Next Meeting-April 13, 2004
Owls
by Rhonda Clay

APRIL PROGRAM

When: Tuesday, April 13, 6:30 p.m.
Where: LSU-Shreveport, Museum of Life Sciences

Rhonda Clay will present a lecture on owls at the April meeting of the BSG. Rhonda has been a park naturalist at Walter B. Jacobs Memorial Nature Park since October of 2003. She will discuss the general characteristics of owls as well as her work with owls at Walter B. Jacobs Memorial Nature Park. Rhonda will bring with her a Barred Owl named Winkie that, she has trained for educational purposes.

FIELD TRIPS & EVENTS

EDDIE D. JONES NATURE PARK
Saturday, April 10, 2004, 7:30 a.m.
Trip Leader – Larry Raymond, 929-2806 (W), 929-3117 (H), LRRaymond@aol.com

NOAH TYSON PARK ON BLACK BAYOU LAKE
Sunday, April 18, 2004, 7:30 a.m.
Trip Leaders – Jeff and Jean Trahan, 868-7360 (H), jtrahan@centenary.edu or wildbird421@aol.com

LOS SPRING MEETING, CAMERON, LA
Friday, April 23 - Sunday, April 25, 2004
http://losbird.org/meetings.htm

FORT HOOD, TX
Saturday, May 1 - Sunday, May 2, 2004
Trip Leaders – Gil Eckrich and Rich Kostecke, Fort Hood
Trip Coordinator – Nancy Menasco, 868-3255, nmcpa@aol.com

NORTH AMERICAN MIGRATION COUNT (NAMC)
Saturday, May 8, 2004
Compiler – Hubert Hervey, 925-9249, Hawkeyehub@aol.com.

SOUTH LOUISIANA RICE FIELDS AND WHISKEY BAY ROAD
Saturday, May 15 – Sunday, May 16, 2004
Trip Coordinator: Nancy Menasco, 868-3255, nmcpa@aol.com

DAPHNE PRAIRIE, TX, GRASSHOPPER SPARROW, BELL’S VIREO, WILDFLOWERS
Saturday, May 22 - Sunday, May 23, 2004
Trip Leader – Matt White
Trip Coordinator – Nancy Menasco, 868-3255, nmcpa@aol.com.

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UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS AND EVENTS
by Nancy Menasco

Membership in the BSG is encouraged but not required for participation in field trips. Beginning birders are welcome on all field trips. IMPORTANT NOTICE: Field trips will LEAVE the designated meeting place at the time posted for each field trip. Plan to arrive early for field trip orientation and carpooling/caravanning arrangements, if necessary.

EDDIE D. JONES NATURE PARK
Saturday, April 10, 2004, 7:30 a.m.
Trip Leader – Larry Raymond, 929-2806 (W), 929-3117 (H), LRRaymond@aol.com

Meet at the LSUS Museum of Life Sciences. Another of our new Hot Spots, Eddie Jones is managed as an adventure park and has over 15 miles of trails for hiking, mountain biking, and horseback riding. Habitat ranges from open field to edge of forest, second growth, and mature forest. There are large expanses of switch cane, two ponds, and a couple of large creeks. Park specialties include Wild Turkey, Northern Bobwhite, Sedge and Marsh Wrens, Louisiana Waterthrush, and Blue Grosbeak. Expect a probable mix of resident species, late winter birds and early migrants. There are restrooms available at the park headquarters area. What to bring: drinks and snacks, lunch, insect repellant.

Members of the Northwest Chapter of the Louisiana Native Plant Society will join the group at the park's visitor center at 10:00 a.m. to start a plant field trip. Come prepared for moderate walking on steep terrain to see some of the floral jewels of the park. Bring a sack lunch and enjoy a picnic on the grounds after the hike.

NOAH TYSON PARK ON BLACK BAYOU LAKE
Sunday, April 18, 2004, 7:30 a.m.
Trip Leaders – Jeff and Jean Trahan, 868-7360 (H), jtrahan@centenary.edu or wildbird421@aol.com

Meet at the Whataburger Restaurant just north of I-220, 2900 N. Market. Noah Tyson Park, located on scenic Black Bayou Lake in northern Caddo Parish between Vivian and Hosston, is the third new Hot Spot the BSG is visiting during March and April. The park is almost surrounded by water with many tall pine trees, sweetgums, and oak trees in the center of the park and cypress and water tupelo swamp on three sides. Target species include warblers, vireos, and nesting Red-shouldered Hawks. The park has restrooms, picnic tables, and barbecue grills. Expect light walking. What to bring: drinks, snacks, lunch, and insect repellant.

