No. 198 BATON ROUGE, LA July 2002

LOS NEWS

NEWSLETTER OF THE Louisiana Ornithological Society

A REAL TREAT AWAITS YOU AT THE LOS FALL MEETING

Greg Lasley of Austin, TX will present his nationally-acclaimed program entitled "A Visit to Robinson Crusoe Island and Its Endangered Hummingbird" on Saturday evening at the Fall 2002 LOS Meeting in Cameron. Located 300 miles off the coast of Chile is the island of Isla Robinson Crusoe. Here British seaman Alexander Selkirk was marooned centuries ago. His experiences was the impetus for Daniel DeFoe's famous book, *Robinson Crusoe*. Not only rich in history, Isle RobinsonCrusoe also is home to the Juan Fernandez Firecrown - an endangered hummingbird living nowhere else on earth. In his presentation Greg explores the island's history as well as the habitat and activities of this little-known hummingbird. For many of us who may never have an opportunity to visit this remote island and seek this elusive hummingbird, this adventure through Greg's eyes and camera lens will be memorable.

Greg is well-known throughout the United States for his extraordinary birding skills, outstanding field trips and contributions to the birding community as longtime South Texas Regional Editor of *American Birds*, *Field Notes* and now *North American Birds.* His diligent work in properly documenting Texas rarities was instrumental in the Texas Bird Records Committee of the TOS developing strict documentation requirements that have gained national acceptance. From 1985 - 2000 Greg served as Secretary of the Texas Bird Record Committee.

Since his initial introduction to birding in the early 1970's, Greg has birded most of the world including the U.S., Canada, Mexico, Central and South America, Africa and Antarctica. After retiring from a 25-year career with the Austin Police Department, Greg now leads bird tours throughout the western hemisphere for Victor Emanuel Nature Tours.

Not content to just observe an area's birdlife, Greg is also an accomplished bird photographer. He has had over 1000 of his photographs published in many national and international magazines, books, brochures and catalogues.

So bring those binonculars to the Saturday night program and join us for "A Visit to Robinson Crusoe Island and Its Endangered Hummingbird."

IN THIS ISSUE

MINUTES OF THE LOS BOARD MEETING - APRIL 26, 2002

The LOS Board Meeting was held at the Dyson House. Those attending: President Marty Guidry, Secretary/Treasurer Judith O'Neale, Past President David L'Hoste Board Members Gay Gomez, Rosemary Seidler and Lee Ellis; JLO Editor Jim Ingold
Absent: Vice President Karen Fay

Financial Report: Judith distributed the latest financial statement with account balances and income and expenses to date. Gay Gomez made a motion that we contribute $25 to the Gulf Coast Bird Observatory. Second and approved. [This was later amended to $100]

LOS NEWS: We will be using a different procedure for the LOS News. Lowry's Printing will be doing the layout and Marty will be submitting articles to them. The latest newsletter was produced by them. We do not have an editor at this time but Marty will be seeking someone to take over this position.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE: The nominating committee for the fall, 2002 meeting will be: Gay Gomez and Marty Guidry. The committee will be seeking candidates for President, Vice President, Secretary/ Treasurer and Board Member for Southeast Louisiana.

AWARDS: Marty announced the awards which will be presented on Saturday night are:
George H. Lowery Award to Van Remsen
Presidents Award to Olga & Walter Clifton, Nancy Newfield and Ron Stein and Bobby Santini. Ron and Bobby were presented their awards early since they could not attend the meeting.

FESTIVALS:
April 5 - 7 Audubon Country Birdfest
April 11-13 Lake Arthur Migration Sensation
April 11-14 Great Louisiana Birdfest
April 19-21 Grand Isle Migratory Bird Celebration

ORGANIZATIONS: Marty listed the organizations which we support and sponsor:
Gulf Coast Bird Observatory
Grand Isle Migratory Bird Celebration
National Ornithological Conference in New Orleans September 2002
Audubon Country Birdfest

GRANT 2002: One grant was given to Jennifer Coulson for $1,000 for her continued studies of the Swallow-tail Kite in Louisiana.

SUMMER YOUTH CAMP: The Ted Parker Youth Fund will be funding a young Louisiana birder for summer camp. The committee currently is making the final selection.

LOS WINTER MEETINGS: The winter meeting, 2003, will be held in Lake Charles and Louise Hanchey has already been setting up arrangements. Will look into the possibility of getting Monroe to do winter of 2004 meeting. Someone questioned the possibility of having a spring meeting in Grand Isle. Are there enough accommodations?

GUEST SPEAKERS 2002: Greg Lasley will give the program for the Saturday night fall meeting October 2002 on the Juan Fernandez Islands.

Rosemary moved to approve the minutes of the last meeting. Lee seconded and motion was approved.

David L'Hoste moved to adjourn at 9:40 p. m.

Fourth Annual Haynesville Celebration of Butterflies

Memorial Butterfly Conservatory
With Special Consultant Dr. Gary Noel Ross

September 14 - 15, 2002

"Butterfly Capital of Louisiana"
Claiborne Parish Fairgrounds
Haynesville, Louisiana

PROGRAMS

Organic Gardening
$2 for Adults
Highlights: Bird/Butterfly Walks

Butterflies
$1 for children ages 6 - 18
Highlights: Wildflower Walks

Butterfly Gardening
Under 6 years of age free
Highlights: Story Telling

Birds
Admission good for entire festival
Highlights: Children's Activities

Greenhouses
Highlights: Children's Fish Pond

and much more!!!

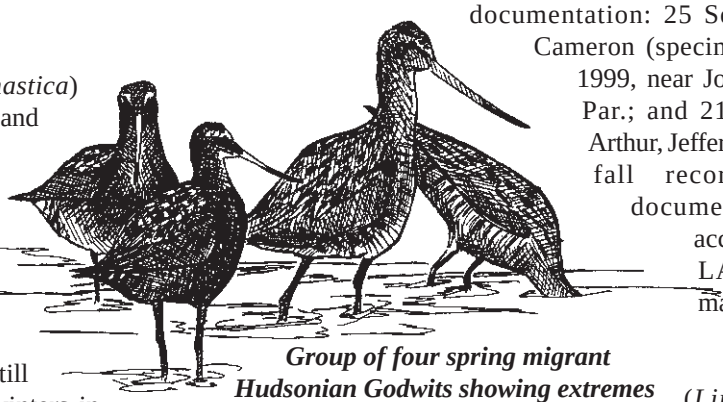
Let's take a closer look - godwits

Following reports of Marbled Godwits in interior southwestern Louisiana this spring and discussions of its status in the rice fields on LA-BIRD, it seemed like a good excuse to discuss status and identification of Godwits from a Louisiana perspective. There are only four species of godwits (genus *Limosa*) worldwide. Two species are regular and easy to locate in Louisiana at the appropriate time of year and in preferred habitat. A third species has occurred once as a vagrant and the fourth is a potential vagrant.

Status

Hudsonian Godwit (*Limosa haemastica*) breeds in isolated pockets in northwestern and southern coastal Alaska, Northwest Territories (along McKenzie River Delta and Anderson River Valley), northwestern British Columbia, and eastern Canada (primarily around Hudson Bay). Because of the remoteness of breeding sites, the exact breeding distribution of this species is still relatively poorly known. The species winters in marsh and *pampas* wetlands of South America on the coast of Chile, and from Paraguay, southern Brazil, and Uruguay south to Tierra del Fuego (>1/2 of the World population winters in this one general area of Tierra del Fuego), and on the Falkland Islands. Hudsonian Godwits traverse a fantastic annual migration circuit. Northbound spring migrants move primarily up the eastern side of South America, making landfall on the U.S. Gulf coast in Texas and western Louisiana, then moving north across the Great Plains, and, then, eventually north and west to breeding areas. During spring migration through Louisiana, the vast majority of individuals occur in the southwestern "prairie" rice-growing region. Birds prefer shallowly flooded, muddy impoundments (rice fields or crawfish ponds). Occasionally, small numbers are seen on the immediate coast, especially if "grounded" by weather. Records are generally few east of the Atchafalaya Basin. As shorebirds go, Hudsonian Godwit is a relatively late spring migrant. Northbound migrants begin arriving in Louisiana by mid-April (exceptionally 8 April), numbers peak during early May. Single-day high-counts include 108 on 11 May 1996 (P. Conover) in the vicinity of Lafayette, Vermilion, and Acadia parishes. Single site highs include 102 on 8 May 1998 (J. Kleiman and K. Fay) in fields north of Lacassine Pool in Lacassine NWR, Cameron Par., and 88 on 15 April 1987, on Gum Cove Road, Calcasieu Par. (G. H. Rosenberg, et. al). Migration gradually subsides by early June. There is only one acceptable summer record for the state: an adult 4 mi. N Kaplan, Vermilion Par., 9 July 1989 (K. V. Rosenberg).

