

The **BARRED OWL**

Newsletter of the Baton Rouge Audubon Society

Volume XXXIII, Number 2

2nd Quarter, 2006



by Cathy Coates

The Reluctant Activist

Whether on the political front, the environmental front, or in any number of ways, many of us see events unfolding and feel helpless to make a difference in the outcome. We may admire vocal activists, but feel no desire to do the same. Would you like to be more involved, but quietly and not leading the charge?

We all have those issues which are important to us. It might be conservation, coastal restoration, rebuilding New Orleans and the Gulf Coast, national security, Iraq, terrorism, ANWR, alternative forms of energy, LNG, global warming, tax policy, foreign policy, which congressperson is most religious, or most patriotic, corruption in our government, the separation of church and state, intelligent design, abortion, education, trade, balancing the budget, health care, social security, campaign reform, lobbying reform, levee board reform . not necessarily in this order. Each of us has an internal list prioritizing the debates which we feel most strongly about. Events and decisions happen daily on a local, state and federal level which impact them.

If you don't want to run for office or lead marches, here are some suggestions that are easy, quick and within the grasp of every citizen.

1/ Contact your elected officials and let them know how you feel. They are an email, a fax, or a phone call away. Eloquence is not required. Most of them have polite staff members who readily accept calls and write down your message. Most respond to faxes and letters, and sometimes emails. All contact information can be found at www.senate.gov, www.house.gov, www.la.gov. or www.brgov.com. Keep the information handy. Contact them before important votes or contact them when events are in the news which make a difference to you.

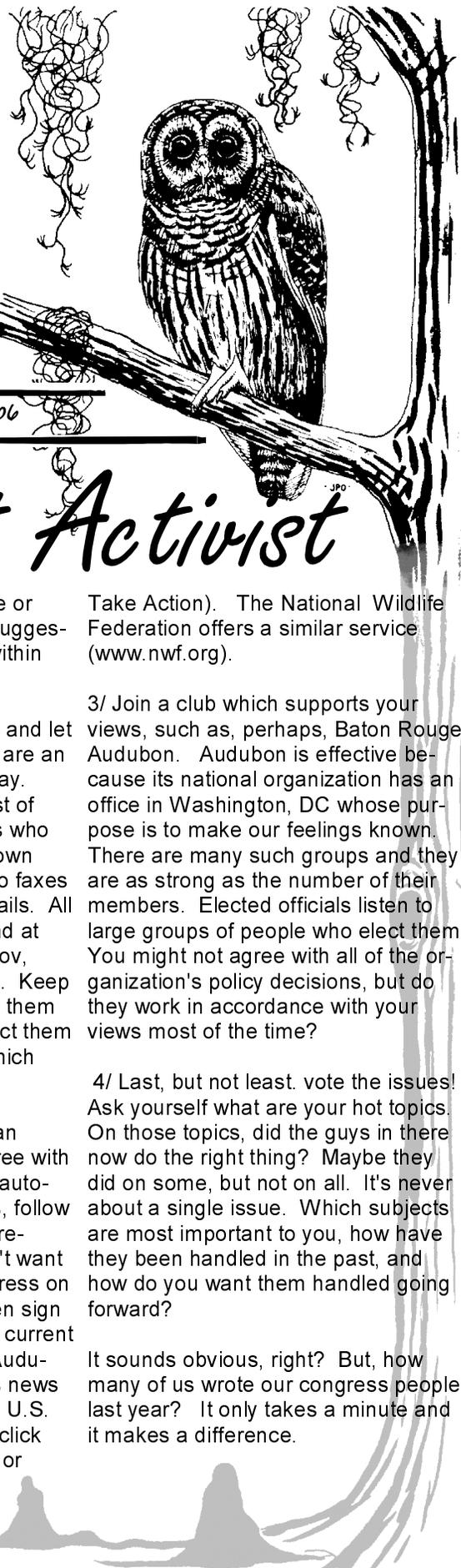
2/ When someone sends you an email about a topic that you agree with and which includes a link to an automated letter to decision makers, follow the link. If an email address is required on the form and you don't want to give it, create a free 2nd address on yahoo or hotmail. You can even sign up to receive news alerts about current events on certain topics. The Audubon Advisory offers subscribers news on conservation topics from the U.S. Congress (www.audubon.org - click Issues and Action - click Home or

Take Action). The National Wildlife Federation offers a similar service (www.nwf.org).