LOS SPRING MEETING, CAMERON, LA
Friday, April 23 - Sunday, April 25, 2004
Information and registration forms for the annual spring meeting are available at the Louisiana Ornithological Society (LOS) website at: http://losbird.org/meetings.htm.

We have reserved the Rockefeller Wildlife Refuge. Lodging is $10 a night per person in dormitory-style rooms. Sign up for the Rockefeller at the BSG April meeting or call the LSUS Museum at 797-5338.

Membership in LOS is not required to participate in any of the LOS meetings, but you are encouraged to join to support the activities of our state society. Annual dues are $15 for a regular membership and $20 for a family membership. Three meetings are held each year with programs on Friday and Saturday nights, a banquet on Saturday night, and organized field trips on Saturday and, for the winter meeting, also on Sunday. The spring meeting is in Cameron the last weekend in April; the fall meeting is in Cameron the last weekend in October; and the winter meeting is held in different locations around the state the last weekend in January. The January 2005 winter meeting will be sponsored by the Lafayette bird club, LABA (Louisiana Birders Anonymous).

FORT HOOD, TX
Saturday, May 1 - Sunday, May 2, 2004
Trip Leaders – Gil Eckrich and Rich Kostecke, Fort Hood
Trip Coordinator – Nancy Menasco, 868-3255, nmcpa@aol.com
Target birds for this trip are Black-capped Vireo, Golden-cheeked Warbler, Rufous-crowned Sparrow, and other Central Texas specialties. There is a maximum of 20 participants for this trip, so advance reservations are required. THIS TRIP IS COMPLETELY BOOKED; THERE ARE NO SPOTS LEFT. I am maintaining a waiting list, so let me know if you want to be placed on the waiting list. If you have signed up and find you will not be able to participate, notify me as soon as possible so someone else can have your spot. As of this writing, due to a cancellation by another group, Sunday, April 25, had become available. If you want to go on this date and it is still available, let me know and I will give you the contact information so that you can make your own arrangements.

NORTH AMERICAN MIGRATION COUNT (NAMC)
Saturday, May 8, 2004
Compiler – Hubert Hervey, 925-9249, Hawkeyehub@aol.com.

You bird where you want to for as long as you can. This year, the Northeast Louisiana Bird Club has challenged us to see which club can rack up the highest number of species, with a trophy to be presented to the winning club. Contact Hubert for forms and instructions or sign up at the April BSG meeting. Be sure to keep separate records for each parish and location you bird. Participants will meet at Larry Raymond’s home at 6675 North Park Circle for the evening meal and to call the list. Larry’s phone number is 929-3117.

SOUTH LOUISIANA RICE FIELDS AND WHISKEY BAY ROAD
Saturday, May 15 – Sunday, May 16, 2004
Trip Coordinator: Nancy Menasco, 868-3255, nmcpa@aol.com

Once again, we’ll journey to south Louisiana for birding and mingling. Please contact me in advance to sign up for the trip so I may keep you informed as to meeting places and times. Participants are welcome to join us for either or both days. Let me know your plans when you sign up.

Itinerary:
Saturday – Vermilion Parish rice country south of Rayne for shorebirds and others. Species sighted last year included Black-bellied Plover, Dunlin, Ruddy Turnstone, Buff-bellied Sandpiper, Whimbrel, White-faced and Glossy Ibis, Peregrine Falcon, Swainson’s Hawk, and Broad-winged Hawk. We’ll stop somewhere for lunch, probably at Suire’s Grocery in Kaplan.

Sunday – Sherburne WMA/Atchafalaya NWR and Whiskey Bay Road. We’ll join LABA, the Lafayette bird club, for their annual field trip and potluck. The morning’s birding will be followed by the potluck picnic at Jim Delahoussaye’s home on the Atchafalaya River. Jim has Prothonotary Warblers nesting in his yard. Last year’s list included Swallow-tailed Kite, White-Eyed and Red-eyed Vireo, Acadian Flycatcher, Northern Parula, Swainson’s Warbler, Hooded Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat, and Painted Bunting.

Lodging – Best Western Hotel Acadia in Lafayette, 1801 West Pinhook Road. Please make your own reservations. You may call Best Western reservations at 1-800-826-8386 or the motel directly at 1-337-233-8120 or register online at www.bestwestern.com.

What to bring: Binoculars, scope, mosquito repellent, snacks, drinks, and some easily transportable food to share for Sunday’s potluck.

DAPHNE PRAIRIE, TX, GRASSHOPPER SPARROW, BELL’S VIREO, WILDFLOWERS
Saturday, May 22- Sunday, May 23, 2004
Trip Leader – Matt White
Trip Coordinator – Nancy Menasco, 868-3255, nmcpa@aol.com.