In fall, rather than re-tracing the spring route, Hudsonian Godwits first move generally east from breeding areas to "staging areas" such as Quill Lake, Saskatchewan, and James Bay, Ontario (where they may spend a couple of weeks). In general, males leave breeding areas (late June) ahead of females (mid-July) and adults ahead of juveniles (late July to early August). At the staging sites, birds add fat deposits (increase body weight by as much as 30%; rate of fat deposition 2.4-2.8 g/day; from *BNA*) to prepare for the long flight ahead. Birds then fly SE, primarily over the Maritime Provinces and New England, then head south well offshore over the western Atlantic non-stop to South America. This route accounts for the rarity of the species elsewhere in North America during fall migration. For Louisiana, there are only about ten fall records, from late Sep.-late Oct. Recent fall records with supporting documentation: 25 Sep. 1982, just north of Cameron (specimen-LSUMNS); 25 Sep. 1999, near Johnsons Bayou, Cameron Par.; and 21 Oct. 1995, near Lake Arthur, Jefferson Davis Par. Most older fall records lack supporting documentation. There are no accepted winter records for LA (or the U.S. for that matter).



Group of four spring migrant Hudsonian Godwits showing extremes in size (two small birds on left are males; females).

Marbled Godwit (*Limosa fedoa*) breeds in prairies from southeastern Alberta, southern half of Saskatchewan, southern Manitoba, northwestern Minnesota, North Dakota, central and northeast South Dakota, central to southeastern Montana. Isolated populations breed in Ontario (coast of James Bay) and Alaska (Alaskan Peninsula). Marbled Godwits winter locally along the entire Pacific coast of the Americas from Washington to northern Chile (largest numbers winter along the west coast of Mexico, including the Gulf of California), and locally along the Atlantic-Gulf-Caribbean coast from Massachusetts to Colombia (irregular north of South Carolina). Also winters locally in the western U.S. interior in western Nevada and California (Sacramento Valley and Salton Sea).

In Louisiana, the species is generally uncommon and usually associated with saltwater or brackish marsh; migrants are only occasionally found inland. Largest concentrations are found during winter in salt marsh- mudflat habitats on the southeast coast, especially in the vicinity of Port Fourchon, Lafourche Par. (where counts of 100+ are not uncommon, indicating the importance of this site for this species). Elsewhere, usually only a few are encountered at any one time. Continued coastal erosion and development of salt and brackish marsh habitat could have a major impact on this species' winter status in southeast Louisiana. There are only a handful of records of *spring* migrants away from the immediate coast (and many of these records lack supporting details). This is probably because Marbled Godwit is a relatively short distance migrant; most probably "stage" on the coast and then fly north over Louisiana without having to stop in the interior to replenish fat supplies. Spring migrants found in the interior are most likely "downed" by inclement weather. Because it is difficult

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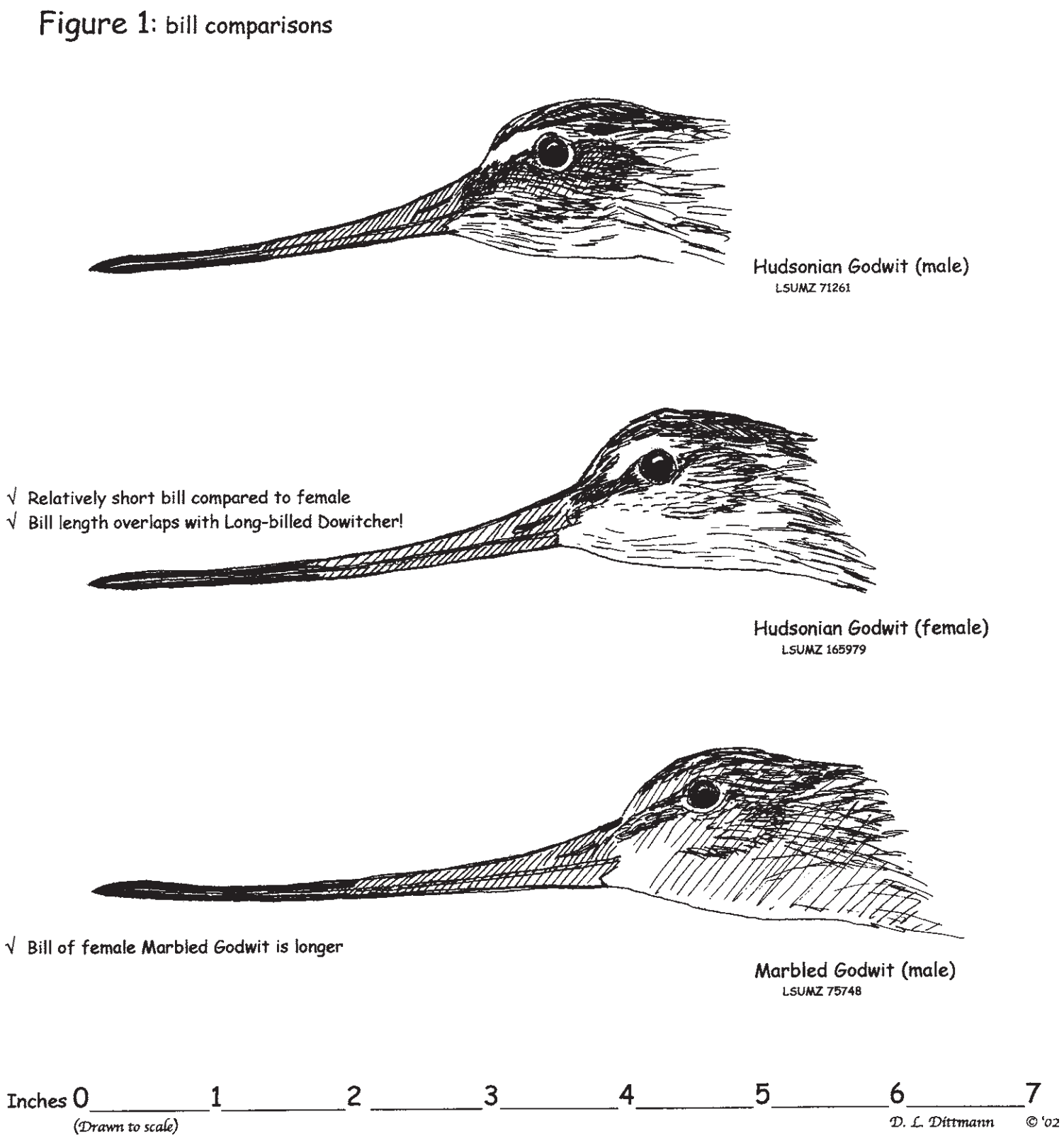

Figure 1. Head profiles of Hudsonian vs. Marbled godwits. Note that bill of female Hudsonian is approximately the same size as a male Marbled and significantly longer than a male Hudsonian.

to differentiate migrants from wintering individuals on the coast, timing of spring migration is poorly understood. Northbound migration probably begins by late March and early April and extends through the end of May. Small numbers, probably first year individuals, summer along the coast and on barrier islands, which also makes it difficult to detect early arriving fall migrants (unless molt can be used as a clue). Individuals thought to be fall migrants have been reported as early as mid-late June, but the main arrival usually begins during July. The species is a scarce fall migrant inland (but more regular than in spring), and most records probably involve juveniles.

Black-tailed Godwit (*Limosa limosa*) breeds strictly in the Old World from Iceland, the Faeroe Islands, southern Scandinavia, the Baltic states, central Russia, central Siberia, and Kamchatka south to southern Europe, southern Russia, Lake Baikal, Mongolia, and the Sea of Okhotsk. Black-tailed Godwits winter from the British Isles, the Mediterranean region, India, Myanmar, China, and the Philippines south to east-central Africa, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, the East Indies, Australia, and Tasmania. The species is a casual spring visitor in Alaska, and is accidental to casual on the Atlantic Coast from Newfoundland to Florida, with most records along the immediate coast. There is one record for Louisiana: 11-12 May 1994, about 4 mi. north of Kaplan, Vermilion Par. This bird was associating with Hudsonian Godwits in a shallow (draining) crawfish pond.

As yet there are no Louisiana records of **Bar-tailed Godwit** (*Limosa lapponica*), but the species is a potential vagrant here, especially considering that other vagrant shorebirds with similar distributions (Mongolian Plover, Ruff, Sharp-tailed and Curlew sandpipers) HAVE been found in, or adjacent to, Louisiana. Two subspecies occur in North America. The Alaskan subspecies, *L. l. baueri*, breeds in western and northern Alaska and eastern Siberia. Like Hudsonian Godwit, *baueri* is a *long*-distant migrant. Large numbers stage in the Yukon-Kuskokwim river delta and other western Alaska peninsulas (peaking in September), then they fly *non-stop* to winter quarters in New Zealand and Australia. In spring, Bar-taileds move north and stage in central eastern Asia then fly non-stop to breeding sites. The European subspecies, *L. l. lapponica*, breeds from Sweden, northeastern Norway, and northern Finland to western Russia. Nominate *lapponica* is a short- to fairly long-distance migrant and winters in the British Isles-North Sea region, Mediterranean region, Black Sea, and Iraq and the Persian Gulf south to central Africa, western India, Sri Lanka, islands of the northern Indian Ocean, and, casually, to the Azores, Canary Islands, southern Africa, Madagascar, and the Seychelles. Often considered distinct from *baueri*, the third subspecies *menzbieri* is intermediate in appearance between *baueri* and nominate *lapponica* and breeds in the intervening north-central region of the former USSR.

