President's Report  by Chris Carlton

I assumed my duties as your chapter president during June with the expectation of having a nice quiet term. I planned to focus most of my attention on improvements at the newly acquired sanctuary house at Peveto Woods. Hurricane Rita changed all that, so this first report to you is not the one I initially had in mind. Many of you are rightfully concerned about the effect Hurricane Rita had on our sanctuary and some of you may also be concerned about the house, but it is gone now so you can quit worrying....more about that later. The sanctuary itself did suffer extensive damage that Ron and Victoria have documented first hand. (see the website for the not so pretty pictures) All the structures are gone, our beautiful sign has vanished, but they found the new interpretive panel, scratched but intact. Vegetation at the sanctuary has changed dramatically with some obvious loss of trees, particularly hackberries and honey locusts. The extent of damage to the live oaks and other trees will not be known until spring. In addition to the effects of the winds the storm surge left standing salt water throughout the sanctuary and we are not sure of the long term effects. Optimistically, it will kill a lot of the non-native weedy vines and our coastal flora will recover quickly. In addition, the whole landscape has been dramatically altered. One of our more immediate concerns is the need for a massive cleanup of what we estimate to be three houses that were washed onto sanctuary property from the coastal side in addition to what’s left of the sanctuary house. We are currently processing insurance claims that we expect will cover the original cost of the house, allowing us to pay off our loan from the bank and recover the amount generated by our recent fundraiser. This is the good news! The challenge that lies ahead will be rebuilding infrastructure that will make Peveto Woods Sanctuary the bird watcher friendly place that it was prior to Rita. We are currently exploring the best methods to rapidly restore the habitat for our migratory birds. We are not alone in this. Refugees across the central Gulf coast were dramatically affected by either Katrina or Rita and various Audubon chapters are cooperating to expedite some of the immediate challenges. Finally, we suddenly have some added flexibility in how we approach development at Peveto, and we invite your participation in planning for the

National Audubon Society Christmas Bird Count

Baton Rouge Audubon is once again sponsoring the Baton Rouge Christmas Bird Count. The count will be held on January 24th. If you are interested in learning more check out the National Audubon Website at www.audubon.org under “birds & science” then “citizen science.” If you are interested in participating in this years count please contact Victoria Hayles at vmoselod@lsu.edu

Donation Acknowledgements for our Fundraiser

As of October, 2005, we have received donations from the following individuals. Thanks for your support!

Donations of $5000 - ConocoPhillips, Baton Rouge, LA
Donations of $1000 - Chris Carlton, Baton Rouge, LA; Charles R. Godchaux, Abbeville, LA; Jay Guilloty, Baton Rouge, LA; Ellen A. Hennessy & Frank Daupl, Washington, D.C.; Dorothy Powell, Baton Rouge, LA
Donations of $500 - Gomez Family, Lake Charles, LA; Jimmie Guyton, Baton Rouge, LA; Liz Hampton, Baton Rouge, LA; Jim Lee & Legison, Inc., Baton Rouge, LA; Mobile Bay Audubon Society, Fairhope, AL; John Stuvall, Baton Rouge, LA
Donations of $300 - Susan & Frederic Billings, Baton Rouge, LA
Donations of $250 - David Booth, Lake Charles, LA; Catherine Coates, Baton Rouge, LA; Dennis Demcheck, Baton Rouge, LA; Nancy & Paul Merrill, Baton Rouge, LA; Lawrence O’Malley, New Orleans, LA
Donations continued from page 2