Daphne Prairie is a 1,000-acre unplowed remnant of Texas’ Tallgrass Prairie located three hours from Shreveport near Mount Vernon, Texas. As many as 200 to 300 different kinds of native grasses and wildflowers can be found in an acre of virgin prairie and Daphne should be in full bloom during our visit. Grasshopper Sparrows will be singing from the fence posts and Bell’s Vireo will be nesting.

Itinerary (Exact times and meeting places will be in the May newsletter):
Saturday afternoon. – Field trip to Mount Vernon’s Dupree Park.
Saturday evening (Tentative) – Cocktail reception at the Old Church Inn hosted by B.F. Hicks.

Sunday morning – Field trip to Daphne Prairie.
Sunday afternoon – To be determined.

The standard rate for visiting Daphne is $50. However, because of the large turnout for the BSG November trip to Daphne, B.F. Hicks, the co-owner of Daphne, has offered us a special one-time rate, so the cost of this trip is $40 per person, not including lodging or meals. $35 of which will go to preserving the prairie and $5 of which will go to support the activities of the BSG.

Lodging – Please make your own reservations. Accommodations in the Mount Vernon area include the following:

- Super 8: I-30 and Hwy 37. 903-588-2882. Rates quoted are $44 per night, $5 for additional persons.

What to bring: Binoculars, scope, insect repellent, snacks, drinks.

RESERVATIONS AND ADVANCE PAYMENTS ARE REQUIRED FOR THIS TRIP. RSVP to Nancy Menasco by Tuesday, May 18. Send your payment of $40 per participant to me at 503 Haynes Avenue, Shreveport, LA 71105. Checks should be made out to the SSNS-Bird Study Group.

WILD BIRD CENTER EVENTS

Beginner Bird Walks

Saturdays, April 3 and 17, 2004

The Wild Bird Center conducts field trips the first and third Saturday of every month, weather permitting. Meet at the store in the University Place Shopping Center (also known as the Target Shopping Center) at the corner of Youree Drive and East 70th Street at 8:00 a.m. Trips end by 10:00 a.m. C. Bickham Dickson Park is the usual destination, which can’t be beat for habitat and diversity. Loaner binoculars are available. Check the weather and dress accordingly. For more information, call Dennis or Janice Forshee at the Wild Bird Center, 318-797-BIRD (2473).

Beginner Bird Feeding Class

Saturday, April 10, 2004, 9:00-10:00 a.m. at the Wild Bird Center

Learn the basics in our backyard bird feeding class. Victoria Williams will show you how to attract birds to your backyard. Learn how to choose a feeder, select the proper seed, and landscape for wildlife.

Uncommon Birds Made Easy

by Nancy Menasco

Five members of the Shreveport Bird Study Group, Linda Adrion, Rosemary Seidler, Jeff Trahan, Jerry Bertrand, and Nancy Menasco, journeyed to Rapides Parish on Saturday, March 13, to spend the morning birding with four members of the Alexandria Loose Alliance Birding Club, Jim Johnson, Tiny Moore, Eric Sipco, and Joe Daniels. Jim had agreed to be our leader for the trip. Despite telling us that he’d been unable to find much on his Friday scouting trip and that the woods just seemed dead on Saturday morning, he delivered on all three of our target species, Red-cockaded Woodpecker (RCW), Bachman’s Sparrow, and Henslow’s Sparrow, and he made it seem easy in the process. Our first stop was on the road leading into Indian Creek Recreation Area, not far from the turnoff from Indian Creek Road. This area is part of the Alexander State Forest, administered by the Louisiana Department of Agriculture. This brief stop was unproductive, so we drove a little further along the road to an area where the trees were marked with white paint, an indication of use by RCW. While we were getting out of our vehicles, Jim heard a call and before long, we were watching not one but two Red-cockaded Woodpeckers (Target #1) foraging in the pine trees along with Brown-headed Nuthatch, Pine Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Tufted Titmouse, and Carolina Chickadee. A Pileated Woodpecker called, Rosemary heard a Hermit Thrush, and Jerry spotted and identified an adult Bald Eagle flying by while the rest of us were still trying to figure out what large, dark bird would be flying through a pine forest.

Jim next led us a few miles away to Castor Plunge Road, which runs through the Caney Ranger District of the Kisatchie National Forest. We stopped along the road by an area of Longleaf pine forest that Jim said looked like a likely spot for Bachman's. The forest really did seem dead as the only sound we heard was one lone Pine Warbler singing across the road. In no time though, Jeff and Rosemary flushed a bird, which quickly dove for cover. As we approached, another bird flushed but this one landed in a tree and seemed content to stay there. It was easily identified as a Bachman's Sparrow (Target #2). We wandered around looking at the forest floor flora, Linda practiced reading sign (deer tracks), and still the Bachman's sat. Note that at this point we
are still about 100 feet from the road and there are apparently only three birds in the whole darn forest and one of them is a **Bachman’s Sparrow**.

