

The **BARRED OWL**

Newsletter of the Baton Rouge Audubon Society

Volume XXXV, Number 2

2nd Quarter, 2008

LEAP INTO SPRING AT OUR WHOOPING CRANE PROGRAM!

By Lindsay Seely

The elegant whooping crane is on the verge of an extraordinary comeback after nearly becoming extinct due to human activities. In 1941, the last migratory flock was reduced to only 15 birds. An ambitious reintroduction project is currently underway to restore a migratory flock of whooping cranes to eastern North America. Now in its eighth year, the project is being undertaken by the Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership (WCEP), a team of non-profit and governmental agencies, whose founding members include the International Crane Foundation (ICF). ICF works worldwide to conserve cranes and the



wetland and grassland ecosystems on which they depend. ICF is dedicated to providing experience, knowledge, and inspiration to involve people in resolving the threats to these beautiful birds.

On Thursday, May 1st the Baton Rouge Audubon Society will be hosting our Spring Program on Whooping Cranes. Our keynote speaker for the evening is Joan Garland, who is the Outreach Coordinator at the International Crane Foundation in Baraboo, Wisconsin. She has worked at ICF for eight years and is Co-leader of the Outreach Team for WCEP. For the past five years, Joan has accompanied the ultralight-led

whooping crane migration down to Florida. She also works on crane conservation education programs in northeastern China and Russia. She will be sharing information about current news, research, and status of the whooping cranes.

In addition to Joan's presentation, Dr. Andy Nyman will also be joining us for the evening. Dr. Nyman is an Associate Professor at LSU in the School of Renewable Natural Resources. He dedicates most of his time researching wetland wildlife ecology but also spends time in the classroom teaching about wildlife science and wetland ecology and management. He will be sharing his current research and efforts on "Investigating the feasibility of Whooping Crane reintroductions in Louisiana at Marsh Island and White Lake."

The event will be held from 6-8 p.m. at the Dalton Woods Auditorium in the LSU Energy, Coast, and Environmental Building, which is located at the southwest edge of campus on Nicholson Drive Extension. In addition to the presentations, there will be a silent auction along with wine and hors d'oeuvres that will be served.

**We look forward to
seeing you there!**

Songbird Search!



Join Robert McLaughlin on Saturday, April 5th, on a field trip to the Burden Research Center on Es-sen Dr. in search of migrating songbirds. The gates will open at 7 a.m. and we will meet at that time at the lone Burden Conference Center.

Target birds are Prothonotary and Hooded Warblers, Indigo and Painted Buntings and Scarlet and Summer Tanagers. Please note that we will not meet at Coffee Call. Please pre-register by calling Robert during business hours at 926-2223 or by e-mail at 20legend@cox.net



President's Report - Harriett Pooler

BRAS' spring program is on Thursday, May 1st and will address the latest thoughts on the Whooping Crane introduction into Louisiana (see page one for more details). It will also be our 2008 annual meeting. We will conduct a small amount of business --- voting on the slate of officers for the 2008-09 year. The slate of officers for next year are as follows:

President: Harriett Pooler
Vice President: open
Treasurer: Jay Guillory
Secretary: Donna LaFleur

Nominations will also be taken from the floor. Please come to the meeting and vote! We've also decided to start recognizing those outstanding folks who promote conservation and/or birdwatching in the community/state with their actions. Please join us at this annual meeting as we give out the first **Baton Rouge Audubon Society's 2008 Volunteer of the Year Award**. If you have someone you would like to nominate, please send his/her name and activities/ involvement to me at

harriett.pooler@gmail.com

Names will be submitted to the board for recommendation. After conducting our business, we will have the opportunity to

hear Joan Garland and Dr. Andy Nyman speak on the whooping cranes, followed by a reception and silent auction. It will be a fun night and I look forward to seeing you there.