Donations of $225 - Peter Manlove, New Orleans, LA
Donations of $200 - Olga & Walter Clifford, Abits Springs, LA; Julian & Doris Darden, Baton Rouge, LA; Fred Stovall & Jody Kennard, Baton Rouge, LA
Donations of $100 - Johnny Armstrong, Ruston, LA; Donald M. Bradburn, New Orleans, LA; Michael J. Caire, Wood Monroe, LA; Dewey Carpenter, Baton Rouge, LA; Crystal & Mike Chatelain, Baton Rouge, LA; Diane L. Conner, Baton Rouge, LA; Linda Dawson, Daphne, AL; Sherry DelFonseca, LaPlace, LA; Leon DeMent, Jr., Baton Rouge, LA; Robert C. Donnelly, Natchez, MS; Jodie Finley, New Orleans, LA; Margaret Fontaine, Shreveport, LA; John & Carol Fryling, Baton Rouge, LA; John P. Gee, Alpine, TX; Keith Gibbon, Baton Rouge, LA; Louise M. Hancey, Lake Charles, LA; Edwin D. Hornbaker, Baton Rouge, LA; Horace H. Jeter, Shreveport, LA; Barry & Gail Kohl, New Orleans, LA; Raylon Lantion, Baton Rouge, LA; Mary Louise Liles, Baton Rouge, LA; Lois Alliance of Birdwatchers, Alexandria, LA; James Lowrey, Shreveport, LA; Ron & Susan Martin, Shreveport, LA; Clyde N. Massey, Shreveport, LA; David Much, New Orleans, LA; Frank & Patty Parrish, Fitzgerald, GA; Chadwick Phillips, Baton Rouge, LA; Bob & Karen Pierson, Baton Rouge, LA; Larry & Anne Raymond, Shreveport, LA; Jim & Krista Roche, Baton Rouge, LA; Rosemary Seidler, Shreveport, LA; Shreveport Society for Nature Study Bird Study Group, Shreveport, LA; Barry Tillman, Natchez, MS; Joseph G. Allevbe, Abbeville, LA; Wayne & Becky Watkins, Alexandria, LA
Donations of $50 - Honore Poofter, Baton Rouge, LA
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GCBO Workshop by Victoria Bayless

The Gulf Coast Bird Observatory (GCBO) is an independent, membership-based nonprofit organization whose mission is the study and conservation of birds and their habitats around the Gulf of Mexico. The Observatory especially values partnerships with individuals and other organizations, both public and private, to conduct research and facilitate habitat conservation in areas critical for neotropical migrants. The shared goal of all partners is to preserve and restore essential migratory bird habitats. GCBO is active in citizen science projects, and is the focal point in a Network of Site Partners ranging from Florida to the Yucatan Peninsula of Mexico. Peveo Woods Sanctuary is one of 54 Gulf-wide Site Partners in their network.

On Oct 5th Ron and I attended the GCBO Site Partner Workshop at La Mancha near Veracruz, Mexico. The workshop had two main focuses this year. The first being development of ecotourism at Site Partner reserves and sanctuaries.

The second focus of the workshop was on site monitoring. We had been introduced to the monitoring program last year and had been working on a way to set up a monitoring trail in Peveo Woods for migrants. Topics included the Avian International Monitoring Network. This network uses eBird, www.ebird.org, a project developed by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society, to provide a simple way for birders to keep track of the birds seen anywhere in North America. This centralized database is a secure and public repository, which will allow scientists from any country to select datasets for analysis. eBird is now available in Spanish. There is a special version of eBird that is to be used by the Site Partners for entering data on migrants. We also heard reports on some monitoring programs underway in the Yucatan.

GCBO Site Partner Workshop meeting facility at LaMancha Research Station, Veracruz, Mexico.
By the time you have this issue of The Buried Owl, the Senate may have already voted on the Water Resources Development Act of 2005. It is in this legislation that Louisiana is asking for $2B in funding to protect the Louisiana coast. It is also in this bill that Senator David Vitter of Louisiana has inserted a provision which would reduce the oversight authority of the Corps of Engineers over cypress wetland forests. Our forests are under tremendous pressure now due to a demand for cypress mulch. The greater need for land and housing after Hurricane Katrina has increased the risk they are under, with logging operations and residential developments clearing to clear out the forests. This provision would be harmful to the coast because the trees store up land which is being threatened by the encroaching Gulf, and it would be harmful to the forests which cannot regenerate due to the increased flooding they experience as the Gulf takes over the wetland.

The most important piece of this puzzle is how to satisfy private land owners whose property holds the majority of the cypress wetland forests. If the bill passes the Senate with the provision, or not, we must find a way to offer incentives to protect the land permanently. Current easements are recognized as being unsatisfactory. A subgroup of the Governor’s Advisory Panel is studying state and federal programs which might be applicable.

At the same time, another group is working to update Louisiana’s inadequate Best Management Practices manual which was written in 1988. Existing BMP’s are voluntary, do not take into consideration the conversion of wetland forests to open water, and are modeled after states which do not have Louisiana’s unique environment.