Although he was batting a thousand, Jim warned us that **Henslow’s Sparrow** might have already departed the area but that it had been found earlier in the winter next to the Booker Fowler Fish Hatchery. By now, we had great confidence in Jim and we followed him back down Indian Creek Road, firmly believing the **Henslow’s** would still be there. Sure enough, **Henslow’s Sparrow** (Target #3) was found in a field right across from the installation. Unfortunately, only a couple of our participants got much of a look at the elusive birds. The first one identified headed for the woods across the road and the second one hid himself but good. We consoldeo ourselves with the other birds hanging out at the hatchery, two **Belted Kingfishers**, **Barn Swallow**, **Purple Martin**, **Chipping Sparrow**, and **Killdeer**. By the way, this is the NEW fish hatchery, which we were told has tanks that, regrettably, do not hold water.

BSG members lunched at Lea’s in Lecompte, then birded Bayou Road and Cheneyville-Echo Road, hoping for **Sandhill Cranes**, which were not found, probably because of Jim’s absence. However, in some flooded fields along the Cheneyville-Echo Road, we found a large flock of **Plegadis ibis**. At least two were **Glossy Ibis** as we were able to get the scope close enough to them to see the blue facial skin. **White Ibis**, **Gadwall**, **Mallard**, **Blue-winged and Green-winged Teal**, **Northern Shoveler**, **Northern Pintail** and **Ring-necked Duck**, **Great Blue** and **Little Blue Heron**, and **Great, Snowy, and Cattle Egrets** were also present.

We had picked up 21 species at 70 mph on our way down I-49 from Caddo through DeSoto and Natchitoches Parishes to Rapides Parish, including a **Northern Harrier** just north of Natchitoches and an **Anhinga** at a pond just south of Alexandria. Jerry and I decided to stop by Lock and Dam No. 4 in Red River Parish on the way home. We could not go all the way to the dam as the road has been closed for some reason just before the backwater on the south side of the road, but we nevertheless added a second **Bald Eagle** (an immature, probably third-year bird), **American Wigeon**, **Wood Duck**, **Common Moorhen**, and **American White Pelican**, among other birds. Then, on LA 1, just after 6:30 p.m., we spotted two **Great Horned Owls**, both sitting on utility poles, the first just north of Armistead and the second three miles north of there beside the Red River NWR Westdale unit. This brought the total species count for the day to 74. A fine time was had by all, lagniappe being that the day’s outing had added to our total species counts for five different parishes.

**Great Backyard Bird Count 2004 Wrap Up**
by Nancy Menasco

What can a small group of people with determination and teamwork do? For the 2004 Great Backyard Bird Count, they can put four northwestern Louisiana towns in the Top Ten Cities in Louisiana in numbers of species reported AND put one of those cities, Shreveport, in the Top Ten Cities in the entire United States and assist Louisiana in tying New Mexico for seventh place in the U.S. with 180 species reported. That’s what they can do!

**CITY REPORTS:**

Shreveport had 116 species and ranked first in Louisiana and eighth in the United States. All the other nine cities in the Top Ten cities in the U.S. in number of species reported are within 50 miles of the Pacific Ocean, Atlantic Ocean, or Gulf of Mexico in California, Virginia, Florida, or Texas. Shreveport, which is approximately 190 miles (as the pelican flies) from the Gulf, was the only inland city and the only Louisiana city in the Top Ten.

Homer had 84 species and ranked second in Louisiana (tied with New Orleans). Stonewall had 58 species and ranked seventh in Louisiana. Keithville had 56 species and ranked ninth in Louisiana. Mansfield had 39 species and ranked sixteenth in Louisiana. Benton had 31 species and ranked twenty-third in Louisiana. Blanchard had 17 species and ranked forty-sixth in Louisiana. The total species reported in northwestern Louisiana was 126.