Bar-tailed Godwit (*baueri*) is casual mainly in fall and winter along the Pacific Coast from south-coastal Alaska to southern California, and on the Atlantic coast (*lapponica*) from Newfoundland to Florida (with at least one record from the Florida Gulf coast). Although there are no records from elsewhere on the Gulf coast or from the U.S. interior, either of the two U.S.-occurring subspecies could potentially show up in Louisiana. This species will most likely turn up on the coast, as it prefers coastal mudflats, beaches, and salt marshes for foraging and roosting, but it should also be sought among other migrant shorebirds inland, especially in the rice and crawfish producing areas of southwestern Louisiana. Be on the lookout for this species during spring or fall migration, or perhaps even during the winter.

Godwits in General

Godwits are large, somewhere between awkward and elegant, and relatively easy to identify shorebirds, at least to genus = godwit (*Limosa*, from Latin *limus* = muddy). Like many other species of shorebirds, godwits deliberately pick and probe exposed or shallowly flooded soft muddy substrates for invertebrate prey, although their longer bill, neck, and legs allows them to forage in somewhat deeper water if necessary. Godwits are usually found in association with, and can be directly compared to, other shorebird species. Their size alone, which usually dwarfs other shorebirds, quickly eliminates the majority of other species from consideration. In our area, the only shorebirds that could remotely be confused with godwits based on size and general coloration are Willet and Long-billed Curlew, but both are easily eliminated given adequate looks at obvious field marks. American Avocet is superficially godwit-like in size and shape, but the plumage is strikingly different, and the bill is very slender, delicate, and all-black— not likely to cause confusion even in poor viewing conditions. Godwits have a unique two-toned (pale basally, dark distally) appearance to the bill. Bill coloration varies with age and time of year, with breeding condition males brightest (reddish orange base) and juveniles dullest (dull pink). Although absolute bill length can actually *overlap* between Long-billed Dowitcher and Hudsonian Godwit, dowitchers are smaller, lack the pink base to the bill (instead it's greenish or ochre), and are shorter legged and generally more "dumpy" in appearance. All godwits have essentially all-dark colored legs: gray, bluish-gray, blackish-gray, or brownish-black.

All four species of godwit show relatively dramatic reverse sexual size dimorphism (females larger than males, although there is some overlap). Within-species sexual dimorphism in overall size can equal between-species size differences, and is a potential cause of misidentifications. *Females also have longer and more prominently upturned bills than males*. In three of the species, adults in Alternate plumage can be identified to sex, with males being more intensely colored. In most cases, however, identification of the four species should be relatively straightforward given decent views and a basic knowledge of size variation, key plumage characters, seasonal status, and distribution.

Identification basics

The three popular recent North American field identification guides vary in how well they portray this genus. The *National Geographic Society Guide to North American Birds* (3rd edition) does a decent job of illustrating the main plumages of all species and emphasizing the important field ID characters, but completely ignores sexual dimorphism in Alternate plumage, overall size, and bill length. Flight illustrations (which are important to highlight distinctive wing, rump, and tail differences between species) are included on a separate page and only cover winter (Basic) plumage. *The Sibley Guide to Birds* has better illustrations (all species together on two

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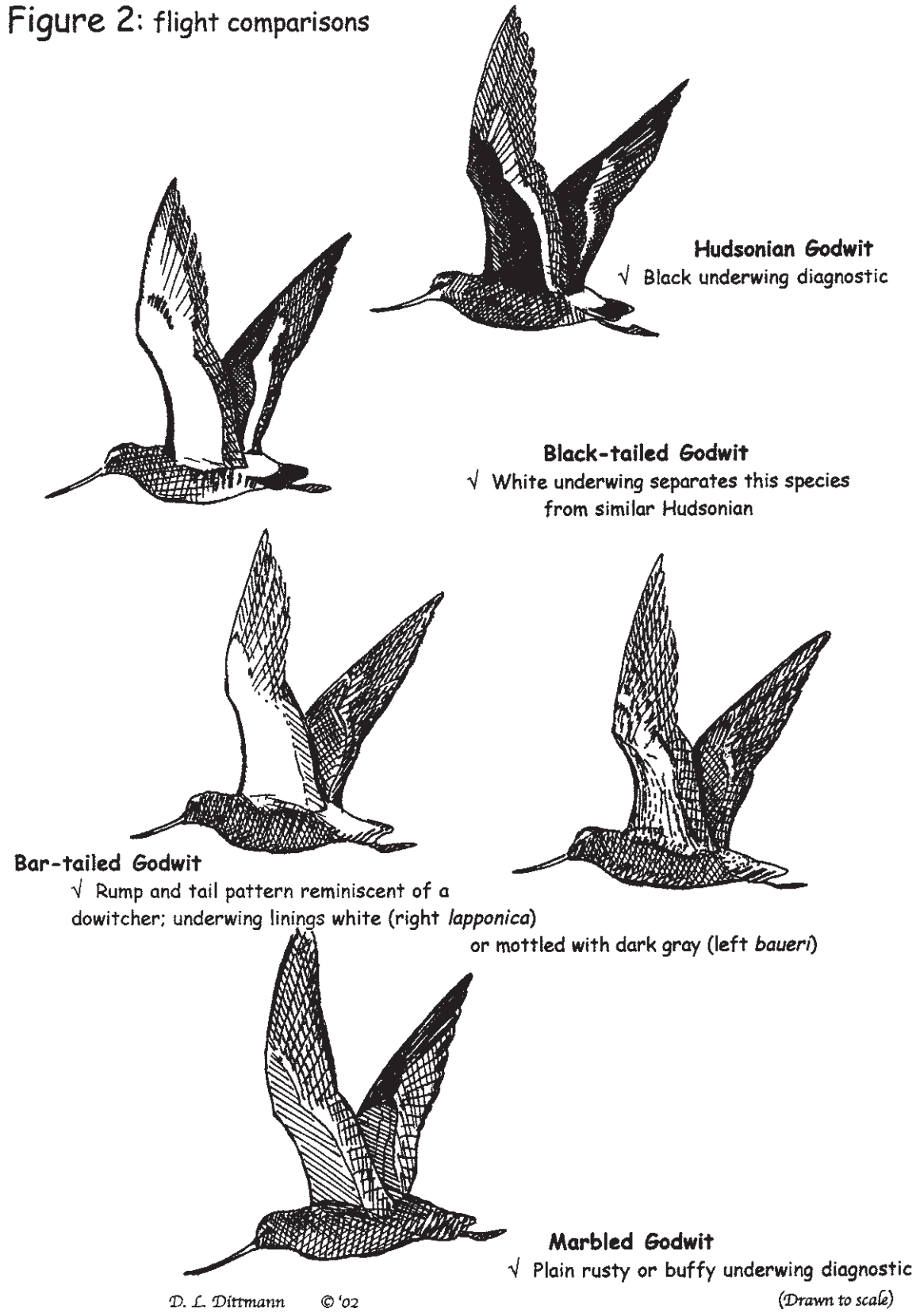

Figure 2. Flight appearance showing wing pattern differences between Hudsonian, Black-tailed, Bar-tailed, and Marbled godwits. Each species has a distinctive flight appearance.

facing pages), better representation of plumages, and more comprehensive flight illustrations. The range maps, though tiny, depict distributions with reasonable accuracy; "dots" showing "extralimital" distribution and arrows showing migration routes are improvements over *NGS*. Although *Sibley*'s text indicates that females are larger, and both sexes are illustrated (at least for the three plumage-dimorphic species), the illustrations do not reflect the sexual dimorphism in body size and bill length. This is unfortunate, as observers might be mislead into believing that there is NO intraspecific variation in body size and bill length. The Kaufman Focus photographic guide, *Birds of North America* does not illustrate (once you figure out where shorebirds are placed in the guide….) Black-tailed Godwit, and lacks a flight photo of Bar-tailed Godwit. Although it's nice to see actual photographs of these birds, this guide otherwise has the most superficial coverage of the group.

Not surprisingly, *Shorebirds: An Identification Guide* (obviously devoted to shorebirds of the World) has the best coverage of these four species.

The Main ID Pitfall

Our two regularly occurring species, Hudsonian and Marbled godwits, are very different from each other in all plumages and should be unmistakable under good viewing conditions and, especially, if seen in flight. Marbled Godwits look more or less the same in all plumages, except that females are larger. Spring migrant Hudsonian Godwits, on the other hand, can be quite variable in size and plumage depending on sex and molt (Fig. 4). Because female Hudsonian Godwits tend to have duller Alternate plumage (or, some individuals could still be in duller Basic plumage) and are larger and longer-billed, they would be more likely to be mistaken for a Marbled Godwit, especially in direct comparison to a smaller, shorter-billed, more brightly plumaged male Hudsonian. The likelihood of this "misidentification scenario" occurring would, of course, be increased in the case of poor viewing conditions (longer distance, poor light) and/or by a lack of knowledge about species' status.

