

The **BARRED OWL**

Newsletter of the Baton Rouge Audubon Society

Volume XXXVI, Number 1

1st Quarter, 2009

BRAS, OAS & NAS DISPATCH

Audubon's New Bird Conservation Initiatives

by Melanie Driscoll with Paul Kemp

Let me fill you in on several of Audubon's new bird conservation initiatives, which range from conservation planning to real, down-in-the-marsh muck, get-your-hands-dirty conservation action!

Director of Bird Conservation

First, I have been promoted to Director of Bird Conservation for Audubon's Gulf Coast Initiative, and will be looking to hire a new IBA Coordinator soon. I am working on wrapping up IBA site identification, and will hand that over, along with publishing the results of the IBA identification process, soon. Your birding efforts, particularly those through organized citizen science projects such as Christmas Bird Counts, Breeding Bird Sur-

veys, Great Backyard Bird Count, and Louisiana Winter and Summer Bird Atlases, are being used to support the nomination of Important Bird Areas throughout Louisiana. Many thanks for your efforts, and get ready for the Winter Bird Atlas (Jan 10 - Feb 20), and keep submitting your data to e-bird!

The Louisiana Gulf Coast Initiative gets an Office

The National Audubon Society is finally opening an office in Louisiana, though it will not be an official state office. The new office will be located in Baton Rouge near the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries at 6160 Perkins Rd., Suite 215, in the Quail Run Atrium building. We hope to move into the renovated space toward the end of January and will host a grand opening as soon as we can after that, to which you will all be invited.

Conservation Planning for the Atchafalaya Watershed

Through the Walton Family Foundation grant Audubon received with National Wildlife Federation and Environmental Defense Fund, Audubon is leading an adaptive management conservation planning effort for the Atchafalaya Watershed, a landscape comprised of cypress-tupelo swamp, bottomlands, and the only growing marsh on the Louisiana coast. Of

course, it is also an Important Bird Area, and was designated as such recently. The Atchafalaya Watershed will be one of our key focal project areas over the next several years. The conservation planning process is a systematic way to gather the expertise of our many partners, state, federal, and non-governmental agencies on the Atchafalaya system. The process involves defining targets for conservation, evaluating factors interfering with the conservation targets, and developing conservation goals and a monitoring plan. The Atchafalaya River is the 4th largest river in the United States, is currently managed to take 30% of the combined flows of the Red and Mississippi Rivers, and provides habitat for key Louisiana species such as Prothonotary, Swainson's, Kentucky, and Yellow-throated Warblers, as well as millions of Neotropical migratory songbirds. One important aspect we will be examining is whether managing for a static 30% distribution of flow from the Mississippi is really best, and whether a more dynamic approach that would allow for more extensive drainage within the Atchafalaya Basin during the summer, for example, or ranging flows to reduce stagnation could produce conservation dividends without compromising river safety. While Audubon is taking the lead on this planning, we are working closely with partners, and will include input from chapters.



Bob Pierson pitches in on Peveto Woods Cleanup Workday - story page 3

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President's Chip Notes

Happy New Year! Thank you to everyone who participated in the BR Christmas Bird Count over the holidays. Thanks also goes to Kevin Morgan for being count compiler, and Dennis Demcheck and Laurie Binford for heading up the BR hummingbird/backyard count.

I started 2009 by going green and signing up for the Geaux Green power program with Entergy. It costs very little and I encourage you to think about signing up. While I am trying to be green..... There have been many articles written about prescription drugs being found in our drinking water, rivers and streams, and the negative impact it is having on the environment, especially amphibians and fish. The old adage of flush it down the toilet or pour it down the sink is at the root of the problem. U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service addressed this issue in a news release dated March 2008. The website is

<http://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/pressrel/08-27.htm>

and I recommend reading the article. It details how to properly dispose of expired and/or no longer used medicines is a way that is more environmentally friendly.

Thank you for being a member of BRAS.
We appreciate your support! All the best,

Harriett



Thinking of a way to go green? Consider buying green power - electricity produced from renewable energy - by signing up for Entergy's Geaux Green program. You can buy as little or as much as you want, up to 100% of your electricity bill.

Entergy Louisiana and Entergy Gulf States Louisiana now offer electricity generated from environmentally-friendly renewable energy producers in the state. Power from these green providers - offered in blocks - goes into the electric system as part of the total power mix. The blocks you purchase go directly to the Geaux Green program. You can sign up for as little as \$2.25 per month for a 100 kWh block, or more to cover a larger portion of your electric bill.

You can be part of an effort with environmental benefits today and help build a future where affordable renewable energy can play an important role in the energy mix in our state.

