

The

BARRED OWL



Newsletter of the Baton Rouge Audubon Society

Volume XXXI, Number 2

April / May 2004

President's Message

by Dorothy Prowell

February and March have been lively months for BRAS. We're working with Orleans and National Audubon and the Bird Resource Center at LSU to get the Important Bird Area Program off the ground in LA. In our partnership with the LA Nature Conservancy (LNC), we've settled on a piece of property in Cameron and expect to close on it by the end of this month. The Spring "Bird Singing" Program and Annual Meeting are just around the corner and we're gearing up for them. And, in early March, there was the honeysuckle roundup at Peveto Woods. On the LA-BIRD listserv there was a lengthy exchange about this effort at vine removal so let me explain how this started and what we are doing.



After scouting out other areas on our coast for potential land purchase last month and ending up at Peveto for the night, Victoria and I were humbled by the realization that we were planning to buy new property when we were losing large sections of Peveto to a marauding invader with no conscience, Japanese honeysuckle. Honeysuckle was in evidence on every part of the property and blanketed (see photo) more than half of the 40 acres. The mats that were totally obscuring our sapling oaks in the open areas were also firmly entrenched in the wooded sections. These observations didn't make us feel like good land stewards. Victoria and I returned home, did our homework reading and talking to LNC (experts on invasives), and rounded up the troops for a work weekend (see VB write-up). We made a small dent in the honeysuckle and also took out many of the other vines to give our trees a break. The combined load from honeysuckle, grape, poison ivy, and smilax was heavy, sometimes a dozen per tree, and

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Calendar

April 15 - 18, 2004: Great Louisiana BirdFest, Lake Arthur, Louisiana.

April 16, 2004: Annual Meeting (held immediately before start of Bird Song Fest described below).

April 16 & 17, 2004 Daniel Edelstein's "Bird Singing" slide show, lecture, and workshop. Attendance is limited **for the workshop** so call Dorothy (923-1070) if you're interested in attending.

April 16 - 18, 2004 Grand Isle Migratory Bird Celebration.

April 23-25, 2004: Louisiana Ornithological Society Meeting in Cameron Parish.

May 01, 2004: Bluebonnet bird walk.

May 01, 2003: West Feliciana Trip (call Harriett @ 225.291.0077 for more information).

June 19, 2004: Purple Martin Roost (call Harriett @ 225.291.0077 for more information).

July 03, 2004: Alligator Bayou Trip (call Harriett @ 225.291.0077 for more information).

the canopies looked like a solid tangle of vines. Many trees were getting minimal sunlight exposure. We plan to use every strategy at our disposal to try to minimize honeysuckle, including herbicides and perhaps livestock on some sections. It will be a constant battle and we may lose but we're going to try.



There were many thoughtful emails on LA-BIRD about the value of natives vines for birds. We will keep that in mind in future workdays. Rest assured that the BRAS board has many knowledgeable folks tackling the management issues at Peveto Woods. Five of us have advanced biology degrees and do research on conservation and biodiversity protection. Collectively, we've spent a great deal of time on

LNC, State, and Federal lands over the past decade and have worked closely with land managers. I teach a conservation biology class to seniors and graduate students at LSU. What I've learned and what I teach is that exotic (non-native) invasive plants are the second greatest threat to our natural areas behind habitat loss and fragmentation. Louisiana is no exception and our Peveto Woods Sanctuary is a case in point.

Bear with us through what may look like radical measures at times. We are doing our best with the knowledge available and learning as we go through input from various sources including LA-BIRD. In the long run, we expect to have a healthier chenier for birds and, thus, excellent opportunities for birdwatching. Please help when you can. Every single volunteer at our work weekend said they wanted to help again and we need the help! It was a fun and productive way to spend a weekend.