In the meantime, logging activities continue, many of which are unauthorized and do not comply with the required Corps permitting. The Governor’s Science Working Group report which was issued in April of this year, clearly states that many of these forests will not regenerate. It also observes that we are still woefully lacking map and exact designation of forest classifications. This issue was covered in the Sept/Oct issue of the Audubon Magazine on pg 11.

Until the mapping and the incentives and the BMP’s are completed, there should be a moratorium on logging in cypress wetland forests. Reminder: The Blackcypress is the Louisiana State Tree.

2006 BRAS Membership Patch is now available
Don't Forget to Help With The Christmas Bird Count (see page 2 for more information)
Potluck Cocktail Party!

To all members, please join the BRAS board for a post-harvest, post-travels, post-holiday cocktail party on Friday, January 20 at 7pm. It will be held at the home of Cathy Coates, 665 Greentree Dr. Board members Ron and Victoria Bayless have taken many photos of our heavily damaged Peceto Woods Sanctuary and recently purchased home in Cantonment Parish which will be running in the background. President Chris Carlton may also show some shots of his trip to Darwin, Australia. We encourage all members to attend and we look forward to hearing your input on reconstruction priorities for our sanctuary. Also, BRAS is in the process of hiring a new Important Bird Area Coordinator, the first full time employee for National Audubon in Baton Rouge. If you’re planning to attend, please contact Cathy (225.767.9074) for potluck contributions, directions, and so we can have an accurate head count of attendees. Hope to see you there!

Sanctuary Report by Victoria Bayless

I know that each of you is very aware of the changes that have occurred all around us, to our state and to our friends and family. My heart goes out to all those who have lost so much. In the coming months as we discuss the devastation at our sanctuary, the board members are all acutely aware that it is a minor tragedy compared to what some others have suffered. I do worry about the migratory birds that typically feed in south Louisiana and how far they will have to go to find food and fresh water before they begin their long journey south. I have been reminded that this must have occurred in the past, that hurricanes have been through this area before. But it is little consolation to me when I think of all the creatures that lost their lives during these hurricanes.

If you read the president’s report then you know what we know about the situation. These are a few other observations I made on October 6th to add to Chris’s report: the dun area that separated the beach from the cypress is gone, many of the mediumsized oaks (10-15 ft tall) that we planted in the early 90s still had leaves and were not uprooted, the fences are all gone, the honey Locust may be dead but the vines were not washed away, the benches around the pond are still there, and I could see many large live oaks standing without any leaves, although when Ron returned on Oct. 29th I had not yet observed anything suspicious except for the bees. We had some heavy rains after the bees were already leaving. I hope this report gives you a little insight into what we have experienced. We were not able to visit the Hollister Woods tract to see what damage had occurred there but we will report on that as soon as we have information. This is my report for now. I do hope to have some good news in the near future.

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The Barred Owl

is published quarterly by the Baton Rouge Audubon chapter of the NAS. Submissions should be received by:
Dec 15 for the 1st quarter issue, Mar 15 for the 2nd quarter issue, June 15 for the 3rd quarter issue, and September 15 for the 4th quarter issue. Submissions may be sent via e-mail to vbayless2@cox.net or mailed to:
Editor, Barred Owl
Baton Rouge Audubon Society
P.O. Box 82525
Baton Rouge, LA 70884-2525

Changes of address and other official correspondance should be sent to the mailing address shown above.
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This issue’s mailing label has a membership expiration code on the first line of the label above your name. There are three basic membership codes: Baton Rouge chapter (identified as BRAS), National Audubon (NAS), and library/newspaper/media, etc. (GRATHS - which has no expiration date). BRAS-only subscriptions will identify the month and year in which your membership expires (e.g., BRAS Dec. 2004) while NAS will show only the year (note: NAS 2005 means your membership expires in 2005). Keeping your membership current is important!

Chapter (BRAS) and National Audubon Membership

Join NAS by going to their website (www.audubon.org) and you automatically become a member of 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 are $10 extra and can be received by mailing in this form and indicating the number of patches you want and that you are a NAS member.

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Baton Rouge Audubon Society (BRAS)

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