

The **BARRED OWL**

Newsletter of the Baton Rouge Audubon Society

Volume XXXIII, Number 3

3rd Quarter, 2006

--- Monthly Speaker Program ---

BRAS and the Ivory-billed Woodpecker

September 20, 7pm
Speaker - Jon Andrew

Please join BRAS on September 20 at Hilltop to meet Jon Andrew, chief of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's National Wildlife Refuge System in the Southeast and chairperson of the Steering Committee for the Recovery Team for the Ivory-billed Woodpecker. Since the April 2005 announcement of the rediscovery of the Woodpecker in the Cache River National Wildlife Refuge in Arkansas, many local birders and nature lovers have been wondering what the latest information is about the Ivory-billed. Is it still alive? Could

it be in the Atchafalaya? What has happened since the announcement? How can we help the recovery efforts? These and many more questions will be answered at our first speaker program of the season. As the Recovery Team plans to issue a Technical Agency Draft at the end of September, we may get a glimpse at the plan that will be open for public comment later in the year.

Jon Andrew is from the Atlanta office of the USFWS and he is looking forward to his visit to Baton Rouge. Prior to his responsibility for overseeing all of Wildlife Refuges in the Southeast, Jon served as Chief of

the Division of Migratory Bird Management in Arlington Virginia. He also served as Chief of the Branch of Planning and Policy for the National Wildlife Refuge program in Washington D.C. and refuge manager of two refuges in Texas and the National Key Deer Refuge in Florida. At the beginning of his career, Jon worked on refuges in Alaska and North Dakota. Jon's hobbies and interests include: bird watching, duck hunting, fly fishing, book collecting, and he collects Theodore Roosevelt memorabilia. Please join us to welcome Jon Andrews to Baton Rouge.

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IBA Update

by Melanie Driscoll

After long efforts by committed members of local Audubon societies in Louisiana to develop an Important Bird Areas (IBA) Program, a state IBA Coordinator was hired in February 2006. Spearheaded by the Baton Rouge and Orleans Audubon Societies, additional funding comes from a State Wildlife Grant through the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries. The program is housed in the Louisiana Bird Resource Center at the LSU Museum of Natural Science. The goal is to identify the most essential areas for birds in the state, to monitor those sites for changes to birds and habitat, and to conserve these areas for long-term protection of biodiversity. The Louisiana Important Bird Areas Program is getting into full swing with the formation of a Technical Advisory

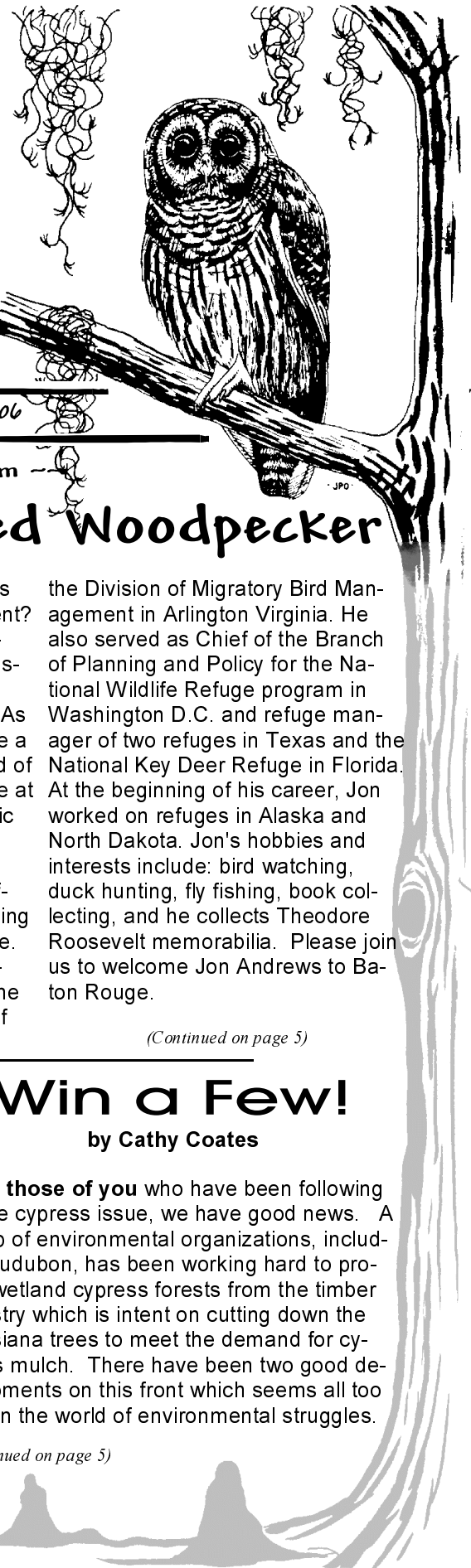
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Win a Few!