PROPERTY UPDATE

Victoria and I spent a day riding around with Richard Martin and Jeremy Atkins (LA Nature Conservancy [LNC]) looking at properties in southwest LA that had potential for easement purchases. We walked around on four sites varying in size from 640 to 50 acres. We chose a place called Hollister Woods. This property is 54 acres (29 in cheniers and 25 in marsh) and is located on the north side of Highway 82 near Grand Chenier, about 25 miles east of Cameron and 6 miles east of Rutherford. We chose this site because the owners were willing to sell, it was close to the coast, fairly close to Cameron, had a good mix of trees likely to be favorable for birds, was in pretty good condition and had minimal invasive plants. The site needs a bit of work to be easily accessible for birding and LNC and the State will help us accomplish this. We'll be putting in a sign, a gate, a shell path back to the woods, replanting and restoring the open spots, and controlling exotics (a few tallow trees are the only pesky plants right now). BRAS is pleased to be making these woods available for birdwatching in the not too distant future. We are able to pay for almost all of our portion (\$35,000) with newly raised funds. LNC and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation are picking up the rest.

Our second choice was Nunez Woods, directly across Highway 82 from Rockefeller WR. It's not for sale right now but if it ever is, BRAS has agreed to partner with LNC to raise funds to acquire it. It is a 93 acres chenier with possibly the most spectacular old-growth live oak forest on the Gulf Coast. The trees are huge and form a solid, majestic canopy which created a totally open understory. There were very few invasive plants and the place would require minimal maintenance. This beautiful chenier should be protected. We hope to be a part of the effort to accomplish that someday soon.

On behalf of the BRAS Board, we'd like to thank all the donors and LNC for making this land deal happen. We have a generous group of bird lovers in Louisiana. We're fortunate to be able to work with and take advantage of the expertise of the Louisiana Nature Conservancy. Starting below the Sanctuary Report on Page 3 is a list of our second set of donors (since Jan. 6th). In addition to the 42 people listed (whose contributions totaled \$7,045), 12 more anonymous donors gave another \$735 to bring our grand total to \$29,620 since the start of our fund-raiser.



Sanctuary Report by Victoria Bayless

I visited some cheniers with Dorothy recently (see her "President's Report") and was surprised at the differences between those areas and our own Peveto Woods; I knew from old photos and my work with the sanctuary 10 years ago that the sanctuary's honeysuckle and vines were growing but it wasn't until I saw firsthand those other areas that I realized how far out-of-control the sanctuary's vines had gotten (what a good wake-up call those other areas provided!).

We had a great "Work-Weekend / Honeysuckle Roundup" on March 5, 6, and 7 with twenty five people helping over the course of those three days. Everyone worked really hard (even in the rain we had on Friday - though

for those that stayed on or joined us on Saturday and/or Sunday, the weather was gorgeous) - thanks again for your help!

We didn't see many migrants but we did see a very large Chuck-will's-widow; that was fun!

We are looking into ways to deal with the vine situations and I won't repeat all the things Dorothy explained in her "President's Report", but I will say that we appreciate all the input we have received on LABIRD about our management decisions. Our latest news is that Paul Dickson, from Shreveport, has volunteered to help us with the problem of the pond. Over the years we have tried many ways to solve the problem of maintaining the water level in the pond. We are excited about this new offer of assistance.

Hope you all can visit Peveto Woods during spring migration.

Victoria!

Donor Update

Donations of \$2000

Sara L. Simmonds Alexandria, LA

Donations of \$1000

John Erffmeyer Baton Rouge, LA
Nell Hennessy & Frank Daspit Washington, D.C.

Donations of \$500

John C. Stovall Baton Rouge, LA

Donations of \$250

Gulf Coast Bird Club Lake Charles, LA

Donations of \$200

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Friends of Lacassine NWR Lake Arthur, LA

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Arnaudville, LA
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ANNUAL MEETING IN APRIL & NOMINATIONS FOR OFFICERS

Our yearly Annual Meeting will be held prior to the seminar on Bird Songs on Friday, April 16th, at 7:00 P.M. at Bluebonnet Swamp. The primary business is receiving nominations for and voting on the new slate of officers. We'll provide drinks and some appetizers and sweets. Hope you can make it!