Lastly, what excitement the Fork-tailed Flycatcher caused the Louisiana birding community! It was found in Plaquemine near the Conoco Plant by David Muth, and hung around for a couple weeks. When Karen Fay and I went to see it, we easily knew where the bird was by the large flock of birders standing near the road. Luckily, the owner of the yard was pretty bird friendly and we could stay around the greenhouse with spotting scopes, etc. I may be wrong but I believe this is the first documented record of a Fork-tailed Flycatcher in Louisiana. It was a lifer for me! I don't know whether this bird flew off its' migration route or is expanding its' range, but I do know that extraordinary sightings like this keep birding exciting and challenging.

See you on May 1st!

All the best,

Harriett

Thanks to our Members!

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!

Dec. 1, 2007 - March 1, 2008

CERULEAN WARBLER
(\$1000)

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(\$500)

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(\$50)

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Beverly Smiley, Baton Rouge, LA
Joseph G. Simmons, Baton Rouge, LA

BRAS 4-1-1

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225/926-2223

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The Barred Owl

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Important Bird Areas Report - Melanie Driscoll

We've had great progress recently with Important Bird Areas (IBA) site identification. The National Wetlands Research Center (NWRC) hosted a January IBA Technical Committee meeting which resulted in the nomination of 16 new IBAs. Additionally, 5 identified sites were expanded, some quite significantly. Two sites, Evangeline and Vernon Units of the Calcasieu District of Kisatchie National Forest, were merged to become the West Kisatchie IBA.

The sites vary widely in the reasons they are important to birds. Some sites, such as the Chandeleur Islands, provide important nesting habitat for birds. Other sites, such as the Active Delta (formerly called the Mississippi River Birdsfoot Delta) provide habitat for wintering waterfowl. The Atchafalaya Basin IBA provides stopover habitat for migratory songbirds like the (Audubon Yellow WatchList) Wood Thrush. Many sites, due to their location within the Mississippi River flyway and near the Gulf Coast, provide important nesting, stopover, and wintering habitat for many species of birds in different guilds. There are even a few sites that provide for a suite of birds more specific to one habitat type. East and West Kisatchie are such examples, and support birds

adapted to upland pine savannahs, such as Red-cockaded Woodpecker, Bachman's Sparrow, Northern Bobwhite, and American Woodcock.

With the expansion of existing sites and the addition of new sites, IBAs now span most of southern Louisiana, excluding a few larger cities such as Baton Rouge and New Orleans. There are also several sites in central and northern Louisiana, and more will likely be nominated in the future. The sites were delineated based on habitats and ecological characteristics, as well as known counts of birds within them. Total, thus far, there are over 17 million acres of land in nominated and identified IBAs in Louisiana. The predominant habitats are: 1) more than 5 million acres of open water, 2) more than 3 million acres of forested swamp, 3) more than 3 million acres of marsh, 4) more than 2 million acres of cropland (primarily rice fields), and 5) more than 1 million acres of evergreen forest (primarily in Kisatchie National Forest).

This amount and arrangement of good habitat for birds is nothing less than astonishing. I cannot emphasize this enough. In most states, IBAs are remnants of good habitat in an unfriendly 'matrix' - usually agricultural

or developed areas that are sub-optimal for birds. This is why it is considered a 'site-based' program. In contrast, in Louisiana, we have vast, relatively unbroken landscapes of habitat, albeit altered by hydrological and other changes. When I presented this new map of IBAs to the National Audubon Society conservation team, I asked one of them "Did you expect this map?" They told me that this has some precedent - from the pampas of Brazil. Alaska may be another area with such extensive habitat for birds. Otherwise, this is virtually unprecedented.

For a change, Louisiana may be breaking ground, in a very positive way. We are causing some raised eyebrows with our IBAs - because we have, if there is such a thing, too much habitat, and too many birds. In one of our IBAs, we meet global IBA criteria with 16 species of birds. Most of our IBAs meet global or continental IBA criteria for at least one species in a couple of years. Unprecedented. Something to be proud of. Something Louisiana should value, and protect.

In that light, we will be conducting at least one site recognition ceremony this spring. Possibly at the Atchafalaya Basin IBA at Step Outside Day on May 10, 2008. Keep an eye out for the announcement on LABIRD and the BRAS listservs. Meanwhile, what a way to usher in spring! What a way to feel pride in Louisiana birds!