by Cathy Coates

For those of you who have been following the cypress issue, we have good news. A group of environmental organizations, including Audubon, has been working hard to protect wetland cypress forests from the timber industry which is intent on cutting down the Louisiana trees to meet the demand for cypress mulch. There have been two good developments on this front which seems all too rare in the world of environmental struggles.

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THE BIRDS OF MACHRIHANISH

by David Cagnolatti

If you're the typical birder, you never travel without a pair of binoculars. Even when traveling with non-birders and on a tight schedule, you try to break away for a few precious minutes on those road trips to try to pick up a life bird or two. Such was the case on a recent trip to Scotland for me and a few golf buddies. A little persuasion and a couple of hours of diversion turned into a most memorable experience on the Kintyre Peninsula.

The Kintyre Peninsula is situated on the western coast of Scotland. From Glasgow, we headed northwest through the Argyll Forest an hour's drive to Tarbet, then made the turn to the South for an eighty-mile drive down one of the most scenic two lane roads in the world bound for a town called Machrihanish, whose golf course is world famous. I was soon to learn that its birding should be also.

All the way down the coast road, I could see glimpses of feathered flyers, unable to identify any of them at 65 miles per hour. "Can we stop for just a minute to."

"No. No time for stopping. We'll lose our hotel room if we're too late."

Darn. More opportunities wasted.

Arriving at the Ardsheil Hotel in Campbelltown, the innkeeper noticed the binoculars around my neck and asked "Are you a bird watcher by any chance?"

Grinning excitedly, I replied "Why, yes. Yes I am." My non-birding companions, eyes glazed over, sensed what was coming.

"Then you must take the time to visit the bird observatory at Machrihanish and meet Eddie Maguire." Directions were jotted on a napkin. Now all I had to do was talk my friends into a short diversion. My luck was improving. The observatory was only a block from the golf course. The group agreed to leave early in the morning. They'd spend the extra time practicing their short games while I went birding.

The next morning, I took a glance at the

paperback version of the local bird guide I had picked up at a tourist information center the day before. The author's name on the cover: Eddie Maguire. Same guy? You betcha. Lady Luck smiles again.

I pull up at the observatory, a small but tidy wooden structure nestled among the rocks on the shore of the Atlantic, and out walks the Warden of the Machrihanish Seabird and Wildlife Observatory. With thick Scottish accent he says "Welcome to the observatory. I'm Eddie Maguire." Pleasantries and introductions were exchanged. I put a ten pound note in the donation box. Then, the serious birding began.

Eddie Maguire is probably one of the foremost experts on local birds in all of Scotland. He showed me no less than 25 life birds in the span of thirty minutes. Shore birds included fulmar, gannets and shags (what we would call cormorants). There were shelduck, eiders, and pochards. We had a rare visit from an osprey, and spotted several kestrels dive bombing the adjacent fields; both species slightly differing from their North American counterparts. There were oystercatchers of the European variety by the hundreds. We saw a ringed plover, curlew, rock pipits, wheatear, stone chats and arctic terns.

After showing me all the species present at the observatory at the time, Eddie gave me directions to one of his favorite places - the Benmore National Botanic Gardens of Scotland. It would prove to be a convenient stop on our way back to Glasgow. There, I added another dozen life birds to my list.