Please visit www.GeauxGreen.com
for information and to sign-up.

Peveto Woods Clean Up Makes A Dent In The Damage!

Fourteen volunteers braved the chill wind and temperature on November 15th to make the clean up day at Peveto Woods Sanctuary a success. Several large piles of debris were hauled from the woods and left along the road side for pick up. Jimmy LeBlanc came over from Texas with his tractor to help provide the extra muscle needed to move the larger stuff. Jay Guillory's pickup truck also came in handy as he and Joseph Vallee teamed up on some heavy work. How-

ever, a large portion of the work was the result individuals putting boots and work gloves to good use. We wish to thank the other members of the work team: Christine Kooi, Susan Hill, Janie Doucet, Ann Ingram, Sharon Nabours, Jane Patterson, Melanie Driscoll, Beverly Smiley, Bob Pierson, Karen Pierson, and Paul Conover. We also appreciate Hope Norman offering her camp as a home base for the work weekend.



Beverly Smiley



Jimmy LeBlanc

Another work day is in the planning for Saturday, February 14th. We will continue with debris removal and start creating new trails for the sanctuary. We may also put some shovels to use and plant a few trees. Please call or e-mail if you think you might be able to help.

Dave Patton
Sanctuary Committee Chairman
wdpatton@cox.net

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!

Oct. 1, 2008 - Dec. 31, 2008

PAINTED BUNTING (\$500)

Lionel H. Head, River Ridge, LA

ROSEBREASTED GROSBEAK (\$100)

Bird Study Group, Shreveport, LA
 Steve & Chris Hightower, Folsom, LA
 Jay Huner, Boyce, LA
 Peter Monroe, New Orleans, LA
 Lawrence P. Rozas, Sunset, LA

WOOD THRUSH (\$50)

Doris Falkenheiner, Baton Rouge, LA
 John & Cindy Hartgerink, Baton Rouge, LA
 Eric Liffmann, Baton Rouge, LA
 Ann McMahon, Baton Rouge, LA
 James H. Roche, Kenner, LA
 Harold Roscoe, Baton Rouge, LA
 Annie Scivicque, Denham Springs, LA
 Anton Szabados, Barrington, IL
 Kathy Tait, Ruston, LA

BOOK REVIEW by Richard Gibbons

Of a Feather

a Brief History of American Birding
 by Scott Weidensaul

In this compelling account of North America's ornithological and birding roots, Weidensaul develops the discovery and embrace of North America's birds. He delivers the story with the acumen of an accomplished naturalist and author. Birders will quickly recognize the author as one of their own as he develops the cast of characters with copious bird references.

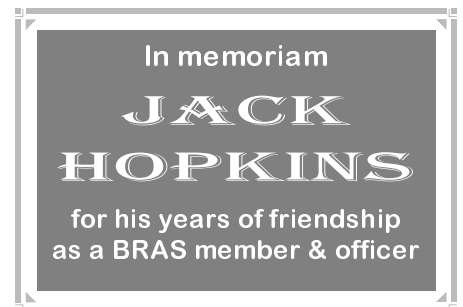
Of a Feather gives the reader detailed accounts of familiar ornithological and birding legends such as Lewis and Clark, John James Audubon, Alexander Wilson, and Roger Tory Peterson to name a few. Weidensaul doesn't stop there though. He introduces the under-celebrated personalities that spent a lifetime connecting common folk to nature. Finally, he brings us up to date with the evolution of the modern field guide and the birder/citizen scientist.

It may lag in a couple of chapters, but I couldn't help making the connection between a typical day birding when the early afternoon doldrums roll in. I recommend any birder worth their salt to check it out from the library or get a copy and pass it on. Hey, you can't bird all the time.

What Our Friends Are Doing

February 20 - 22
Louisiana Native Plant Society
 Annual Meeting
 Camp Hardtner, Pollock, LA
 www.lnps.org
 rwebb@i-55.com.

April 4
Audubon Country Bird Festival
 St. Francisville, LA,
 www.audubonbirdfest.com
 225-635-3110



New Audubon Bird Conservation Initiatives

(Continued from page 1)

We hope to use birds as many of our indicators of the success of our conservation actions in the Atchafalaya Watershed. Swallow-tailed Kites, for example, need large, contiguously-forested blocks of moist forest in conjunction with access to marshes for food, and they may have a preference for nesting in very tall trees. Thus, they may reflect to us our success in conserving large areas of healthy marsh and bottomland hardwoods with older, strong nest trees.