3/ Join a club which supports your views, such as, perhaps, Baton Rouge Audubon. Audubon is effective because its national organization has an office in Washington, DC whose purpose is to make our feelings known. There are many such groups and they are as strong as the number of their members. Elected officials listen to large groups of people who elect them. You might not agree with all of the organization's policy decisions, but do they work in accordance with your views most of the time?

4/ Last, but not least. vote the issues! Ask yourself what are your hot topics. On those topics, did the guys in there now do the right thing? Maybe they did on some, but not on all. It's never about a single issue. Which subjects are most important to you, how have they been handled in the past, and how do you want them handled going forward?

It sounds obvious, right? But, how many of us wrote our congress people last year? It only takes a minute and it makes a difference.



BRAS, OA Plan Joint Fundraiser To fund IBA Coordinator

We reported in the last issue of the Barred Owl that we now have an IBA Coordinator for National Audubon located in Baton Rouge. Funds for the position are provided by the US State Wildlife Grants Program and awarded through the state fish and wildlife agencies. It is a 3 year program with the possibility of an extension to 5 years. They provide 75% of the costs while the local chapters (BRAS and Orleans Audubon) must make up the difference. It is with this goal that the two organizations will shortly send our first joint fundraising letter. We will continue to raise money for the next three years. The decision to fundraise together was made as a result of the major upheaval Orleans Audubon has experienced due to Hurricane Katrina. In addition, any shortfall in one club's IBA dues would have to be made up by the other. The IBA position is an important one which will hopefully lead to a long overdue, larger Audubon presence in our state and more attention to bird conservation issues. We hope you will contribute!



BRAS ACTIVITY SCHEDULE

Saturday, May 20 - Join Harriett Pooler to walk/drive down Whiskey Road looking for nesting birds. Species seen might include Yellow-breasted Chat, Kentucky Warbler, Prothonotary Warbler, Swainson's Warbler, Painted Bunting and Swallow-tailed Kite. We will meet at Coffee Call at 6am carpool to the birding site. Return around noon. Bring water and a hat. Participation is limited to 15 people. Please pre-register by calling Robert McLaughlin during business hours at 926.2223 or by e-mail at rmclaughlin@sterneagee.com.

Saturday, June 3 - Feliciana Preserve. Join Dorothy Prowell and Mark Skinner at 7am for a walk through the hills of Tunica. Feliciana Preserve is a private natural area near Star Hill about 40 minutes north of BR. We'll walk on a moderately hilly trail that skirts Thompson's Creek for about 3 miles. We could see several species of warblers including Worm-eating, Hooded, Kentucky, Prothonotary, and Prairie. Return to BR by 1pm. Pre-registration deadline is

June 1st via phone call to Dorothy 387-0867 or by email at dprowe@lsu.edu.

Saturday, June 10 - Meet Marty Guidry at 6am at Coffee Call on College Dr. for a trip to the rice fields in the Kaplan and Crowley area for shorebirds. If possible, we will stop near Ramah to see Wood Storks and shorebirds on the east side of the Atchafalaya. We plan to be back at Coffee Call no later than 4pm. We will stop at a local place for facilities and food. Bring water and a hat. Please pre-register by calling Robert during business hours at 926.2223 or by e-mail at rmclaughlin@sterneagee.com.

Coming Attractions:

Tentatively scheduled for October 21 - James Beck of Broussard will lead a fall migration birding trip to the Basin.

December 2 - Karen Faye will lead a trip to the Lacassine NWR. Target birds will include Snow, Greater White-fronted and Ross' Geese; Crested Caracara, Vermillion Flycatcher, Fulvous and possibly Black-bellied Whistling Ducks, Canvasbacks, Pintails and American Bittern. Also, there have been Golden Eagles there around this time of year.



BRAS Directory

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We Need Field Guides!

by Harriet Pooler

The Baton Rouge Audubon Society doesn't pay guides to lead fieldtrips. We depend on our members and volunteers to be leaders, and to share their knowledge with others. BRAS has as its mission the preservation of birds as well as other biological treasures of Louisiana, including trees, plants, butterflies, reptiles, amphibians and insects. Please step forward and offer to lead a trip in your area of interest. Diversity of fieldtrips is the key to keeping our members interested and staying connected to our mission. Contact Robert at RMLaughlin@sterneagee.com to volunteer. We promise to make it pain free! You will surely enjoy it and have the opportunity to learn from participants who join the trips.