I joined the group to play golf at Machrihanish. Fittingly, the golf club's logo was an oystercatcher. That's one souvenir cap I could not pass up. Looking back, I wish I'd bought two.

So if you ever find yourself on the Kintyre Peninsula of Scotland, be sure to stop in and meet Eddie Maguire. It's a birding experience you won't soon forget. On the road leaving the little seaside town of Machrihanish, the sign reads simply "Haste ye back." I believe I will. Some day.

For more info, visit
<http://www.machrihanishbirds.org.uk/>

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NAS SIGNS AGREEMENT WITH THE CORPS OF ENGINEERS

Representatives from the National Audubon Society (NAS), as well as regional and local Audubon staff and members met at the offices of the Corps of Engineers (USACE) in New Orleans in March in preparation for the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between NAS and the USACE. Staff members in attendance from NAS included John Flicker, President, Bob Percia-sepe, COO, April Gromnicki, Assistant Director of Government Relations, Roger Still, VP of the Miss. Rivers Program and our own Melanie Driscoll, IBA Coordinator for Louisiana. Local chapters were represented by Jennifer Coulson, President and Conservation Chair of Orleans Audubon, and Cathy Coates, Conservation Chair of BRAS.

The MOU was signed in Mississippi on March 20 by John Flicker and John Paul Woodley Jr., Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works), providing a framework for collaboration between the two organizations. It is expected to have a positive impact on landscapes throughout the US, importantly including Louisiana, the Mississippi River north to south, and the Everglades. The two organizations agreed to:

✓ Encourage water management measures that benefit migratory and resident native birds, other wildlife, plants and natural communities while meeting human needs;

✓ Foster wetland protection and restoration and demonstration projects to test promising innovative water management strategies;

✓ Promote non-structural flood protection, where appropriate and consistent with human health and safety, and other measures to restore or maintain natural ecosystem functions at sustainable levels;

✓ Promote the gathering and sharing of scientific data and research; and

✓ Cooperate in public information and education efforts.

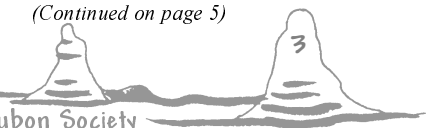
NAS and USACE currently have restoration, research, and educational projects under way, and additional projects are being planned. To read the full MOU, go to <http://www.usace.army.mil/inet/functions/cw/cecwo/reg/citizen.htm>.

National Discusses Emerging Priorities at Board Retreat.. And Louisiana wins!

Audubon's Board of Directors held its 3rd annual retreat May 18-21 in Vail, CO with national and state board members, state executive directors, local leaders, and staff from around the country in attendance. Cathy Coates from Baton Rouge attended as the only representative from Louisiana. The event focused on emerging Audubon priorities including the Louisiana coast as part of the larger Mississippi River - Headwaters to the Gulf campaign, with the exciting announcement of the creation of a full time position to be based in South Louisiana. The new VP/Director, Gulf Coast Initiative will be charged with working to ensure that restoration of coastal wetlands is a central component of any post hurricane plan on the Gulf. He/she will report to Roger Still, VP, Mississippi River Programs and will supervise all programs and assets in Louisiana including the Rainey Sanctuary and IBA program. South Louisiana has no shortage of environmental organizations working to save our coast. National Audubon is one of the largest, strongest, and most respected conservation groups in the country. It is long overdue, and a welcomed announcement that we will have an Audubon staff person in our state.