A National Innovation Grant for Marsh Restoration

Ten thousand acres of Louisiana marshland vanish every year. These critical coastal wetlands sequester carbon and support 40% of the United States' seafood catch as well as threatened birds like the Solitary Sandpiper and the Loggerhead Shrike. Vitality, they also act as barriers against floods during hurricanes. Large-scale dredging and preservation efforts are underway, but when every acre counts, smaller landowners can make a real difference, too. National Audubon Society's Gulf Coast Initiative has received a *TogetherGreen* Innovation Grant to give more Louisiana residents the tools to be actively involved in the restoration and preservation of their coastline.

Through the Walton Grant, Audubon has monies to do significant marsh restoration on our Paul J. Rainey Wildlife Sanctuary (Rainey). We used some of that money as match for a grant to *TogetherGreen*, a new initiative created by Audubon and funded by Toyota, which is giving \$20 million over 5 years to support projects that address local environmental problems and engage citizens in conservation. Our grant, *Coastal Marsh Restoration for the Masses*, was one of 41 chosen from over 120 proposals in this first year. It is featured in the Jan-Feb issue of Audubon Magazine (p. 22). Our grant will put Louisiana residents a step closer to playing an active, hands-on role in restoring the vital wetlands that serve as the state's first line of defense from hurricane-driven flooding.

Audubon has teamed with Javeler Industries, an innovative dredging company headquartered in New Iberia, to help design and build a small, pontoon-mounted, trailerable dredge that individual landowners and non-profits can use to pump a high-density sediment slurry from adjacent open waters up to 600 feet into deteriorating marsh, to restore it before it becomes open water restore. Javeler is funding the construction of the dredge, and we will be starting a testing program at Rainey this

winter, and will use Walton grant money to lease the dredge. The work will be advised by a host of conservation groups, science, academic and regulatory partners. Later we will recruit and work with volunteers to restore coastal marsh at Orleans Audubon Society's Marguerite Moffett Audubon Sanctuary and at Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve. *TogetherGreen* funds will support project management, outreach, and education, including community workshops for landowners and regulatory and restoration officials. In the workshops we will teach the legal, scientific, and practical requirements of this kind of restoration.

The grant-funded effort to make hands-on restoration available to the masses reflects growing public awareness of the need to reverse the losses. The likelihood of success will be boosted by the broad expertise and interests of participating partners. Along with National Audubon's Gulf Coast Initiative, partners include the Baton Rouge Audubon Society, Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program, Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana, Louisiana Department of Natural Resources Dedicated Dredge Program, Louisiana State University Wetland Biogeochemistry Institute, National Park Service and Orleans Audubon Society. The partnership will restore five acres in its first year, and in the process will gain the knowledge and experience to restore many more in years to come.

"This marsh-building micro-dredge project puts Audubon on the cutting edge of marsh restoration in Louisiana!" said Jennifer Coulson, President and Conservation Chair, Orleans Audubon Society. *"We are absolutely ecstatic about this opportunity to get folks out in the wetlands to help rebuild our marshes."*

Some Problems with Managing the Mouth of the Mississippi River

On November 4, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) -- with the support of the Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act (CWPPRA) Task Force -- approved diversion of restoration dollars to dredge an anchorage area adjacent to the West Bay sediment diversion, the only one constructed so far. We sent a letter along with the National Wildlife Federation, Environmental Defense and the Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana to Col. Lee, Commander of the New Orleans District, USACE, protesting this action, questioning its legality and requesting the technical and legal basis on which this provocative decision was based. EDF subsequently submitted a FOIA request and we have received some information, though

not all that was requested. It is, however, sufficient to ascertain that the technical basis for the decision is flawed and incomplete. So, this has opened up a new opportunity for discussion of the way the Corps balances competing missions of flood control, navigation and the environment. At almost the same time, we joined NWF and EDF in sending a letter to Col. Lee regarding the Bayou Aux Carpes 404c area that the Corps wants to impact as part of hurricane protection system improvements on the West Bank of New Orleans. This was undertaken partly at the request of EPA, Region 6, and National Park Service personnel, and partly at the request of the Louisiana Audubon Council.

Green Infrastructure 'Stimulus' Proposal Includes Plans for Coastal Restoration in Louisiana

After the election, we began to work with our DC policy office and with the Louisiana Governor's Office on the contents of a 'green infrastructure' request that was to be included in the Green Group (Leaders of national environmental groups) submitted to the Obama transition team. The package now under consideration would greatly accelerate construction of the river diversions that have proposed into the Barataria Basin through Bayou Lafourche and downstream of New Orleans at Myrtle Grove, and hasten the restoration of the Lake Borgne funnel wetlands damaged by the MRGO. We should all pay close attention to how the Obama administration proposes to address the hurricane protection and wetland restoration needs of our area.