**PARISH REPORTS:**

**Caddo, Bossier, and part of Red River Parish:**

Mac Hardy delivered on his Bert Kouns Loop Greater Roadrunner and he and Amanda Crnkovic rounded up the first pair of **Barn Owls** sighted. Rosemary Seidler, alone or with Vicki LeFevers or Linda Adrion and Ann McLaurin, swept the Cross Lake area; Jeff and Jean Trahan were responsible for their home-away-from-home, C. Bickham Dickson Park, which was also visited by Bobbe Wommack (of **Allen’s Hummingbird** host fame) and Norma Cobb; and Jim Ingold, in between visits to Velda Neilson’s to band and confirm what was probably the first record ever of **Sage Thrasher** in northern Louisiana, birded here, there, and yonder. John McBride and Terry Davis birded North...
Shreveport and the Dixie-Belcher-Gilliam area; Lily Poole visited hummingbird hosts and Cypress Lake Nature Preserve; Karen Gordon volunteered her Rufous Hummingbird when Paul Dickson’s wouldn’t cooperate; and Larry and Anne Raymond reported from the Blanchard area. Jerry Bertrand and I concentrated on Hart’s Island Road, Bishop Point, and the Red River and, with Mary Jacobs, checked out Ellerbe Road and Wallace Bayou. Bill Wood turned in his usual dazzling species numbers from Keithville; Ginny Hooper and Lelia Vaughan observed the only Canvasbacks found over the four-day count from Ginny’s home on Cross Lake; and Linda Adrion and Ann McLaurin went wherever it took to mop up missing species. It seemed like almost everyone visited Yearwood Road at some point during the count period.

Claiborne Parish:

ME Lewis at her birding mecca on Lake Claiborne was ably assisted by Linda Adrion and Ann McLaurin on Saturday and Terry Davis on Sunday in putting the Homer zip code in second place in Louisiana with species like Bewick’s Wren, Grasshopper Sparrow, and Henslow’s Sparrow, and in settling once and for all the question, “Are there any birds in Claiborne Parish?”

DeSoto Parish:

The unbeatable combination of Hubert and Pat Hervey in Stonewall with Harris’s Sparrow and Rufous Hummingbird and Velda Neilson near Mansfield with her Sage Thrasher once again put DeSoto Parish on the birding map.

What species did we miss entirely?

Here’s a list of some of them:

- Geese – Not a gaggle to be found.
- American Wigeon
- Blue-winged Teal
- Little Blue Heron – One of those off-again, on-again species possibly dependent on how warm it is up here during the count.
- Common Loon, Red-breasted Merganser, Horned and Eared Grebes – These species often require a boat trip on Cross Lake to be seen.
- Sandhill Crane – Sometimes found in Bossier Parish in the winter, more scouting or expanding our territory might find these next year.
- Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, dowitchers – Possibly same problem as Little Blue Heron or maybe not enough time spent on Red River (it was cold out there, folks!).
- Vermilion Flycatcher – A non-arrival at CBD this winter, but a possible sighting the week before on Cross Lake and a March Yearwood Road appearance indicates they’re out there somewhere, so let’s resolve now to hunt every nook and cranny for them next year.

- Horned Lark and Lapland Longspur – Despite extensive searches, none were found. Were they even here this year?
- Sedge and Marsh Wren – Sedge Wren is getting harder and harder to find. There are Marsh Wrens in Caddo Parish, but migrant wren numbers appeared to be down this year. We’ll get ‘em next year.
- Sprague’s Pipit and Smith’s Longspur – Major habitat loss over the years for these uncommon species, which used to be found at the Gilliam Raceway, sometimes found at the airport, none reported this winter to the database.
- Common Yellowthroat – Same habitat as Marsh Wren, but can be as hard to find.

Our thanks go to Amanda and Joel Crnkovic for hosting Sunday’s strategy brunch and to everyone for the good eats to fortify us for the rest of the count.

I have created a Word chart that shows all the species reported for the Great Backyard Bird Count by northwestern Louisiana towns, complete with parish totals. If anyone wants a copy, e-mail me at nmcpa@aol.com or call me at 868-3255 and I’ll send it to you.

Great Backyard Bird Count Diary

Lily Poole:

2/13/04, 1930 – I called Bobbe Wommack to get her Friday GBBC bird list. Can you imagine reading off a Shreveport, LA, backyard bird list that includes an Allen’s Hummingbird?!

2/14/04, 0700 – I woke up Saturday morning to the sound of rain. A sensible person would have rolled over and gone back to sleep. Instead I dressed for the 36-degree rain and left for Paul Dickson’s house to attempt to see his winter rarities for inclusion in the GBBC.

0800 – Can you imagine a Shreveport, LA, backyard bird list that includes Broad-tailed Hummingbird, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, and Summer Tanager? Too bad I missed his Rufous hummer.