Other emerging priorities include the Western Hemisphere Alliance to protect Important Bird Areas and global warming. Audubon is now the BirdLife International Partner in the U.S. Bird Life International is the organization which created the IBA program and manages it internationally by developing partnerships with nonprofit environmental groups around the world. Audubon's strategy for international success is to build alliances with BirdLife Partners in other Western Hemisphere countries with critical IBA's. As for

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All About Hilltop Arboretum and the BRAS Monthly Speaker Program

Please join BRAS on the 3rd Wednesdays of September, October and November at 7pm for speaker programs to take place at Hilltop Arboretum on Highland Rd. between Bluebonnet and Siegen. Refreshments will be served. We thank Hilltop for its generosity in allowing us to use their wonderful space. If you aren't familiar with the Arboretum, it will be a special treat to discover. Its 14 acres were donated to LSU in 1981 by Emory Smith, then 90, who had made it his home since 1929. The house he and his wife built on the property still stands, as does the natural legacy he left behind. Mr. Smith's intent was that the property be used as a teaching tool in the LSU School of Landscape Architecture and to be shared with the community. He planned the garden to follow the form of a cathedral - "it had a central great hall or nave, and from that - in every direction - ran hallways leading to other rooms and on to others, with niches and passageways of every description. The

nave and other rooms were the grassy plots; the walls were trees, shrubs, and bamboo; the pillars were old tree trunks. The paths you walk lead in every direction to invite you to the green openings, to unusual trees, to masses of beautiful flowers. In short, the plan is an invitation to stop for a while to marvel at Nature's beauty." The Friends of Hilltop support group was established in 1982 with the purpose of working with LSU to maintain and enhance the property. It is committed to the preservation and development of Hilltop as a natural preserve of native southern trees, shrubs, and wildflowers and encourages its use by the community. Major annual events include a winter guest speaker symposium, a garden tour series in the spring and fall, and the largest native plant sale in Baton Rouge in the fall. The arboretum is open to the public free of charge from dawn to dusk daily. Friends of Hilltop is supported by memberships, donations and grants. You can learn more at lsu.edu/hilltop.

Gary Noel Ross, BRAS Past-President

Featured in AUDUBON magazine

Gary Noel Ross, retired Professor of Biology (Southern University), lepidopterist, and a past president of BRAS (1993-1995), has an article in the July/August issue of **Audubon** magazine. "Swamp Muse," is the magazine's JOURNAL feature. The text centers around Gary's research with the rare butterfly, the Seminole Crescent (*Anthanassa texana seminole*), a subspecies of the Texan Crescent (*A. t. texana*). Whereas "Texans" are relatively common in the western U.S., Mexico, and Central America, "Seminoles" occur only in isolated colonies along the Gulf coast between southern Louisiana and Florida and then northward on the Atlantic coast into South Carolina. The Seminole Crescent is a small, attractive butterfly related to our common Pearl Crescent and Phaon Crescent. However, unlike Pearls and Phaons, which are denizens of sunlight roadsides and meadows, Seminole frequent dank swampy environments. Gary's story described his long term and adventurous work in Bluebonnet Swamp Nature Sanctuary, a popular urban sanctuary located in south Baton Rouge. The site is an excellent place to view the butterfly, and in fact, the population

of the butterfly this summer is reasonably high.

Editors of **Audubon** are nominating the story for the John Burroughs Association's "Outstanding Essay Award for Nature Writing" for 2006. Gary's feature, "Butterfly Wrangling in Louisiana," **Natural History** magazine, May 1995, won this same award in 1995. Gary's detailed research on the Seminole Crescent, "Life History of the Seminole Crescent, *Anthanassa texana seminole* (Lepidoptera: Nymphalidae)" was originally published in the full color journal **Holarctic Lepidoptera**: Vol. 9 (1-2):1-30, 2002 (2005). Copies are available for sale in the Gift Shop at Bluebonnet Swamp Nature Center. Gary also has exciting, popular stories in the May/June issue of **Louisiana Conservationist** ("The Tentless Tent Caterpillar") and stories/photographs on the Forest Tent Caterpillar, Louisiana Iris, and Katrina watermelons in the summer issue of **Louisiana Wildlife Federation** magazine.

Important Bird Areas UPDATE

(Continued from page 1)

Committee comprised of expert biologists, ornithologists, and ecologists from around the state review nominated sites for IBA designation. The experts come from more than 15 organizations, including state and federal agencies, non-profit organizations, and knowledgeable birders.