Molt

Presence or absence of primary molt is often helpful in predicting whether a bird is a migrant versus "over-summering" or "over-wintering." As discussed in *Let's take a closer look —Calidris* sandpipers (*peeps*) *LOS News* No. 187: 8-14**,** it adds another important dimension to your observational" tool kit." Primary molt should be looked for if birds are observed during June and July. Summering individuals (most likely one-year-olds, or "defective" individuals with some disability that forced them to remain south of breeding areas) initiate molt earlier than post-breeders. For many species, southbound migrants do not begin primary molt until they arrive at wintering sites. A Marbled Godwit with obvious primary molt in June is likely a summering bird because a returning bird should be on a later molt schedule. However, godwits have a more complex molt than many of the peeps. Some godwits initiate primary molt on breeding or staging grounds, then suspend molt during migration and finish molt on the wintering grounds. These migrants can therefore show a mixture of new inner and old outer primaries *while migrating*. More details about molt are discussed in the species accounts below.

Hudsonian Godwit

Plumage. Definitive Basic Plumage is acquired by a complete molt. The replacement of body feathers is initiated following breeding and during migration, so southbound migrants can be in various stages of transitional plumage. Completion of body molt and replacement of the flight feathers occurs on the wintering grounds. In both sexes, the **Definitive (adult) Basic plumage** is essentially gray, white, and black. Back feathers are dark gray narrowly streaked with black. The head and neck are somewhat paler. A prominent white supercilium is one of the most striking features. The under parts are whitish gray. The tail appears mostly black, but the outer tail feathers have a wedge of white extending from the base nearly to the tip, and most of the other rectrices have white bases and small white tips. The black tail contrasts with the white tail coverts. The gray inner upper wing coverts and the blackish flight feathers and primary coverts contrast with a white stripe along the base of the secondaries and inner primaries. The grayish black under wing linings are *diagnostic*; otherwise, the under wing is similar to the upper wing pattern. The white wing stripe and the black under wing linings are very conspicuous in flight (Fig. 2). The bill is pale pink at the base and darkens toward the tip. Bill length varies by sex and age; females have longer and more prominently upturned bills (See Fig. 1) than males; juveniles are relatively shorter sex for sex. Note that Fig. 1 compares male and female Hudsonian Godwit to *male* Marbled Godwit; *female Marbled Godwit has a much larger bill*. The legs are dark gray.

From a Louisiana perspective, it important to know Basic Plumage as a starting point because many birds that return in spring are not yet in Alternate Plumage. The first migrants that appear in late April and early May usually display a mixture of Basic and Alternate feathers. As spring progresses the gray Basic Plumage is replaced during a partial molt involving most of the body feathers**.** In **Definitive Alternate plumage**, males are more extensively reddish below than females. Males in "maximum" Alternate Plumage are exceptionally handsome. The feathers of the mantle, scapulars, and tertials are black with white scalloping, imparting a marbled appearance. The head and nape appear gray from a distance, but are actually finely streaked with dark gray and white. The wing coverts (folded wing) are predominately gray but the bend of the wing is outlined in blackish-gray. The lower throat, breast, and belly are brick red (= dark rufous or brownish red), finely barred with dark brown, which is most prominent along the sides. The chin is white. The under tail coverts are three-toned, barred rufous, white, and black. The base of the bill intensifies to a dark red for males in high breeding condition. Females are attired in a duller version of the male's plumage. The under parts are more barred with white and, from a distance, can appear more or less uniform, allowing possible confusion with Marbled.

To date, a juvenile Hudsonian Godwit has never been observed in Louisiana. All summer-fall records have been of adults in transitional plumage. **Juvenal plumage** is distinctive and easy to distinguish from the definitive plumages. The under parts are uniformly buffy, whiter on the belly and under tail coverts. The back and wing coverts (folded wing) are broadly edged with buff

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Figure 3: feather comparisons:

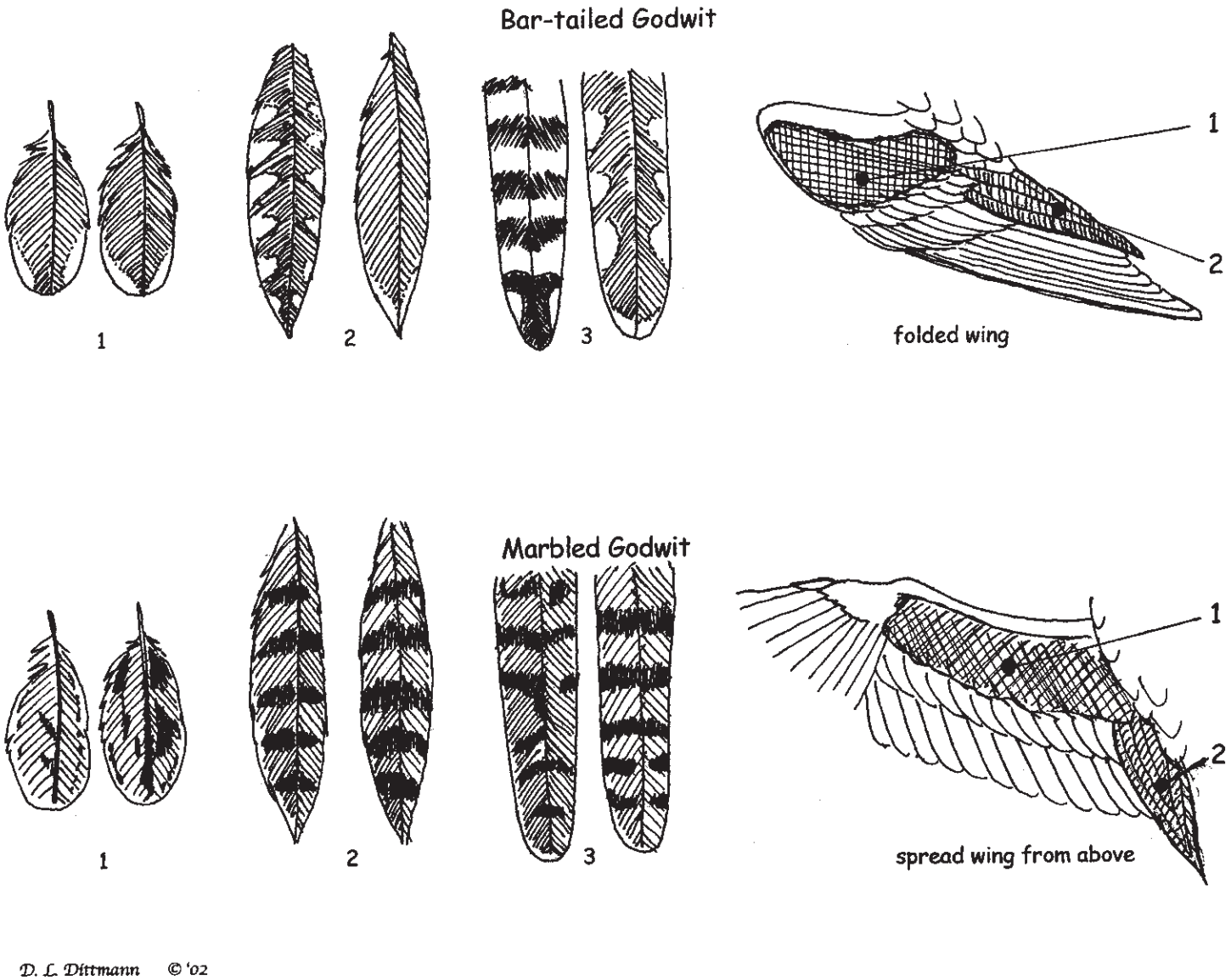


Figure 3. Feather patterns used to age Bar-tailed and Marbled godwits. **1**-Example of a median covert feather (upperwing); **2**-Example of a tertial feather; **3**-central tail feather. For each comparison, juvenal pattern on left; adult on right. Right hand wing illustrations show relative position on wing of **1**- median coverts (scapulars are pulled away), and **2**-tertials on folded wing (above) and spread wing (below). Note white barring or scalloping on feathers is present in Bar-tailed but not Marbled.

and give the upper parts a scalloped appearance. Juveniles undergo a partial body molt during the first winter. First-year individuals acquire **First Alternate plumage** (essentially a dull, more female-like version of Definitive Alternate) via a partial body molt late in their first spring.

Voice. Though not particularly vocal during migration, the typical call is a muted "codweet." Generally, the call can be interpreted as some rendition of the name, "godwit." [Although the generic name "godwit" is reported to originate from Old English ("dod wicht" meaning "good creature," as in being "good to eat"), it seems as likely that "godwit" is an interpretation of the superficially similar basic calls of several of the species.] Migrants in Louisiana will also occasionally "sing," putting together in a melodic series of 3 or 4 "godwit"-type notes!