2/15/04, 1330 – I had made plans to meet at Cypress Black Bayou Nature Center with Girl Scout Troop 177 to work on their Outdoors Badge. Plans don’t always turn out as expected and instead of 3 adults and 3 scouts, there was one adult, Marie Williams, and her daughter Bonnie. Oh well, we could still work on the Badge and I would hopefully add Bald Eagle to the NW LA GBBC
species list. We had not been at the Nature Center 5 minutes when Bonnie pointed out a bird. **Hermit Thrush!** Good Start! After giving Marie and Bonnie an overview of the park’s common birds and their calls, we started down the trail to see the **Bald Eagle**’s nest and hopefully a **Bald Eagle**. It was a good thing my review of bird calls had included the **Barred Owl** and **Bald Eagle** as Marie and Bonnie were quite pleased to be able to identify these birds by their distinctive calls. Unfortunately we had to be satisfied with eagle calls because, while we located the nest, we only heard an eagle calling. Many thanks to park naturalist/educator Melissa Whittington for her help with the Outdoors Badge requirements.

1930 – Called Bobbe to take down her yard list. Added **Great Horned Owl** along with **Allen’s Hummingbird**. At this time, this was the only owl species for Shreveport.

2/16/04, 1030 – GBBC Brunch/Social at Amanda Crnkovic’s was a great success. Great food, good company and a list of bird species that we would like to locate to put Shreveport and NW LA in the running for the top spots in Louisiana and the United States.

3/17/04 – As usual I’ve enjoyed the GBBC. Northwestern Louisiana is doing well in the Top Ten GBBC lists. Shreveport, Homer, Stonewall (Hubert and Pat’s **Harris’s Sparrows**) and Keithville are in Louisiana’s Top Ten cities for number of species seen. Mansfield (Velma’s **Sage Thrasher** – Woo Hoo!), Benton, and Blanchard are well represented. Louisiana is the eighth state in the United States for number of species seen and it looks as if Shreveport will be in the Top Ten cities in the United States for number of species seen. Really impressive team work and a good time had by all. Geaux BSG!

**Nancy Menasco and Jerry Bertrand:**

We arrived home a little before 11 p.m. on Monday, February 16, from a last-ditch attempt to fill in as many gaps as we could. We had met Terry Davis and John McBride south of Shreveport on Gayle Levee Road about 4:15 p.m. Terry and John had already gotten a **Bald Eagle** at the port, the second **Bald Eagle** of the day as one had been spotted downtown by Perry Tuminello, Pat Young, and ten others. We headed down Hart's Island Road, where we found 14 **Rusty Blackbirds** (not new for the count but a Watch List bird), to LA 1 to Bishop Point at Lock and Dam No. 5, arriving about 6 p.m. In one of the cattail marshes along Bishop Point Road was a heard **Virginia Rail** (new count bird). We saw two red-phase **Eastern Screech-Owls** on either side of the road that leads to the gated levee just before you get to the boat launch, heard eight others before we left Bishop Point, and picked up two more in other spots for a total of twelve **Eastern Screech-Owls**. At the same spot on the levee, we heard two, possibly three, **Great Horned Owls**.

John had to leave so Terry, Jerry, and I continued on. On Yearwood Road, we had four **Barn Owls**, all of them seen and one of them heard as well. Two of them were probably the same ones Mac and Amanda had the day before. All of them were out hunting; three flew over and around us.

**Best Bird of the Night:** One, possibly two, **Short-eared Owls** on Yearwood Road. Two owls flew up, over, and around us right next to the road. Only one could be positively identified as a **Short-eared Owl**. Toughest Bird of the Night: **Barred Owl**. At this point, we weren’t going home until midnight or we found a **Barred Owl**, whichever came first. We tried numerous spots and kept coming up empty. Finally, after 10 p.m., we stopped on Robson Road near the bridge. Terry squeaked and called but there was no reply. Just as we were getting ready to move on, we heard a cracking, crashing sound a few feet over our heads in a tree right beside us. A **Barred Owl** flew out of the tree to another a very short distance away. It had come in so silently that we had not heard it. Apparently, the branch it perched on was rotten and gave way when it started to move. We got wonderful looks. Total Owls for the night - 21: **Eastern Screech-Owl**, 12; **Great Horned Owl**, 2; **Barn Owl**, 4; **Short-eared Owl**, 1; **Barred Owl**, 1; unidentified, 1. Owls seen, 9; owls heard only, 12.

**Just another Vermillion Flycatcher**

*by Amanda Crnkovic*

"Just another Vermillion Flycatcher," I never thought those words would pass from my lips let alone say the phrase every other time I picked up my binoculars. It’s just another day of birding in Mexico.