The nominating committee has come up with the following proposed slate of officers and committee chairs:

President - Dan Hendricks
Vice President - Chris Carlton
Secretary - (open)
Treasurer - Fred Sheldon

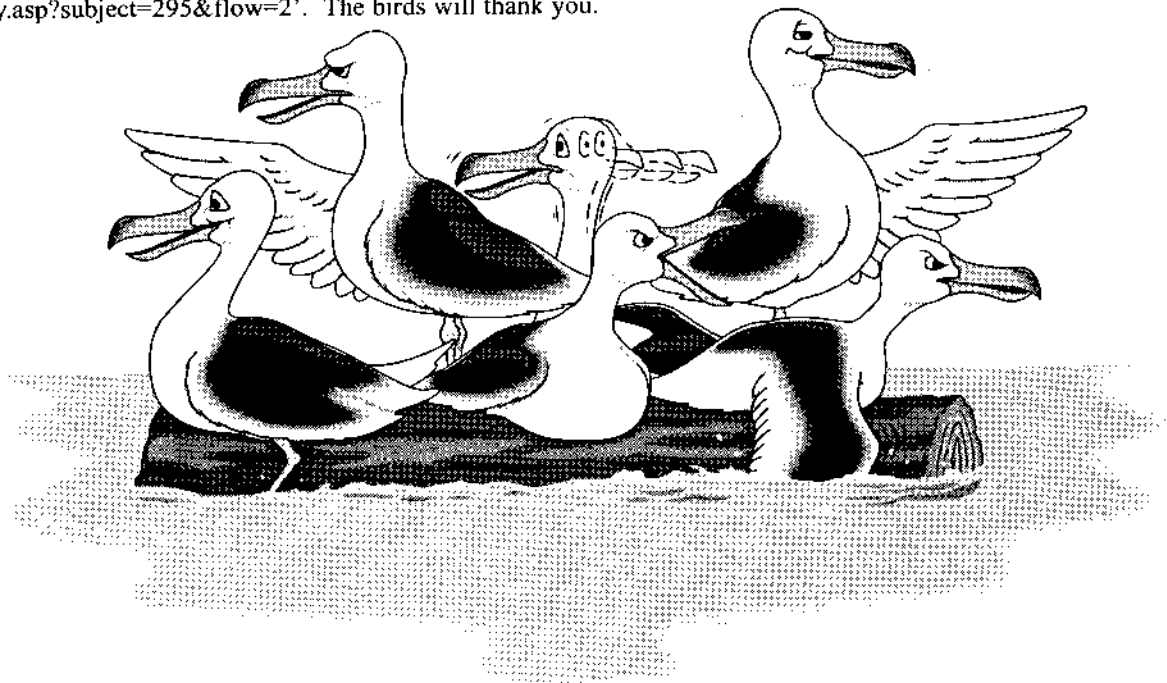
Sanctuary - Victoria Bayless, Chair
Education & Public Relations - Donna LaFleur
Field Trips - Harriett Pooler, Chair
Membership - Dorothy Prowell
Newsletter - Ron Bayless
Electronic Communications (vacant)
Birdathon Coordinator (vacant)
Programs (vacant)
Conservation (vacant)

Board Members at Large (up to 6): Cathy Coates, Jay Guillory, Mark Skinner

If you are interested in one of these positions or would like to nominate someone, please call Dorothy at 225.923.1070 or email her at dprowe@lsu.edu. We would love to have some new faces. We are particularly in need of someone who is concerned about environmental issues and who has time to write advocacy letters for BRAS as the Conservation Chair.

HELP PROTECT LOUISIANA'S DISAPPEARING COAST

Please show your support for Louisiana' coastal restoration! The latest Audubon Advisory has a nice alert on our coast, and if enough people write in to show interest we can elevate the issue within Audubon and with our representatives as well. Increasing our visibility is vital to protecting the coast. You can visit Audubon Advisory at '<http://www.capitolconnect.com/audubon/>', then choose "On Protecting Birds, Wildlife, & Habitat" under the "Contact Legislators" menu. Or you can go directly to this web page: '<http://www.capitolconnect.com/audubon/summary.asp?subject=295&flow=2>'. The birds will thank you.