Shadtree Inn

⇒ B & B ⇒

A Great Spot for Birders

The Shadtree Inn in St. Francisville is situated on 4 acres with vistas into tree tops, feeders for hummers and others, baths, and lots of plants providing cover and food for birds. It's a perfect place to experience spring migration. The owner, Kenwood Kennon, is eager to get the word out to birders and willing to give a 10% discount to first time BRAS members visiting Sunday through Thursday.

**You can learn more about it at
www.shadtreeinn.com**

BRAS REMINDS YOU!

DON'T MISS

AUDUBON COUNTRY BIRD FESTIVAL

April 4, 5, & 6: St. Francisville, LA.
Sponsored by the Feliciana Nature Society. More information can be found at
www.audubonbirdfest.com
Or phone 225-635-3110

AND DON'T FORGET!

Visit www.birdlouisiana.com

for details of all Louisiana
birding festivals!



LEGISLATION TO EXPAND THE BARATARIA PRESERVE AWAITS CONGRESS APPROVAL

*By Jennifer Coulson
Orleans Audubon Society*

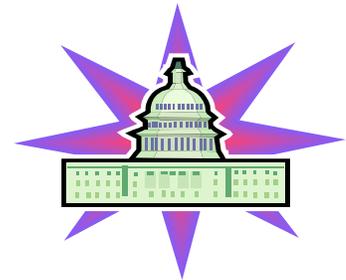
Senator Mary Landrieu recently introduced Senate Bill 783, which, if adopted by Congress, would expand the boundaries of the Barataria Preserve unit of Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve to include over 8,000 acres of wetlands in Jefferson Parish, 3,000 of which have already been paid for by the taxpayers and need this legislation to be opened up for public use. Senate Bill 783 adds already public land to the park and allows the owners of private property the opportunity to sell to the Park if they so choose. Senator David Vitter, Representative Charlie Melancon and former Congressman Bobby Jindal have also supported the expansion

of the Park and offered earlier versions of these bills.

The boundary expansion would be the first step needed to protect over 8,000 acres of wetlands to locals and visitors from all over the world. These wetlands protect our west bank hurricane levees from storm surge. The acquisition of this land will help Park managers conserve this delicate ecosystem. The addition of the 8,000 acres will protect large tracts of forested wetlands, including Baldcypress-Watertupelo-Red Maple swamps and bottomland hardwood forests, as well as fresh, intermediate and brackish marshes. Included in this acreage is the ecologically unique floatant marsh, or floating freshwater marsh, the only example of this eco-

system in the National Park Service, and a globally rare habitat.

If you agree that expanding the Park boundary to include these wetlands is a good idea, then consider contacting your Senators and Representative today. If you live in Jefferson Parish, you may also wish to express your interest and support for this legislation to the Jefferson Parish Council.



SHOW YOUR SUPPORT FOR SENATE BILL 783!

Senator Mary Landrieu
724 Hart Senate Building
Washington, D.C. 20510
Voice: (202)224-5824
Fax: (202) 224-9735

Senator David Vitter
516 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510
Phone: (202) 224-4623
Fax: (202) 228-5061

U.S. Rep. Charlie Melancon
404 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515-1807
Phone: (202) 225-4031
Fax: (202) 226-3944

BRAS Education Notes - Jane Patterson

Earth Day - BRAS will participate in Baton Rouge's Earth Day Celebration again this year with an activity in the Earth for Children area. We're calling it "I know my birds!" and the focus is on teaching kids skills for identification they'll see in their yards, schoolyards, parks and wild areas around Baton Rouge. The booth will feature a game for children 5-9, and another for children 10-16, with prizes for participation. Come join us on Sunday April 20 in downtown Baton Rouge.

