reference for Salvias with features for students at all levels, horticulturalists, hummingbird lovers, collectors, botanical gardens, and nurserymen. For the upcoming November sale, he hopes to bring a minimum of three (in production now) and as many as twelve new Salvias suited to the Baton Rouge climate and for hummingbirds in addition to many old standards. Plan to meet at Coffee Call on College Dr. at 7 am and carpool to the birding site.

Please pre-register for both trips by calling Robert during business hours at 926.2223 or by e-mail at 20legend@cox.net.

What Our Friends Are Doing

Sep. 8: Hilltop PlantFest! Teaser – 9a-12 noon with Bill Fontenot “Creating Backyard Habitats for wildlife and your life” and Susan Ludwig “Plants You Will Come to Grow and Love”. Plants available for sale. 767 6916 for more information.

Sep. 15: The Feliciana Nature Society's morning nature walk, “Birds, Botany, and Butterflies at The Bluffs”. Meet at The Cottage on Sunrise Way for a guided visit of the three mile nature trail, located off of Louisiana Hwy. 965 in West Feliciana Parish. Admission is free. Participants should bring water, binoculars, and insect repellent. For more information: banowetz@bellsouth.net or www.audubonbirdfest.com.

Sep. 29-30: LSU Rural Life Museum Harvest Days - This educational event will interpret life in nineteenth century rural Louisiana and commemorate the 145th anniversary of the Civil War Battle of Baton Rouge. Several hundred re-enactors will portray the battle of August 1862. The gift shop will offer an array of unique folk items. For more information, call 765-2437.

Oct. 6-7: Hilltop Plantfest! - Come to Highland Rd. for more and better plants for sale than you've ever seen. plus knowledgeable plant people with advice. This sale is an annual community favorite with customers waiting at the gate on opening day. See www.lsu.edu/hilltop or 767 6916 for more information.

Oct. 26-27: 19th Annual Southern Garden Symposium. Saint Francisville, LA. For information, contact Lucie Cassity, 225-635-3738 or write to the Southern Garden Symposium, P. O. Box 2075, St. Francisville, LA 70775.

Jan. 26: Hilltop Annual Symposium with Guy Sternberg, owner of Starhill Forest Arboretum in Petersburg, IL and expert on oaks “Managing Ancient and Historic Trees” and Rick Webb, owner of Louisiana Growers “Understory Plantings: Louisiana Natives”. Trees available for purchase. www.lsu.edu/hilltop for more information

Harriet Pooler

(Continued from page 1)

- We have an Important Bird Area (IBA) Coordinator whose mission is to get key areas recognized and protected, and a director of Audubon's Gulf Coast Initiative working on coastal issues.

We are growing and getting our green message out to the public, but we still need your help. Please consider becoming a volunteer on one of our committees.

Our annual fundraising letter was mailed out to the membership in July. So far we have raised about \$4,000 which is WAY short of our goal. I know it is summertime and everyone is scattered in different directions, but please take a minute to sit down and send in a contribution to Baton Rouge Audubon Society. We are counting on you!

There is strength in numbers and together we can accomplish many good things in our community. Please feel free to email me hapooler@bellsouth.net with any programs and/or activities you would like Baton Rouge Audubon Society to be involved in. With all good ideas comes the need for good help, so be prepared to volunteer on one of these ideas to get it into motion. I look forward to seeing you at an Audubon program or out birding.

Many thanks for your support and participation,

Harriet Pooler

If you are interested in receiving email about field trips, events, and matters pertinent to BRAS members, you may now join the BRAS email list. To subscribe, send an email to Jane Patterson at braseducation@cox.net and request to be added to the listserv.

Baton Rouge Chapter of the National Audubon Society

Baton Rouge Audubon Society

P.O. Box 67016

Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70896

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Keep Your Membership Current!

If your membership expires, you will no longer receive *The Barred Owl!* Well, eventually we take your name off the list. It is expensive to produce and membership dues help to cover that cost. Please see the expiration code on the first line of the label above your name. BRAS-only subscriptions will identify the month and year in which your membership expires (e.g. BRAS Dec. 2006). We are working on updating NAS memberships to show the same (e.g. NAS Dec. 2006).

Keeping your membership current is important!

BRAS and National Audubon Membership

You may join NAS by going to their website (audubon.org) and you automatically become a member of both NAS and BRAS. You will receive the quarterly award-winning *Audubon* magazine as well as the quarterly BRAS newsletter, *The Barred Owl*.

Patches Extra sanctuary patches or patches for NAS members are \$10 each and can be ordered by mailing the form below. If you are joining BRAS and want a free patch, you must put "1" in the blank.

BRAS Only Membership

If you want all of your dues to support local conservation and education, join BRAS only. You will NOT receive the *Audubon* magazine. You WILL receive *The Barred Owl* and a free sanctuary patch. You may join on-line at any level by visiting our website www.braudubon.org, or send this form with your check to: BRAS, P.O. Box 67016, BR LA 70896.

Baton Rouge Audubon Society (BRAS)

Please enroll me as a member of BRAS! Enclosed is my check for:

- \$25 Individual Membership
- \$30 Family Membership
- \$50 Wood Thrush Donation
- \$100 Rose-breasted Grosbeak Donation
- \$250 Louisiana Waterthrush Donation
- \$500 Painted Bunting Donation
- \$1000 Cerulean Warbler Donation
- \$ _____ Additional Contribution
- # _____ of patches (indicate 1 which is free with BRAS membership; additional patches \$10 each; NAS member patches @ \$10 each; no patch will be sent if there is no indication.)

Name: _____ Ph: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

E-mail: _____

MAIL COMPLETE FORM TO:
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