An IBA program is important in a state like Louisiana which is rich in avian diversity. Louisiana encompasses 4 Bird Conservation Regions (BCRs), based on the North American Bird Conservation Initiative (NABCI) criteria: Gulf Coast Prairie, West Gulf Coastal Plain/Ouachitas, Mississippi Alluvial Valley, and Southeastern Coastal Plain. These ecological units provide a useful framework for planning and prioritizing by land managers. Within these BCRs, birds find foraging, sheltering, and nesting sites in dozens of distinct, and often rare, habitats. For instance, longleaf pine savannas provide habitat for the Red-cockaded Woodpecker, and wintering habitat for populations of Henslow's Sparrows and Bachman's Sparrows. Bottomland hardwood forests offer important habitat for dozens of migrants, as well as for breeding populations of Swallow-tailed Kites, Swainson's Warblers, and Prothonotary Warblers. The cheniers, or coastal live-oak woodlands, are valuable stopover points for migratory birds crossing the Gulf of Mexico. Barrier islands and coastal beaches house Brown Pelicans and shorebirds such as the Piping Plover

and Wilson's Plover, as well as many tern species. Finally, hundreds of thousands of waterfowl and shorebirds use the wetlands of Louisiana in migration as well as for wintering.

During the initial phase of the IBA program, sites that house globally or continentally significant populations of birds will be identified and reviewed for IBA designation. The Technical Advisory Committee will set state-level IBA criteria. The second phase will involve review of potential IBAs that qualify based on state-level criteria. Throughout the designation process, sites will be prioritized in order that limited resources may be used wisely for monitoring, habitat restoration, conservation planning, and education.

Goals of the Louisiana IBA Program include: 1) identifying sites throughout Louisiana important to bird populations, 2) encouraging the participation of the public in avian conservation and management, 3) facilitating the adoption of sites by local groups of friends, 4) initiating volunteer avian, habitat, and threat monitoring at critical sites, 5) initiating conservation planning for high priority sites, and 6) educating the greater community about the natural value and proper management for birds and habitats throughout Louisiana.

There are many IBA success stories as examples for how the program may lead to actual conservation action in Louisiana. In Idaho, weekly field trips for monitoring

of shorebirds at Mann Lake IBA are conducted by the Palouse Audubon Chapter. Monitoring efforts at IBAs are conducted in Connecticut, Mississippi, and many other states. Connecticut has led several bird identification seminars associated with IBAs to educate the public and to add to the number of trained observers for future monitoring efforts. The Earth Day 2006 Great Pennsylvania Cleanup focused cleanups at IBAs.

Audubon New York has had several conservation successes. Financial contributions were made to the Onondaga Audubon Society for a land trust for acquisition of the Whiskey Hollow IBA, and the NY IBA program was instrumental in getting plans made for the management of valuable habitat at Sterling Forest State Park.

These efforts show some of the possible outcomes of designating sites as IBAs. The reality of implementation in Louisiana will depend on many factors, including the political climate, support of the birding community and the public in general, and the wishes of the community. Missouri focuses heavily on conservation planning; New York, on IBA adoption groups. There are many recipes for success. The Baton Rouge and Orleans Audubon Societies are excited to finally have an IBA program in our state and look forward to the opportunities it offers. Stay tuned to the Barred Owl and our website for progress reports.

BRAS Monthly Speaker Program

(Continued from page 1)

October 18, 7pm
Melanie Driscoll, IBA Program Coordinator for Louisiana

You've read about the IBA program in the last 2 issues of the Barred Owl. Audubon finally has a full time staff person in Louisiana, hopefully the first of more to come soon. Melanie will be on hand to talk about the program's progress and goals, and to put them in the context of IBAs globally, at the 2nd of our new monthly programs. This is a great opportunity to find out what it's all about and how you might help.