Marbled Godwit

Plumage. In general, all three plumage categories (Basic, Alternate, and Juvenal) are very similar. There is no obvious difference in coloration between males and females in Alternate plumage as is the case in the other three species. In all plumages, Marbled Godwit can be recognized by their overall tawny-cinnamon coloration, including (very importantly) the under wing linings. The outer primaries and primary coverts are dark brown, the inner primaries and secondaries *bright tawny-cinnamon* (Fig. 2). The tail is also tawny-cinnamon barred with dark brown. The face is relatively unmarked compared to other godwits, with an subtle, buffy supercilium, and darker lores. The only other species of shorebird that shows similar plumage characters is the Long-billed Curlew, which is larger, possesses the typical distinctively decurved "curlew" bill, and has pale blue-gray legs (which can be used to differentiate sleeping individuals that have their heads tucked). A complete Prebasic molt occurs on the wintering grounds from July through November. In **Definitive Basic plumage,** the upper parts are spangled (spotted or barred) with dark brown on a tawny ground color; the under parts are paler and only faintly barred. The Prealternate molt occurs primarily on the wintering grounds during February and March and includes most of the body feathers and the tail. **Definitive Alternate plumage** is similar to Basic, except that the under parts are relatively brighter and more conspicuously barred; **First Alternate plumage** is virtually indistinguishable from Definitive Alternate. **Juvenal plumage** is characterized by brighter, unmarked tawny-cinnamon under parts and more rufous tail combined with a more muted, softer pattern of dark mottling on the upper parts. Another feature of Juvenal-plumaged individuals is the almost unmarked upper wing coverts. Juveniles begin their Prebasic molt on the wintering grounds, and the juvenal body plumage is soon replaced by more adult-like **First Basic plumage** (which is virtually indistinguishable from Definitive Basic plumage except for a few retained juvenile wing coverts). It can be very difficult to age individuals without really *close* views. Very worn adults (Alternate plumage) can look fairly pale and unmarked. For feather comparisons between adult and juvenile Marbled Godwit (and to compare to Bar-tailed Godwit), see Fig. 3.

Small numbers regularly summer along our coast and adjacent barrier islands. These individuals are best identified (and separated from late northbound or early southbound migrants) by very worn primaries (these probably represent First Alternate individuals) and by the onset of primary molt as early as mid-May to early June. Summering birds typically begin Prebasic molt well before southbound migrants arrive.

Voice. The **call note** is a "kaweet," "ger-WHIT," or other similar sounding rendition of the basic "godwit' template. Also gives more muted single- or double-noted calls. Generally quiet away from breeding areas; most frequently calls when taking flight.

Black-tailed Godwit

Plumage. The lone Louisiana record was of an individual in Alternate plumage. This species is superficially similar to Hudsonian Godwit, but is proportionately larger (sex for sex) and has a straighter, heftier bill. Side by side, males of the two species in full Alternate plumage are easily differentiated, but Alternate-plumaged females or birds in transitional plumage may be less conspicuous. In **Definitive Alternate plumage,** males (subspecies *islandica*; generally the more expected subspecies to occur) have a rich rufous-chestnut chest and fore-belly (nominate *limosa* is more cinnamon-rufous). The head and neck are smooth cinnamon-rufous (somewhat reminiscent of an American Avocet), accented by a white supercilium (less pronounced behind the eye), dark lores, and white eye-arcs. The rest of the under parts are white, except for prominent dark barring bars on the sides, flanks, lateral tail-coverts, and vent (less pronounced in *limosa*). The mantle feathers are pink-chestnut with bold black centers bordered by white bars. These feathers are usually mixed with residual gray Basic plumage feathers (some of which will not be replaced). A bright white lower rump and upper tail coverts divide the black tail from the blackish lower back and upper rump. The under tail coverts are white. Females are duller overall, and the dark barring on the under parts is more restricted to the flanks. Wing coverts are brown. In flight, Black-tailed's *white under wing outlined in black* is *diagnostic* (Fig. 2). From above, the wing pattern of Hudsonian and Black-tailed is similar; Black-tailed has a larger, more conspicuous white wing stripe.
The onset of Prebasic molt begins on the breeding grounds or at staging areas and includes some body feathers and inner primaries (extent and timing of molt varies among populations). Molt is then suspended and later completed on the wintering grounds. **Definitive Basic plumage** is fairly uniform in appearance, recalling Basic plumage of Hudsonian Godwit or perhaps even Willet. The upper parts are gray-brown with the scapulars and wing coverts edged with white, the under parts are grayish-white, and the face pattern generally a drabber version of Alternate plumage. The striking pattern of the wings and tail in flight remains *diagnostic* in Basic plumage. **Juvenal plumage** is similar to Basic, especially the "plain-ness" of the plumage, but gray is replaced by cinnamon on the face and neck, and the upper wing coverts are edged with cinnamon-buff, giving the back a somewhat more scalloped appearance.

Voice. Call notes reported as (from *Birds of the Western Palearctic =BWP*) 'däät' or 'dä.' Also 'kett' or 'kik' —nothing that could be interpreted as "godwit."

continued

Bar-tailed Godwit

Plumage. Bar-tailed Godwits exhibit about the same amount of sexual size dimorphism as Hudsonians. Bar-tailed is noticeably shorter-legged and generally longer-winged than Marbled. A small male Bar-tailed, therefore, could be "dwarfed" by a large female Marbled. In Basic plumage, a Bar-tailed feeding or roosting with Marbleds looks like a small, washed-out version of the latter. In **Definitive Alternate plumage**, males are much more colorful than Marbleds, with dark chestnut or rufous head, neck, and under parts. Fairly prominent pale supercilium (often with a white supra-loral spot at bill) and darker loral stripe. The crown is streaked with black and the mantle is black, each feather edged with rufous, and many tipped with white. The overall appearance is reminiscent of an Alternate-plumaged Short-billed Dowitcher. Females are generally only slightly duller, but some can be nearly white below. The two subspecies occurring in North America are separable by size and plumage characters. Alaskan *baueri* is larger, but the most noticeable difference is that the back and upper rump are dark brown with feathers tipped white; the lower rump and upper tail coverts are white, barred or spotted with black. The axillaries and under wing coverts are brown with narrow white bars. In nominate *lapponica*, the lower back, rump, and upper tail coverts are dull white with brown bars. The tail is white barred with dark brown. In flight, the pattern recalls a dowitcher, rather than other godwit species. The spotting and barring on the underwings and rump of *baueri* therefore shows less contrast than *lapponica* and is less dowitcher-like in coloration. Both subspecies of Bar-tailed lack the prominent white upper wing stripe characteristic of Hudsonian and Black-tailed godwits. In flight, Bar-tailed has a relatively "dark wing" with darker flight feathers that contrast with paler wing coverts.

Definitive Basic plumage is acquired after a complete molt, which occurs primarily on the wintering grounds. But, as in Black-tailed, onset of this Prebasic molt may be initiated on the breeding grounds, then suspended during southbound migration and completed on the wintering grounds. The progression of molt is reportedly well-synchronized within subspecies, but timing can vary between subspecies. For example, *baueri* initiates body molt on the breeding grounds and continues to molt at staging areas. Then, molt is suspended during the actual migration southward (e.g., birds migrate in transitional plumage) and resumes upon arrival at the wintering grounds (at which time the flight feathers and residual Alternate body plumage are replaced). Nominate *lapponica* initiates body *and* primary molt on the breeding grounds or staging areas, then suspends and completes molt on the wintering grounds. It is interesting to note that a 7 July Massachusetts photo record on the Internet shows an individual with a combination of new, missing (gap in feathers), and old primaries. Again, in **Definitive Basic** plumage, Bar-tailed resembles a very washed-out version of a Marbled. The upper parts are generally grayish-brown, and the under parts are dull white. The mantle is "smoother," with fine blackish streaks along the feather shafts (e.g., Bar-taileds lack the checkered look of Marbled), and has "colder," grayer color tones than Marbled. The markings of the face are less pronounced compared to Hudsonians or Black-taileds, but generally bolder than in Marbleds. In flight, the rump and tail pattern are *diagnostic*. In **Juvenal plumage,** each mantle and wing covert feather has whitish-buff scalloped edge giving the back a noticeably scaly appearance—the brown and white pattern very distinct from any plumage of Marbled (Fig. 3). The throat and breast are buffy and the remainder of the underparts is white.

Voice. Reported as generally silent away from breeding sites (from *BWP*). Alarm note "gahik;" also "k-wit…weeit." (= interpret as sounding like "godwit"!).

So what about those reports from outside the "normal" pattern?

Current knowledge about status, distribution, timing of migration, patterns of vagrancy, habitat preferences, behavior, and identification is based on a foundation of reliable data contributed and archived by professional and amateur ornithologists over the decades. Although we continue to gradually fine-tune this knowledge, the established patterns are remarkably stable and conservative, so much so that reviewers of records often form opinions about observations based on the probability, say, that a species should or shouldn't be present at a particular time and place. Conversely, it can, of course, be dangerous to put too much faith in probabilities. Birds don't always conform to the established patterns (e.g., extralimital or seasonal vagrants do occur, whether they are pioneers, navigationally challenged, or simply blown off course), and, after all, patterns have to begin as just one or a few records. In the future, especially as we rapidly alter our world, new patterns will develop, and old patterns will remain the same, undergo shifts, or cease altogether. Observations that fall within expected patterns are still important and help reinforce those patterns. EACH report from "outside the normal pattern" is significant and may signal a shift in the pattern or a completely new pattern. Over time, such reports may contribute to analyses that may generate hypotheses about the ultimate forces behind phenomena such as long-distance vagrancy or shifts in breeding distributions, timing of migration, etc.