About TogetherGreen

TogetherGreen will invest in both promising environmental projects and outstanding leaders that can shape a brighter tomorrow. Along with Innovation Grants to be awarded each year, TogetherGreen funds and promotes conservation leadership training and volunteer programs designed to equip and engage diverse groups and individuals to take action today to shape a healthier tomorrow. Information on other grantees, along with opportunities to get involved in conservation efforts, showcase successful initiatives, and honor those who are making a difference, can be found at

www.TogetherGreen.org



BRAS EDUCATION IN ACTION

by Jane Patterson,
BRAS Education Chair

Kids Who Bird



The brand-new birding club for kids, Kids Who Bird, is off to a good start! We're meeting every month (3rd Wednesday of the month) at various locations - 6:30 to 8:30pm. If you know any kids ages 9 through 16 who are interested in birds and have a parent or adult who can get them to the meetings be sure to pass this information along to them! We're also going to try to have regular field trips. Recently the club members joined other BRAS members on the tour of the LSU Natural History Museum conducted by Dr. Van Remsen. There were plenty of exclamations of amazement as the kids looked at colorful birds collected from all over the world. Check us out at www.kidshobird.org.

LSU Leisure Class

If you're reading this newsletter, you're already a member of Baton Rouge Audubon and probably are already a birder. But if you have friends, relatives, or associates that are interested in learning more about birding, there is a class coming up they might be interested in. Birding Basics will be taught as a LSU Union Leisure class in March 2009. Registration is open now. You can go to www.lsu.edu/leisureclasses under Hobbies and Home Improvement to find the signup information for the class. The classes will be held starting on March 2 for 4 weeks on Monday nights from 6:00 to 7:30pm, with field trips to follow each Saturday morning. The cost is \$64 for non-Union members and \$43 for members. Class will be taught by our Education chair, Jane Patterson.

Need a Spare Pair?

If you can afford to buy Swarovski or Leica binoculars, by all means, do it! The optics are phenomenal, and the warranty lasts a lifetime. But if you're a beginning birder, or if you have been using an old pair of bins that were lying around, or you want an extra pair of binoculars to keep in the car "just in case" -- I have a recommendation for you. These binoculars retail for \$126.95, but you can find them on the internet for as little as \$70 if you shop around. They are the Bushnell 8x42 H2O Waterproof/Fogproof Roof Prism Binoculars. You can already see in the name that they have two

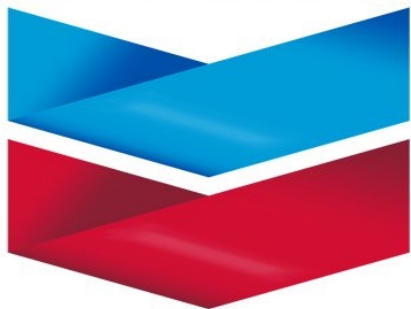
great features --waterproof and fog-proof. 8x42 are pretty standard for birding. It brings things close enough to see detail, not so much magnification that things go out of focus when you hold them in your hands (although these binoculars do come in 10x magnification as well). The glasses are not too heavy at 25



oz, but they feel solid in your hands -- and the side grips help them stay secure. And, lo and behold, they actually come with lens covers that attach to the glasses! Why on earth don't they all come with these?? The twist up eye cups provide good flexibility whether you wear glasses or not. The field of view (365 ft @ 1000 yards) is not the best, but certainly adequate. And the close focus of about 8 to 10 feet is really nice if you're lucky enough to get that close to a bird! With a limited lifetime warranty, if they do prove to be defective, you're covered! All in all, a very good value for the money. Great pair of binoculars for a beginner or someone who just wants to make sure they're never without a pair close at hand -- since you never know what you might see out there!

Baton Rouge Audubon thanks

Chevron



for their sponsorship of
our education programs!

BRAS THANKS

Chris Carlton,
Ellen Hennessy &
Fred Shelton

for Supporting
Our Education and
IBA Programs with
Their Donations!

Join our Email list!

If you'd like to receive emails about Baton Rouge Audubon activities, please send your email to Jane Patterson - Education@braudubon.org to be added to our email list.

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. The month and year in which your membership expires are indicated after your membership organization (e.g., BRAS DEC 09 for BRAS-only members and NAS DEC 10 for NAS members).

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 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.

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 Membership
- \$100 Rose-breasted Grosbeak Membership
- \$250 Louisiana Waterthrush Membership
- \$500 Painted Bunting Membership
- \$1000 Cerulean Warbler Membership
- \$ _____ 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: _____

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