November 15, 7pm
Richard Gibbons, Coordinator, Louisiana Bird Resource Center Louisiana Winter Bird Atlas

Louisiana is home to millions of birds during the winter months. The Louisiana Bird Resource Center, in partnership with the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, will soon begin the important process of identifying the distribution and abundance patterns for this critical wintering bird habitat. Louisiana's first atlas is its Breeding Bird Atlas completed in 1996. We are among only 25 states to have a bird atlas. Winter birding is cool and comfortable. Come learn about this exciting new initiative and how you can participate.

~~ Win A Few ~~ Never Buy Cypress Mulch!

(Continued from page 1)

#1/ The provision added to the Water Resources Development Act by Senator Vitter of Louisiana has been removed. This provision would have reduced substantially Corps permitting authority over wetlands, giving loggers the green light to clear cut non-regenerating cypress forests. While Vitter is strongly supported by the timber industry and fought to protect his provision and their interests, he finally bowed to the obvious conclusion that clear cutting the trees which protect our coasts is a bad idea, and certainly it would not be logical to reduce the protection they are afforded in the same bill which includes over \$1B for coastal restoration. Thank you, Senator Vitter.

#2/ The EPA has recently ruled on a precedent setting logging permit exemption request which it has been considering for over a year. It demanded that the Livingston Parish landowner prove that his forest would grow back if harvested. It cited as a reference the Governor's Science Working Group Report of April 2005 which clearly states that large portions of wetland cypress will

not naturally regenerate due to salt water intrusion and higher water levels resulting from coastal erosion. The EPA visited the site twice and in April, received a group of environmentalists from local Louisiana chapters and national offices, including Betsy Loyless, National Audubon's SVP for Policy, and representatives of Sierra, Environmental Defense Fund, National Wildlife Federation, Atchafalaya Basinkeeper, the Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana and the Science Working Group. We thank the EPA!

While it's rewarding to win a few, we should not believe that the struggle is finished. There is still a demand for cypress mulch and the logging operations continue. After a failed attempt to meet the Saturday before Hurricane Katrina, a group of local environmental organizations has recently come together with the goal of cooperating on several fronts to bring an end to the forest's destruction. We must see effective legislation passed, educate landowners, educate the public, and demand that big box retailers live up to their claims of environmental sensitivity. Stay tuned, and remember, never buy cypress mulch!

NEWS FROM NATIONAL

(Continued from page 3)

global warming, Audubon has held off entering the fray, but the increasingly certain science making clear the threat has demanded that the issue be revisited. There was discussion and unanimous agreement that the magnitude of the problem demands Audubon's involvement.

The weekend was interesting and energizing. All attendees were enthusiastically committed to the Audubon conservation mission. Audubon's grass roots network was repeatedly cited as a key strength of the organization. That means all of us who join the chapters, who read the local newsletters and the Audubon Magazine, and maybe even sign up for the Audubon Advisory* to make our voices heard. With its ability to integrate science, education and advocacy, and reach millions of conservation minded individuals, Audubon is making a difference on important issues.

*(www.audubon.org - click Issues and Action - click Home or Take Action)

BRAS ACTIVITIES

Butterflies Are Free - September 16

Come join Donna LaFleur on September 16th as she takes us to Murrell Butler's beautiful St. Francisville property to look for butterflies. September is the peak month for butterfly watching. Some species we expect to see are Giant, Tiger and Pipevine Swallowtails; Cloudless Sulphur and Gulf Fritillary. Please be at *Coffee Call on College* by 8:45am for a prompt 9am departure. Please pre-register by calling Robert at 926.2223 during business hours or by e-mail at

rmclaughlin@sterneagee.com

BRAS Board meetings

September 6, 925 2223
October 4, 578 9813
November 1, 344 9778

Thanks to our Members and Donors!

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!

April 1 - June 30

Rose-breasted Grosbeak (\$100)

Donald and Anne Bradburn, New Orleans; Keith Gibson, Joseph Hopkins, Helaine Moyse, Baton Rouge; Judith O'Neale, Lafayette; Sara Simmonds, Alexandria

Wood Thrush (\$50)

Wayne Watkins, Alexandria

Baton Rouge Chapter of the National Audubon Society

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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.)

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