The bottom line is that, to be considered acceptable, records that fall outside established patterns for a species need to be documented. It would be wonderful if we lived in a perfect world and could accept all observations at face value. But, none of us is perfect, especially when it comes to bird identification. And so, record reviewers must abide by the conservative philosophy that the *burden falls on the observer* to provide convincing written and/or hard evidence of an unusual observation. To accomplish this task, serious birders who want to be equal to the challenge owe it to themselves to become as familiar as possible with current knowledge regarding identification, distribution, status, timing of migration, and patterns of vagrancy. If we do encounter a bird thought to be unusual, then we need to be prepared to follow through and obtain and submit supporting documentation.

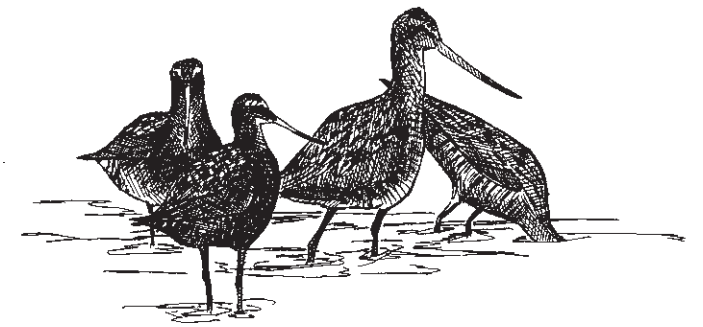
So, you may be asking, "just what does all this have to do with godwits anyway?" Well, because they occur regularly in Louisiana, species such as Marbled and Hudsonian godwits may tend to be taken for granted, especially if observers are not aware of complexities of their status and distribution within the state. Observers need to know whether a species is *unusual* in certain areas or during parts of the year, because this should be taken into

continued

consideration during the identification process. Most observers are aware that records of the rarest species (e.g., those on the Louisiana Bird Records Committee "Review List") are evaluated to establish whether the identification is likely correct. However, "regular" (non-Review List) species that are found at the wrong time and/or place may actually be considered *just as or more unusual* than some "Review List" species (for which there may be numerous records and a well-established pattern of vagrancy from over the years). For example, in the case of godwits, a winter record of Hudsonian Godwit would be unprecedented. Such a record might be considered just as or more unusual than, say, another Louisiana spring record of Black-tailed Godwit. Similarly (if not as dramatically), Marbled Godwits are unusual inland, especially in spring, and should be identified with caution and well-documented. For guidelines on how to properly document unusual records, see How to Document Rare Birds by D. L. Dittmann and Greg Lasley reprinted from *BIRDING* at the LOS website (http://losbird.org/dittman_lasley.htm). Also at the web site, see Instructions for reporting Louisiana birds (http://losbird.org/instruct_lbrc.htm). The best source of information about Louisiana birds is still, of course, *Louisiana Birds* (Lowery 1974). Although increasingly out-of-date, the status, abundance, and seasonal data therein (refer especially to the Summary of Seasonal Occurrence "bar graphs") are still reasonably accurate for the majority of Louisiana species (a great example of the durability of those "established patterns").

Specimens and the Louisiana bird record card file at the LSU Museum of Natural Science provided an invaluable resource. Additional sources of information include the *AOU Check-list of North American Birds* (7th Edition); *Handbook of the Birds of Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa: The Birds of the Western Palearctic Vol III Waders to Gulls (BWP)*; and *Holarctic Waders*; *Birds of North America-Life Histories for the 21st Century accounts*: *Marbled Godwit*, No. 492, 2000; *Hudsonian Godwit*, No. 629, 2002; and *Bar-tailed Godwit*, No. 581, 2001; these are highly recommended for additional information about these species.

Donna L. Dittmann & Steven W. Cardiff
435 Pecan Drive, St. Gabriel, LA 70776



WELCOME NEW LOS MEMBERS

Vicki & Richard Daviet, Baton Rouge, LA

Danielle Durand, St. Martinville, LA

Leanne S. French, New Orleans, LA

Claire Hebert, Baton Rouge, LA

Judy Hundley, Jennings, LA

R. Scott Litz, Baton Rouge. LA

Art MacKinnon, Orange TX

Ann McDowell, Centreville, MS

Ryan Stewart, DeRidder, LA

Bob and Polly Thomas , Metaire, LA

Patrick J. Thomas, Metaire, LA

Jerry G. and Maleta Walls, Bunkie, LA

LOUISIANA BIRDS • SPRING 2001 • (1 March – 31 May)

Joseph P. Kleiman

[**KEY: boldfaced species** are on the Louisiana Bird Records Committee (**LBRC**) Review List; documentation is on file, and eventual acceptance of these records is pending evaluation by the LBRC. **ad.** = adult; **imm.** = immature; **Lowery (1974)** = Louisiana Birds by George H. Lowery, Jr., 3rd Edition; **m.ob.** = many observers; **NWR** = National Wildlife Refuge; **ph** = photograph to be deposited in LBRC archives at Louisiana State University Museum of Natural Science (LSUMNS); **vt** = videotape to be deposited in LBRC archives at LSUMNS; **WMA** = Wildlife Management Area. **Parish names** are in *italics*. This is the protocol used by Steve Cardiff when he wrote these columns for the LOS News.]

Three American Bitterns, a species of concern, were seen on 3 separate occasions at L Pool, *Cameron*, (JPK, JK, KF) from 6 April to 5 May. Good numbers of another species of concern, Reddish Egret, occurred at Fourchon, *Lafourche, Jefferson* (PAW, BMM, RDP, CCS), with 11 on 4 March and 6 still present on 27 May. This species nests in small numbers in this part of the state. Roseate Spoonbill continue to do well with 204 found on 6 April in *Cameron* (JPK, JK) and ~40 seen at a colony at Belle Pass (PAW, BMM, RDP) on 27 May.

Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks continue to expand with 6 reports from 13 April to 30 May from various parts of the state, *Vermilion, Plaquemines, Cameron, Terrebonne*, (BF, DP, TG, FG, PAW, BMM, JPK, KF, GB, Paul Yakupzack, Ron Paille, Dr. Sasser).

One of our more spectacular birds, the Swallow-tailed Kite, continues to do well, despite some logging in one of its nesting areas. In Sherburne WMA, *St. Martin*, 7 were found on 3 and11 April (JOC), 9 breeding birds (aerial survey) at Sherburne and Atchafalaya NWR, *St. Martin, Iberville, Pointe Coupee*, (JOC, PS), and 10 on 15 April at Sherburne (DL, m.ob.). A kite was also found in *Beauregard Parish* on 13 April along the Sabine River (DL). In the town of Pearl River, *St. Tammany*, on 5 May, 22 Swallow-tailed Kites were at a roost near a nesting colony (JOC, Donna Bush) and 21 were found on 29 May during an aerial survey of the Pearl River basin, *St. Tammany, Pearl River County, MS* (JOC, PS). A good movement of 148 Mississippi Kites, all flying east, was seen on Old River Road in *Beauregard Parish* on 13 April (DL). On 15 April, the same observer found a flock of 40+ Mississippi Kites in a feeding frenzy on a dragonfly swarm on Whiskey Bay Road, *St. Martin.*

Observations of Swainson's Hawk include 1, possibly a wintering bird, on 3 March on US 61 between LaPlace and Gramercy, *St. John*, (PY), 1 at mile marker 41, I-10 in *Jefferson Davis* (BF, DP), and a high count of 7 (one carrying a stick for nesting?) at Chloe, *Calcasieu* (Virginia Rettig, Molly Richard).

A late American Kestrel on 6 May was found near the west ferry landing in *Cameron* (PY). Two late Peregrine Falcons were found 5 May in *Acadia*: 1 at LA92 x LA13, and 1 just north of Morse (JPK, KF).

The observation of 2 King Rails at Big Branch NWR, *St. Tammany* (DM, EM), on 20 May suggests that they might be trying to breed. The Louisiana Breeding Bird Atlas does not report any *Rallus* species for the north shore of Lake Pontchartrain.

Fourchon Beach, *Lafourche, Jefferson*, provided an excellent count of Wilson's Plover, with 47 being found on 24 March (DM, RDP). On the same day in this area, they also found 14 Piping Plovers, an endangered species. Other reports of Piping Plovers in this same area were 6 on 16 April and 1 on 6 May (PAW, CCS, BMM).

Fourchon Beach, *Lafourche*, continued to be productive with a report of 2 American Oyster-catchers on 7 April (DM). A Spotted Sandpiper was fairly late at Bogue Chitto NWR, *St. Tammany* (CR, JOC, TDC). The sod farms on Turf Grass Road, *Jefferson Davis*, were an excellent place to find Upland Sandpiper with 40 on 14 April, 25 on 21 April, and 3 on 29 April. Here, also, were seen Buff-breasted Sandpiper with 78 on 14 April, 137 on 21 April, but none on 29 April (JPK, JK). A late record of Upland Sandpiper was 2 on Belcher River Road, *Caddo*, on 12 May (Jim Ingold).