FIELD TRIPS

by Harriett Pooler

BRAS field trips cost \$1 per person and are open to the public. Unless otherwise noted, all trips meet at Coffee Call at their new location next to Office Depot on College Drive (between I-10 and Perkins). Call Harriett Pooler, Fieldtrip Chairperson, at 291-0077 for more information.

Saturday, May 1, 2004 West Feliciana Trip

We will meet at Coffee Call at 7:45 a.m. and then head out to The Nature Conservancy's Mary Ann Brown Preserve to bird for a couple hours. Target birds to see will be Hooded, Prothonotary and Swainson's Warbler and Yellow-throated Vireo along the trails of the American Beech/Loblolly woods. About mid-morning when the temperature starts to rise we will go to Asphodel Plantation, the 124 acre home of Michael Israel, PH.D, noted lepidopterist. We can view his extensive local butterfly collection and then have a tour of the butterflies and plants in his butterfly garden. Dr. Israel says we may see up to 70 species of butterflies and skippers. Mixed hardwood and Pine on his property have trails around them to walk and bird. Bring a bag lunch and drink to eat on the grounds of Asphodel. Other items to bring include bug spray, sunscreen and a hat. Call Harriett at 225-291-0077 with questions.

Saturday, June 19th, 2004 Purple Martin Roost

Every year about 200,000 Purple Martins adopt the under-structure of the southern end of Lake Pontchartrain Causeway as their evening roost. This is their resting stop before migrating back to S. America in late summer. **We will meet at Coffee Call at 5:00 p.m.** and drive to the Causeway but first bird along the levee. As dusk (~8 pm) approaches we will go to the platform viewing area to see the martins come in. A member of 'Project Swallow' will join us. More info on website: www.gnofn.org/~swallow/welcome.html.

Call Harriett at 225-291-0077 with questions.

Saturday, July 3rd, 2004 Alligator Bayou

Let's meet at the cabin at Alligator Bayou at 8 a.m. to canoe the bayou and Spanish Lake. We can view birds along the bank and overhead while canoeing. Canoe rental is \$10 for the first hour and \$5 per hour afterwards (includes paddles and life jackets). There is a \$5 launch fee if you bring your own canoe. **PRE-REGISTRATION IS NECESSARY!** Call Harriett at 225-291-0077 to pre-register.

Donors *continued from page 3*

Irving A. Mendelssohn & K.L. McKee
Jeannette Moseley
Peter C. Osenton
Marianna Primeaux
Edward Searcy
Shreveport Society for Nature Study
Doc & Matilde Smith
Lynn Thompson
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Claudia Husseneder 578-1819

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March 15 for the April/May issue
May 15 for the June/July issue
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September 15 for the Oct/Nov issue
November 15 for the Dec/Jan issue.
Submissions may be sent via e-mail to vbayless2@cox.net or mailed to:

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Baton Rouge Audubon Society

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Baton Rouge, LA 70884-2525

Changes of address and other official correspondence should be sent to the mailing address shown above.

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Chapter (BRAS) and National Audubon Membership

Join NAS by going to their website (www.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 bi-monthly BRAS newsletter. The Barred Owl Sanctuary patches (sew or iron-on bird patches) are \$10 extra and can be received by mailing in this form and checking the NAS member Patch Option.

BRAS Only Membership

Join BRAS if you want all of your dues to support local conservation and education. You will receive The Barred Owl newsletter every other month, first priority for field trips and educational programs, and a sanctuary patch if desired (check off options on form).

To join BRAS, make checks payable to Baton Rouge Audubon Society and send this form along with your check to:

BRAS, P.O. Box 82525, Baton Rouge, LA 70884.

Local Chapter Code: TXCH8.K01

Baton Rouge Audubon Society (BRAS)

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

- \$20 **Individual Membership**
- \$30 **Family Membership**
- \$100 **Rose-breasted Grosbeak Membership**
- \$250 **Louisiana Waterthrush Membership**
- \$500 **Painted Bunting Membership**
- \$1000 **Cerulean Warbler Membership**
- \$_____ **Additional Contribution**
- _____ **# of patches** (1 free with BRAS membership, additional patches @ \$10 each, NAS member patches @ \$10 each)

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