My first trip to Mexico was a 10-day, 3,400-mile journey in April of 2002. Dr. Mac Hardy and I set out on this expedition in order to attend a scientific meeting in Cuernavaca, Mexico (just south of Mexico City). But as biologists and birders, we couldn't just drive straight back without making a slight detour to see a sample of the variety in habitats and fauna Mexico has to offer. We drove south through scrub and thorny desert on the way to Mexico City, then south through less arid and more mountainous regions in Cuernavaca and Oaxaca. We went east crossing the mountainous region on the Isthmus de Tehuantepec to the coast arriving in Veracruz. On our return north we drove along the coast and stopped at the lush cloud forest in Gomez Firaz.
As we traveled from state to state, we passed many agricultural check-points where officials asked you to discard any fruits, vegetables, or plants before entering their state. It was reassuring to see officials working to protect natural habitats and the agricultural industry. But for every glimmer of hope for conservation that I saw, there was an equally disturbing reminder of the lack of respect for the environment still present in some of the local people. The first was a string of roadside vendors selling wild-caught caged birds. I did not expect to see for sale along the highway a ring-tail (a raccoon cousin) being dangled by his tail or Burrowing Owls stuffed into homemade cages. Another surprise was on the road to the northernmost cloud forest in the new world near the town of Gomez Firaz in a nature reserve. The only restaurant and pit stop in the entire town had caged birds from the surrounding forest, including Great Curassows and a Military Macaw, arranged in a courtyard showcase. They were charging money to look at the birds they kidnapped from the forest. The Macaw was beating his empty metal feeding dish against the cage in between attempts to bite the dog that was sniffing around under his cage.

Driving in Mexico was an experience in itself. It was not uncommon to come to an intersection and have two signs for the same destination pointing in two different directions. My favorite Mexican road memory is the highway that is finished on the map, but without warning suddenly drops off from paved four-lane highway into a two-lane dirt road. Obvious benefits to driving in Mexico included: oropendolas flying across the road to land in their hanging basket-like nests; Crested Caracara, Roadside Hawk, Gray Hawk, and White Hawk all seen from the highway; and fresh, cold coconut sold by roadside vendors.

The rich culture of Mexico is infused in every detail from vibrant colors, wonderful food, and real mariachi bands to families gathering in the city center in the evening. I often found myself wondering how I could still be so close to the United States and still a world away. The birds of Mexico are a treat for any birder, but the overall experience of Mexico is what makes a lasting impression.

I highly recommend a birding trip to Mexico. The birds, the culture, and the country are beautiful. So step out of your comfort zone and venture across the border. Mexico, with a mixture of the unexpected and the predictable, is a sure bet for a memorable birding adventure.
Important Bird Areas – Hubert Hervey chairs the BSG IBA committee. He said that he will conduct a virtual meeting with the committee members.

Field Trips – Nancy Menasco stated that all field trips should leave at the advertised departure time. Upcoming field trips are Indian Creek on March 13, Bishop Point/Smithport Lake Dam on March 27, Eddie Jones Park on April 10, and Noah Tyson Park on April 18.

Library – Linda Adrion reported that she has the DVD “Watching Sparrows” in hand.

Programs – Jerry Bertrand reported that Amanda Crnkovic would speak at the March meeting and that Matt White would speak at the May meeting.

Minutes of the Regular Meeting
March 9, 2004, 7:00 p.m.,
Museum of Life Sciences at LSUS

Program – Amanda Crnkovic discussed her recent trip to Brazil. The title of the talk was “Hot Pink Birds, Pink Dolphins, and Frogs with Red Feet.”

Treasurer’s Report – Jean Trahan gave the treasurer’s report for the month ending February 29, 2004. She said the club had $2,917.39 in the bank. In addition, we had $279.98 and $250.65 in prepaid expenses at the post office and LSUS printing, respectively. The fund balance is $3,448.02.

Field Trips – Nancy Menasco reported on future field trips. The field trip Saturday, March 13, is scheduled to go to Indian Creek near Alexandria. The target birds will be Bachman’s Sparrow and Red-cockaded Woodpeckers. We will meet at 7:00 a.m. at the museum. On March 27, Hubert Hervey will lead the field trip to Bishop Point and Smithport Lake Dam. Larry Raymond will lead a trip to Eddie Jones Park in April. Nancy said that the trip to Fort Hood on May 1 and 2 will be limited to 20 people. Anyone who wants to go should sign up now.

Bird Talk – Lily Poole, Shirley Huss, Bobbe Wommack, and Norma Cobb saw 30 White Ibis, 15 Greater Yellowlegs, and a Vermilion Flycatcher at Yearwood Road. Nancy Menasco reported five Black-necked Stilts, two Bald Eagles, Ruddy Ducks, and 400 American White Pelicans at Bishop Point. Linda Adron and Rosemary Seidler saw a Harris’s Sparrow on Yearwood Road. Rosemary also reported two Herring Gulls at Lock and Dam #5.