Reports of Whimbrel were: 2 birds, marginally early on 28 March, at East Jetty, *Cameron*, (JPK, KF, CT), 22 on 14 April at the erstwhile Vincent Refuge, *Vermilion* (JPK, JK), 38 on 5 May in various rice fields, *Vermilion* (JPK, KF), 41 on 27 May in rice fields south of Kaplan, *Vermilion* (JPK, CF), and on 6 May 17 at Fourchon, *Lafourche* (PAW, BMM). (Note: This is a large number for this part of the state.) Another shorebird rare in this part of the state is the Long-billed Curlew, 1 being seen on 4 March at Port Fourchon, *Lafourche* (PAW, BMM, RDP). Reports of Hudsonian Godwit, a species of concern, were of 2 east of Holmwood, *Calcasieu* (CK), on 27 April, and 32 in various rice fields, *Vermilion, Acadia* (JPK, KF), on 5 May. Marginally early were 12 Marbled Godwits seen at East Jetty, *Cameron* (JPK, KF, CT), on 28 March. A good count, for an inland location, of 95 Ruddy Turnstones in rice fields south of Kaplan, *Vermilion* (JPK, CF), was made on 27 May. Various rice fields, *Acadia, Vermilion* (JPK, KF), yielded a good count of 1050 Dunlin on 5 May. A female **Ruff** was found southeast of Crowley, *Acadia* (DL, Wing Tour Group) on 17 April.

Wilson's Phalarope, 39 birds in 3 flocks, were migrating west to east on 28 April in *Cameron* (DM). However, they were still plentiful on 7 May when 79 were found next to the road to the Cameron Lighthouse (JPK, JW, SZ). Mixed in with these 79 birds was a female **Red-necked Phalarope**, a review list bird, which stayed at least until 10 May (JW-ph, JPK, SZ, RB, CL, DP-vt, BF).

continued

The only report of a Franklin's Gull was on 27 April: 1 adult on Rutherford Beach, *Cameron*, (BMM, CCS, RDP). The Welsh Landfill, *Jefferson Davis* (JPK, CF), continues to be attractive to gulls with about 2000 Ring-billed Gulls seen on 11 March. These birds, along with other gulls, appear to fly in from the coast and back each day. There were 3 reports of Lesser Black-backed Gulls. Two were from Fourchon, and 1 from Cameron: a near adult was found 4 March on Fourchon Beach, *Lafourche* (PAW, BMM, RDP), and on 16 April a fourth summer bird was present at Elmer's Island, *Jefferson* (BMM, CCS, PAW); an adult was found on 17 April at East Jetty, *Cameron* (DL, m.ob.). An all white **Glaucous Gull**, on the late date of 6 May, was seen west of Holly Beach, *Cameron* (PY-ph). Also late, 7 May, was a first summer **Great Black-backed Gull** on Rutherford Beach, *Cameron* (JW-ph, JPK-ph, SZ). Another rare gull, a **Black-legged Kittiwake**, first year, was observed 27 April on Rutherford Beach (BMM-ph, CCS, RDP-vt).

In winter and early spring, the rice fields of southwest Louisiana are excellent places to see Gull-billed Tern, a species of concern. Twelve were seen west of Lake Arthur, *Jefferson Davis* (JPK, CF), on 11 March. A good count of 300+ Common Terns was obtained on various beaches in *Cameron* (DM). Least Terns were early at Elmer's Island, *Jefferson* (DM, RDP), when 4 were present on 24 March. On 6 May, the Fourchon, Grand Isle area, *Lafourche, Jefferson* (PAW, BMM), had ~2000 Least Terns present.

White-winged Doves are continuing their eastward expansion. On six days between 4 March and 27 May, these doves were found on Grand Isle and in New Orleans, with as many as 8 in New Orleans (PAW, BMM, RDP, CCS) on 6 April. Also, 2 White-winged Doves visited a feeder in uptown New Orleans, *Orleans* (Joyce and Bernie Mayer), from 9 to 16 April. The range expansion of Inca Doves continues as well. They apparently nested successfully on Grand Isle, *Jefferson* (BMM, PAW), as 5 adults and 2 fledglings were found on 6 May. In contrast, the Ground Dove has become quite rare in Louisiana since the publication of **Lowery (1974)**. Only 2 Ground Doves were reported: 1 on 7 April on Grand Isle, *Jefferson* (DM), and 1 on 17 April in *Vermilion* (DL, m.ob.).

Evidence of Monk Parakeet nesting in Louisiana was found on 5 May. Two birds were seen, one carrying nesting material to a large communal nest in New Orleans (JW, AA, SH).

A Black-billed Cuckoo in the Honey Island Swamp, *St. Tammany* (DM), was quite late, 20 May. Also late was a year-old male **Calliope Hummingbird** in St. Gabriel, *Iberville* (JVR), on 1 April. On 20 May, a singing Yellow-bellied Flycatcher in the Honey Island Swamp provided one of the rare spring records for this species in the state (DM, EM). Unusual for Baton Rouge was a male Vermilion Flycatcher on Ben Hur Road on 9 March (Dan Christian, Michael Seymour). The **Great Kiskadee** present in the Venice area, *Plaquemines*, for about two years was located again on 18 April (BMM, PAW). Two Western Kingbirds (early migrants or, more probably, wintering birds) were found south of West Point a La Hache, *Plaquemines*, (GO, Joelle Finley, et al) on 31 March. Scissor-tailed Flycatcher arrived early in the Shreveport area, *Caddo*, when 2 were found on 18 March (RS, Vicki LeFevers). A nesting pair of Scissor-tailed Flycatchers was found 25 May in the Vidrine area, *Evangeline*, (Melissa A. Powell, Kim and Carolyn Fuselier).

A large migratory movement of ~90 White-eyed Vireos occurred on 31 March in the Grand Isle, Fourchon area, *Jefferson, Lafourche*, (PAW, BMM, CCS). On 6 May, a **Black-whiskered Vireo** returned to the same area on Grand Isle, *Jefferson*, where 1 or 2 birds have been present in recent years (PAW, BMM). The bird was still present in late May.

Cliff Swallows returned to *Natchitoches* on 18 March when 4 were seen (JT, CL). Some were in Shreveport, *Caddo*, on 21 March when 3 were seen repairing nests from a previous year (RS). In New Orleans on Paris Road, *Orleans*, a new colony of nesting Cliff Swallows, ~60 birds, was located on 28 May (DM). A **Cave Swallow** was present on 7 May at the bridge on LA 82 to Texas in *Cameron* (JPK, JW, SZ). A good count of 12 Golden-crowned Kinglets at Smithport Lake, *DeSoto*, was obtained on 17 March (JnT, JT, RS). There were three late records for thrushes: a Veery (CL-vt) and a Swainson's Thrush (JnT, JT) both in Shreveport, *Caddo*, on 28 May and 2 Hermit Thrushes in the Atchafalaya NWR, *Iberville*, on 10 May (JOC, CR).

Warblers made a good showing in Spring 2001 with many early and late dates, plus the occurrence of the **Painted Redstart** at Peveto Woods. Nashville Warblers were both early and late at Shreveport, *Caddo*, with 4 found on 15 April (JT) and 1 still present on 12 May (RS). A Yellow Warbler was late, 27 May, on Grand Isle, *Jefferson* (PAW, BMM, RDP). On the same day they also found 1 or 2 Ovenbirds. A Cape May Warbler, a rare migrant in Louisiana, was found on 6 May in the Peveto Woods Sanctuary, *Cameron*, (PY). Another rare migrant in Louisiana, the Black-throated Blue Warbler, was found in two locations: a sighting of 1 individual near Lake Martin, *St. Martin*, on 5 May (Walker Wilson), and a singing male and a female on Grand Isle, *Jefferson*, on 6 May (BMM, PAW). A probable wintering Black-throated Green Warbler was found on Grand Isle on 4 March (PAW, BMM, RDP). At Smithport Lake, *DeSoto*, on 17 March were 10 Yellow-throated Warblers (JnT, JT, RS). Some were already singing. A species of concern, a Cerulean Warbler, was found on Grand Isle, *Jefferson*, (BMM, PAW, CCS, CK) on 31 March. In Baton Rouge, on 19 May, a late Ovenbird was found near LSU (Chris Witt). On 19 May on Grand Isle, *Jefferson*, a late Hooded Warbler (does not breed there) and a Canada Warbler (rare at this location) were found (CCS, BMM, Gwen Smalley). A Wilson's Warbler showed up in New Orleans, *Orleans*, on 10 March (DM). It was either a bird that survived the December freezes or an early migrant. A spectacular **Painted Redstart** was discovered on 16 April at Peveto Woods Sanctuary, *Cameron*, (RB, Barbara Breedlove). It was reported again on 18 April (JPK-ph, KF, DL-ph, m.ob.) The bird disappeared after a night of good southeast winds, presumably returning to the west. Scarlet Tanagers were early, with 1 being seen on Grand Isle, *Jefferson*, on 31 March (BMM, CCS, PAW, CK), and 1 in Lafayette on 4 April (Rose Must). A good fallout of Scarlet Tanagers occurred

continued

in the Grand Isle area on 16 April when 75 to 90 were counted (BMM, CCS, PAW).