Thanks in advance.

BRAS Trip Reports

by Robert McLaughlin

On a cold and wet Saturday morning in February, Winston Caillouet led a group of eight to Richfield River-silt in search of Sparrows. Present on the trip were Bob and Karen Pierson, Milton Nall, Sybil McDonald, Linda Night, Dee Childs, Jane Patterson, Winston and myself. We saw numerous Sparrows such as Savannah's and Vesper's, but no White-throated Sparrow. The highlight of the day was a Le Conte's Sparrow which allowed the group to get within about fifteen feet. We all got a great, prolonged view of the bird. Jane got even closer and was able to shoot a great video of the bird. Many thanks to Winston for leading the trip and sharing his knowledge of Sparrows.

In March, our field trip was a joint effort between BRAS and the LSU Bird Club. Richard Gibbons, Justin and Devin Bosler, all of the LSU Bird Club, led a group of 18 birders to Tickfaw State Park. At the park we split up into 3 groups and spent the morning birding the different trails at the park. A total of 55 species were seen by the group and many of us had birds that we could add to our life list, for which Richard said we owed him, as the leader, a beer for each!! Some of the birds that were seen include Wild Turkeys, Pileated Woodpecker, Northern Parula and Yellow-throated Warbler. We had a great time birding with the LSU group and look forward to working with them on future field trips.

*Thanks to our
Members and Donors!*

What our friends are doing

Hilltop Arboretum

www.lsu.edu/hilltop

The spring tour series continues on May 7 with an event called "Gurus and Their Gardens" to feature 6 gardens by top local landscape designers including Jon Emerson, Wayne Womack, Dan Gill, Phil Thompson, Michael Neuman, Doc Reich and Carol Vandeburgt. You may receive this Barred Owl before then... you may not! Upcoming "Through The Garden Gate" programs will focus on Crepe Myrtles, Hibiscus, and Invasive Plants and Their Alternatives. See the website for dates, times and places.

Louisiana Hiking Society

www.hikelouisiana.org

The La. Hiking Club offers hiking trips throughout our state to members of the organization. Many of the hikes are nature outings with emphasis on birds, plants, and insects. Often the outings are led by professionals in their fields. Monthly hikes and membership information can be found on their website.

Feliciana Nature Society

www.audubonbirdfest.com

The Feliciana Hummingbird Celebration is scheduled for July 28 & 29. It is specifically to promote the breeding habitat and population in West Feliciana. There will be at least two sites where visitors can see birds as they are banded, plus opportunities for shopping for plants, feeders and more.

Louisiana Native Plant Society

See www.lnps.org for information on activities and membership, or to join their email group.

Baton Rouge Audubon is appreciative of one and all who make it possible for us to send you this publication, maintain our sanctuaries, and the other projects we undertake on behalf of conservation and birds. We can't do it without you!

February 1 – March 31, 2006

Cerulean Warbler (\$1000) Lionel Head, River Ridge, LA; Kermit and Dorothy Cummings, Huntsville, TX

Louisiana Waterthrush (\$250) Cathy Coates, Baton Rouge, LA

Rose-breasted Grosbeak (\$100) Mary Benson, Baton Rouge, LA; Susan Eaton, Baton Rouge, LA; Joseph Kleiman, Baton Rouge, LA; Anne Simon, New Iberia, LA; G. Guynn, Baton Rouge, LA

Wood Thrush (\$50) Beth Baldrige, Prairieville, LA; Ann McMahan, Baton Rouge, LA; E.V. Moore, Alexandria, LA; Tom and Hope Norman, Alexandria, LA; James Roche, Kenner, LA; Harold Roscoe, Baton Rouge, LA; Mohamed and Joyce El-Mogazi, Lake Charles, LA

Baton Rouge Chapter of the National Audubon Society

Baton Rouge Audubon Society

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Membership Expiration

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). GRATIS includes libraries, news organizations and elected officials.

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 with paypal at our website www.braudubon.org, or send this form with your check to: BRAS, P.O. Box 82525, BRLA 70884.

Baton Rouge Audubon Society (BRAS)

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

- \$20 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: _____