Neotropical Songbird Tour and Step Outside Day - This event will be held on May 10 at Sherburne Wildlife Mgt Area in the Atchafalaya Basin. This area features one of the nation's greatest concentrations of nesting

Neotropical Songbirds. Come find the local warblers, thrushes, flycatchers, cuckoos, buntings, and vireos pointed out by some of Louisiana's savviest birders, while watching overhead for passing Swallowtail Kites and Roseate Spoonbills. The tour will start at about 6:45 a.m. and wrap up about 10:00 a.m.

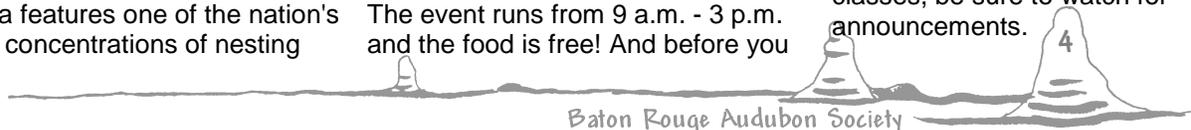
Then, after the songbird tour, be sure to stop by "Step Outside Day" at the Sherburne WMA headquarters. This family event is designed to introduce children and those with disabilities to outdoor activities such as hunting, fishing, boating, and, of course, birding! BRAS will have a booth with games and bird walks for the kids. The event runs from 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. and the food is free! And before you

leave the area, be sure to check out the large Cliff Swallow colony located under the Hwy 190 bridge on highway 975.

Watch the Baton Rouge Audubon website for more information about organized field trips to these events.

Swamp Feathers

A series of classes designed to introduce children and families to the delights of birding was held at BREC's Bluebonnet Swamp in January and February. The "Swamp Feathers" classes were well received and future classes are on the horizon. If you have friends or family interested in the classes, be sure to watch for announcements.



What Our Friends Are Doing

ORLEANS AUDUBON SOCIETY Programs

"From Black Gold to the Black Oyster-catcher: Challenges and Opportunities in Alaska" with Taldi Walter
When: April 22, 2008; 7:00 p.m.
Where: Audubon Zoo, Dominion Learning Center, Auditorium, New Orleans

Joint Spring Banquet of Orleans Audubon Society and Crescent Bird Club - "Panama, A Place for Old Men?" with David Muth and Phillip Wallace
When: Tuesday, May 20, 2008
Time: 6:30-7:00 p.m. social and cash bar, 7:00 p.m. banquet and program
Where: The Imperial Room of Five Happiness, 3605 S. Carrollton Ave.

Reservations: \$28/person; mail check made out to Orleans Audubon Society to Michael Crago, 801 Rue Dauphine, Ste. 304, Metairie, LA 70005; deadline May 15.

OAS Birding Trips held jointly with the Crescent Bird Club

Bayou Sauvage National Wildlife Refuge- New Orleans East

Saturday, April 5, 2008, 7:30 a.m.
Location: Meet at Recovery Road and Chef Hwy. From New Orleans Take I-10 East to Exit 246A (Chalmette, I-510); go about 2 miles on I-510 to Hwy 90 east Exit; turn left and go about 4 miles; turn right at Recovery Road.
Leader: Ed Wallace 504-343-1433 (cell)

St. Bernard Parish All Day Trip

Saturday, April 12, 2008, 7:00 a.m.
Location: Meet at Hoffer's Convenience Store at the SE corner of Paris Rd and Judge Perez Dr. Take I-10 east, exit Paris Rd. Turn left at the intersection with Judge Perez Drive which is the continuation of Claiborne Ave.
Leader: Glenn Ousset 504-495-4284 (cell)

Grand Isle All Day Trip-Corresponds with the Grand Isle Migratory Bird Festival

Saturday, April 19, 2008, 7:30 a.m.
Location: Meet at the intersection of Highways 1 and 3090 (Fourchon Road) just north of Grand Isle.
Leader: Phillip Wallace 504-628-0146 (cell)

Bogue Chitto National Wildlife Refuge and Honey Island

Saturday, May 17, 2008, 7:30 a.m.
Location: Meet at the entrance of Honey Island Wildlife Management Area by Exit 11 off of I-59 just before the Mississippi border.
Notes: You will need a Wild Louisiana Stamp. Good chance for Swainson's Warbler.
Leader: Glenn Ousset 504-495-4284 (cell)

Our Man At National - Paul Kemp

Hope all of you enjoyed the Great Backyard Bird Count as much as I did. This was my first so you will have to forgive my excitement. I saw my first confirmed Yellow-bellied Sapsucker and counted 14 species total within an hour in my south Baton Rouge backyard. Great co-operation from the bird life.