Henslow's and LeConte's Sparrows are finding the closed landfill at the northwest corner of Arabi, *St. Bernard*, to be excellent wintering habitat. On 11 March, 2 Henslow's and 11 LeConte's Sparrows were found; on 1 April, 4 Henslow's and 10 LeConte's were present; and on 14 April, 15 LeConte's Sparrows were there (JOC, TDC, CR, GO, DM, Sherry and Fred DeFrancesch). Rose-breasted Grosbeaks (40) and Blue Grosbeaks (35) staged a good movement on Grande Isle, *Jefferson*, on 16 April (BMM, CCS, PAW). A **Black-headed Grosbeak** was at a residence in New Orleans from 10 February to 2 March (Gloria McKinnon). Central Louisiana saw large numbers of Bobolinks with ~50 southeast of Eunice, *Acadia*, on 25 April (BF, Larry Miller) and 75 - 100 in Henderson Swamp, *St. Martin* (Ron Boustany), on 4 May. A Brewer's Blackbird was late and in an unusual location near St. Gabriel, *Iberville*, on 1 April (JVR). **Shiny Cowbird** occurred at a feeder on Grand Isle, *Jefferson*, on 24 March (DM, RDP). Bronzed Cowbirds were reported from two locations where they are not normally found: 2 were present near LSU from 13 – 18 April (JW, SH, AA), and 1 was at the National Wetlands Research Center, *Lafayette*, on 21 May (Michael Baldwin).

Initialed Observers:
Alex Aleixo, Roger Breedlove, Gary Broussard, Jennifer O. Coulson, Tom D. Coulson, Karen Fay, Carol Foil, Bill Fontenot, Flo Guidry, Toddy Guidry, Stacey Hoffer, Cecil Kersting, Joanne Kleiman, Joseph P. Kleiman, Dan Lane, Charlie Lyon, B. Mac Myers, Edward Massian, David Muth, Glenn Ousset, Dave Patton, R. Dan Purrington, J. V. Remsen, Christie Riehl, Perry Samrow, Rosemary Seidler, Curtis C. Sorrells, Cecil Tarver, Jean Trahan, Jeff Trahan, Phillip A. Wallace, Jason Weckstein, Peter Yaukey, Stan Zamek.

Remember, the Summer 2002 reports are due as soon as possible after July 31. Send them to:

Joseph P. Kleiman
Museum of Natural Science
119 Foster Hall
Louisiana State University
Baton Rouge, LA 70803-3216

The dates for the Fall Period are 1 August – 30 November. If you need cards or rare bird report forms, contact me at the above address or at home, (225) 751-8716.

LOS SPECIAL AWARD WINNERS AT LA STATE SCIENCE FAIR

The Louisiana State Science Fair was conducted April 5th and 6th at LSU in Baton Rouge. LOS would like to congratulate this years Louisiana Ornithological Society Special Award winners. There were several projects this year involving bird research and three of them received recognition.

In the Junior Division, the Special Award went to Ryan Stewart of DeRidder. His project was titled "Do Hummers Care?", and involved using different colored hummingbird feeders to determine whether hummingbirds preferred one color over another color.

Also in the Junior Division, "Honorable Mention" was awarded to Danielle Durand of New Iberia. Danielle is last years LOS Special Award winner and extended her project into a two year study. Her study was titled " Do Hummingbirds Have A Distinct Preference In The Color Of Nectar Placed InThe Feeder". Danielle used food coloring to make different colored nectar and placed them in feeders to see if one was preferred over another.

In the Senior Division, the Special Award winner was Claire Hebert of Baton Rouge and this was a truly outstanding project. Her project was titled, "Motmots: Molecular Phylogeny and Biogeography". Claire received assistance from the LSU Museum of Natural Science and supervised access to the bird collection and molecular laboratory to conduct her research. Her project involved analysis of DNA sequences to develop a new classification for the motmots based on evolutionary relationships, and test existing hypotheses regarding biogeography and diversification of the motmots.

After being selected as the winner of the Senior Division, Claire provided LOS with some additional details on her project. In her words - The motmot project is a work in progress.
Some results that are fairly certain with the current genetic data set are:
1. Motmots originated in Central America
2. Motmots invaded South America at least 4 times, beginning around the time of the formation of the Central American landbridge.
3. The Highland Motmot is highly divergent from other motmots in the "Blue-crowned" group, and represents a separate early invasion of South America. It should be considered a separate species.
4. The ornithologist Frank Chapman was mostly correct in his inferences about the biogeography of motmots made in 1923.

Congratulations to all of the LOS Special Award winners and the other excellent entries for their excellent projects involving bird research.

LOS also thanks Dave Patton for his many years of chairing the LOS Science Fair Committee and judging the projects on bird research at the Louisiana State Science Fair.

LOS SPRING MEETING: FRIDAY, APRIL 26, 2002 CAMERON, LA

President Marty Guidry opened the meeting by expressing thanks to Marianna Tanner Primeaux, Judy Fruge, Judith O'Neale, Joseph Vallee, Wynelle Jones and Elouise Mullen for registration, Cameron coordination, hospitality table and store sales.

LOS Officers and Board Members were introduced:
Secretary/Treasurer Judith O'Neale, Past President David L'Hoste, Board Members Rosemary Seidler, Gay Gomez and Lee Ellis. Vice President Karen Fay and former LOS News Editor Carol Foil were unable to attend. JLO Editor Jim Ingold was also introduced.

Marty acknowledged David L'Hoste for his continued good work on the LOS webpage and online store. You can buy bird books, binoculars and lots of birding need at this online store. www.losbird.org

Annual LOS Awards presentation will be Saturday night.

The LOS Board Meeting will be held after this meeting at the Dyson House and anyone interested may attend the meeting.

Anyone wishing to go on the Saturday field trip should meet at the Cameron Motel at 6:30. This will be an all day trip starting at the west end of Cameron Parish and returning via Peveto Woods and Cameron. The lighthouse road will be open but will be locked at 5 p.m. Please use caution as there have been report of aggressive behavior by the elk.

Congratulations to LOS Members who have been honored by the Louisiana Wildlife Federation recently are:
Bill Fontenot, Professional Conservationist of the Year Award
Tiny Moore Lifetime Achievement Award

Marty introduced LOS Secretary/Treasurer Judith O'Neale who presented an excellent video and commentary of her recent trip to Cuba. Not only were the birds unique and exciting to see, but Judith also had excellent views of places they stayed, the Cuban culture and even a few tourist sites. She also brought along a photo album and books on the area that they visited.

LOS SPRING MEETING: SATURDAY, APRIL 27, 2002 CAMERON, LA

President Marty Guidry opened the meeting with thanks to Marianna Tanner Primeaux and Judy Fruge for Cameron coordination, Joseph Vallee for Sales Table and Elouise Mullen, Wynelle Jones and Judith O'Neale for registration and hospitality table. Marty also thanked Clifton Hebert for the Knights of Columbus work and for the new LOS sign.

The officers and board members of LOS were introduced:
Vice President Karen Fay was unable to attend. Secretary/Treasurer Judith O'Neale, SW LA Board Member Gay Gomez, North LA Board Member Rosemary Seidler, SE LA Board Member Lee Ellis, Past President David L'Hoste and Jim Ingold, JLO Editor. He also thanked David for continuing to be our Webmaster and for producing an excellent webpage for LOS (losbird.org).

Marty thanked Judith for her program on Cuba which she gave Friday evening.

Marty played a tape and asked members to guess which bird was on the recording. Many of the members knew that it was the Ivory-billed Woodpecker.

The LOS News will be handled by a new procedure with our printer doing our setup and layout. Articles and information should be sent to Marty, preferable as a word processing document. Deadlines will be listed in up coming newsletters.

LOS Elections will be held at the fall meeting. The nominating committee will be Lee Ellis, Karen Fay and Marty Guidry. The positions will be President, Vice-President, Secretary/Treasurer and SE Board Member.

Congratulations to LOS Members who have been honored by the Louisiana Wildlife Federation recently are:
Bill Fontenot, Professional Conservationist of the Year Award
Tiny Moore Lifetime Achievement Award

The following awards were presented:
President's Award to Olga and Walter Clifton and Nancy Newfield. Marty had previous presented awards to Bobby Santini of Grand Isle and Ron Stein.

Judith accepted the George H. Lowery award for Van Remsen who could not make it to the meeting. Van sent an email expressing his thanks for being selected for this award. (Marty and Judith presented Van with his award, which was a carved Ivory-billed Woodpecker in May at an LSU lunch. He was delighted with his award.)

Marty announced that the Winter meeting 2003 will be held in Lake Charles, January 24-26, 2002. Anyone interested in hosting the winter 2004 meeting should contact Marty.

LOS gave a grant this year of $1000 to Jennifer Coulson for her continued studies on the Swallow-tailed Kite in Louisiana. The Ted Parker youth scholarship fund will be sending a student to summer camp.

Speaker for the October 2002 Saturday night program is Greg Lasley *Isla Robinson Crusoe, Chile*

The checklist was read and there were 193 species on the count for Saturday, April 27.

Our guest speaker, Jonathan Meiburg, a graduate student from the University of Texas at Austin gave a very interesting program on the Striated Caracara which he studied while on a Thomas J. Watson fellowship in 1997-1998. Jonathan presented an excellent video and slide program on his work as a field assistant for the first-every survey of breeding pairs of Striated Caracara on the Falkland Islands.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30

Judith O'Neale
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