TELL THE BSG
♦ Check out these Louisiana birding festivals:
  - Audubon County Birdfest, St. Francisville (800-488-6502), April 2-4
  - Southwest Louisiana Migration Sensation, Lake Arthur (337-744-3453) April 15-17
  - The Great Louisiana Birdfest, Mandeville (985-626-1238) April 15-18
  - Grand Isle Migratory Bird Celebration, Grand Isle (877-693-6700), April 16-18

Send announcements or any other tidbits of information to Amanda (797-5338 or acrnkov@softdisk.com)

Retrospective Report

BSG Board of Directors & Committee Chairpersons

OFFICERS
President – Lily Poole (2) – 687-2994 (H)
Vice-president – Jerry Bertrand (3) – 868-3255 (H/W)
Secretary – Jeff Trahan (3) – 869-5217 (W)
Treasurer – Jean Trahan (3) – 868-7360 (H)

MEMBERS AT LARGE
Linda Adrion (2) – 868-5729 (H)
Michele Andrews (2) – 752-9469 (H)
Roy Bott (1) – 925-2265 (H)
Amanda Crnkovic (3) – 861-5294 (H), 797-5338 (W)
Dennis Forshee (3) – 797-2473 (W)
Mac Hardy (2) – 687-6738 (H), 797-5338 (W)
Hubert Hervey (3) – 925-9249 (H)
John McBride (1) – 221-2957 (H), 929-2806 (W)
Nancy Menasco (1) – 868-3255 (H/W)
Larry Raymond (1) – 929-3117 (H), 929-2806 (W)
Dan Weber (1) – 949-1850 (H), 773-3077 or 349-2686 (W)
Numbers in parentheses are years remaining of a 3-year term.

COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS

Beginning Birders – Dennis Forshee…………….797-2473 (W)
Bird Alert Service – Rosemary Seidler………….. 424-2972 (H)
Bird Hot Spot – Larry Raymond 929-3117 (H) 929-2806 (W)
Bird Records – Mac Hardy……….687-6738 (H) 797-5338 (W)
Field Trip Coordinator – Nancy Menasco……..868-3255 (H/W)
Fund Raising – Jerry Bertrand…………………..868-3255 (H/W)
Hospitality – Amanda Crnkovic 861-5294 (H) 797-5338 (W)
& Vera Bott……………………………….. 925-2265 (H)
Important Birding Areas – Hubert Hervey……925-9249 (H)
Library – Linda Adrion…………………………..687-5729 (H)
Membership Secretary – Lily Poole………………687-2994 (H)
Newsletter Editor & Folding/Mailing Committee – Amanda Crnkovic…….861-5294 (H), 797-5338 (W)
Programs – Jerry Bertrand……………………868-3255 (H/W)
Publicity – Michele Andrews 752-9469 (H)
& Marti Carroll……………………….. 746-2235 (H)
Website – Barney Poole………………………687-2994 (H)
**BIRD REPORT – compiled March 24, 2004**

Use the bird report to see what other birders have been seeing and where to go find the bird you want to see. Observers are abbreviated by the first and last initials. Dates and localities of observations are summarized under the observer’s initials. Sightings are arranged by species. Following each species is a line of data in the following format: date, initials of the observer, number of birds observed, initials of another observer, number of birds they observed, etc. For the number of birds observed, a 1 is used for both 1 bird and for numbers not reported by the observer. For example: 01/12/99 BB 2 means that on January 12, 1999, BB saw two birds. Then by looking on the observer list, located after the sightings, you can determine that BB is Bob Birder and on 1/12/99 he was birding C. Bickham Dickson Park.

Report bird records for the newsletter to Mac Hardy by the 15th of each month. All bird records reported here are observations of the observers and are therefore the responsibility of the observer.

## OBSERVATIONS

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Observer(s)</th>
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<th>Notes</th>
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**BIRD STUDY GROUP NEWSLETTER**

*April 1, 2004*
Volume 18, Number 8  BIRD STUDY GROUP NEWSLETTER  April 1, 2004


Rustic Blackbird -- 02/28/2004 LA,AM,MEL 1

Brewer’s Blackbird -- 03/04/2004 R&LA 8


Great-tailed Grackle -- 03/11/2004 RS 1


Purple Finch -- 02/13/2004 LA,AM,MEL 1, 03/06/2004 RS 2, 03/06/2004 J&JT 2

House Finch -- 02/13/2004 LA,AM,MEL 1, 02/28/2004 J&JT 2, 03/05/2004 RS 4, 03/07/2004 RS 5

Pine Siskin -- 03/18/2004 B&IW 1


983 of the 147,170 records. 135 species.

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