Much has happened since my last report here in the fall. I want to let you know that the restoration research at Rainey Sanctuary is progressing. Boardwalks have been constructed to allow measurements. We are investigating with scientists at LSU the potential to use a micro-dredge in a very controlled way to recreate tidal wetlands lost over the past 10 years in a section of the property that has been partially cut off from sediment input by crisscrossing canal banks. More to come on that.

Of course we had an election that brought Governor Bobby Jindal to the governor's mansion here. This meant that everybody in south Louisiana who cares about hurricane protection and the environment took a deep breath and waited to see the direction that Garret Graves, Governor Jindal's new Executive Assistant for Coastal Activities, would take with respect to getting coastal habitat restoration, essentially in a stall since the storms, into high gear. An overflow crowd at his first meeting of the Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority (CPRA) on February 26th was not disappointed.

Garret, like most of the Jindal people, has a lot of experience - in this case legislative experience on Capitol Hill in DC - for someone who looks young enough to be my kid. I want to let all Audubon members know that the initial signals are very good. Garret has been generous with his time in meeting with many members of the conservation community, including yours truly, in the few weeks since his appointment. He even spent two days with about 40 of us at a meeting arranged by the Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana with the Army team conducting the Category 5 Hurricane Protection study in Vicksburg. The long and short of it is that he wants to shake up the clubby and slow project planning and construction process to better match the urgent needs of the coast and its communities. We are all for that and I have taken the liberty - on your behalf -- to suggest a number of specific actions that he can take to make that clear.

Garret is looking to build major interstate alliances around common restoration and protection interests over the next six months that will take advantage of the new Governor's star appeal and compensate for our lack of Congressional seniority. One of those he mentioned corresponds to the Mississippi flyway, an upstream-downstream Mississippi Valley caucus. This lines up very well with Audubon's Headwaters to the Gulf Mississippi River program, into which I was hired just one year ago.

A second interstate alliance that I think will get traction quickly is one linking Governor Jindal with Governors Crist (FL) and Swartzenegger (CA). Each is a popular relatively independent pragmatist who faces staggering needs for upgrading inadequate federal flood protection systems, and wetland restoration needs that are critical not only to providing bird and fish habitat, but also fresh water supply and buffering from storms. Think Everglades and the Sacramento River delta. Oh well.

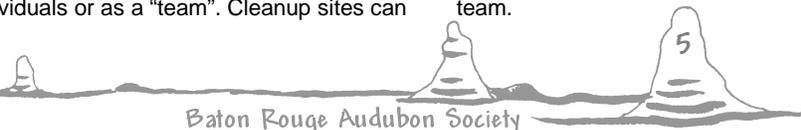
The martins are here and hope springs eternal. Until next time...

Help Clean Up Baton Rouge !

On Saturday morning, April 19th, 9-12:00 noon, a huge Great American Cleanup in Baton Rouge will take place all around the parish. Mayor Holden would like all civic and environmental groups to participate, as well as the churches and businesses in our community. The Istrouma Boy Scout Council and Audubon Girl Scout Council are participating with their many troops. Group members can join in as individuals or as a "team". Cleanup sites can

be chosen by the team or sites can be suggested by Keep Baton Rouge Beautiful at 381-0860. Registration and details are online at KBRB.org.

There will be competition between groups as to which has the greatest percentage of members involved. This would be a perfect time to wear your Audubon t-shirt, if you have one, and join the Audubon clean-up team.



Baton Rouge Audubon Society

Baton Rouge Chapter of the National Audubon Society

Baton Rouge Audubon Society

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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*.

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.

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.

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.)

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City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

E-mail: _____

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