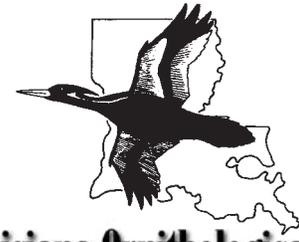


LOS NEWS



www.losbird.org

NEWSLETTER OF THE

Louisiana Ornithological Society

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**Submission Deadline Date for
Spring LOS News is
March 1, 2007**

Journal of Louisiana Ornithology
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2007 LOS Winter Meeting

Quality Inn - La Place

LaPlace, Louisiana

Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, February 2 - 4, 2007

Come on down! Winter is a great time for birding in Southeast Louisiana and there is always great food to sample. We will only be 30 minutes from New Orleans. Enjoy a canoe trip on Sunday morning into the Manchac Wetlands or travel through the destruction left by Hurricane Katrina on our "Levee Break Tour." There will, of course, be plenty of birding trips to enjoy, led by some of the area's best birders.

Accommodations:

The meeting hotel will be the **Quality Inn-LaPlace, 3900 Hwy. 51, (985) 652-5544**. From I-10 take Exit 209 (Hwy. 51) south. The hotel will be about a quarter of a mile on your right. **Room reservations MUST be made before January 15th!** Be sure to mention LOS (group # 100477). \$78.99 single or double, \$83.99 triple, \$88.99 quad

Friday Evening, February 2

6 PM - Registration will be outside the Plantation Room in the hotel. Snacks and a cash bar will be available.

7 PM - Meeting and Evening Program.

The program will be presented by **David Muth and Phillip Wallace** of New Orleans. David is a director with the National Park Service, Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve,

and a birder since childhood. Phillip is the Middle School Principal at Isidore Newman School in New Orleans, has birded for 26 years and is a member of the LA Bird Records Committee. David and Phillip had a "friendly competition" to determine who could see the most birds in Orleans Parish in one year. Their video presentation titled "**A New Orleans Big Year—the Rewards of Restricted Area Birding**" is highly entertaining. Come, enjoy and congratulate the big winner!

Saturday Evening, February 3

6 PM - Registration will be outside the Plantation Room. There will be a cash bar.

6:30 PM - The Banquet is in the Plantation Room. **Reservations MUST be received by January 15th.** Salad, pork tenderloin, seafood pasta, white chocolate bread pudding.

7:30 PM - Meeting and Evening Program.

Dr. Jennifer Coulson will speak on the "**Population Ecology of Swallow-tailed Kites Nesting in Southern Louisiana and Mississippi.**" Jenn received her Ph.D. in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology from Tulane University, New Orleans. She will report discoveries obtained from her long-term study on

Swallow-tailed Kites. Her slides include some stunning photos of kites and also pre-and post-Katrina aerial shots of the Honey Island Swamp.

Field Trips:

All field trips will leave from the hotel parking lot on the south side (left side facing the hotel) at the appointed time. Bring snacks, water, insect repellent, rain gear, sun screen and rubber boots for the Bonnet Carré Spillway trip.

NOTE:Transportation on the field trips is on your own, car pool if possible. Full day trips will stop somewhere for lunch. For most half-day trips lunch is on your own, with the exception of Byron Almquist's canoe trip and po-boy lunch.

ALL DAY TRIP Saturday

Birding the South Shore of Lake Pontchartrain

Trip leader: Phillip Wallace

Date: Saturday, Feb. 3, 2007

Time: 6:45 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Full day trip.

Meeting place: Quality Inn parking lot.

Join Phillip Wallace on this all day birding trip. Trip destinations are the Seabrook Bridge, South Shore of Lake Pontchartrain, and Bayou Sauvage National Wildlife Refuge. Target birds include wintering ducks, grebes, gulls, terns and wintering passerines. We hope to see Greater Scaup and possibly Surf Scoters and Eared Grebes, in addition to the more expected ducks and Horned Grebes. Lake Pontchartrain has large numbers of wintering gulls. In addition to the usual Laughing, Ring-billed, Herring, and Bonaparte's, we hope to find Lesser Black-backed Gull, and possibly better. With regard to wintering passerines, in addition to the usual wintering warblers, sparrows, and phoebes, Bayou Sauvage has been a good place for vagrant flycatchers such as Ash-throated and Vermilion Flycatcher.

Winter Birds of Venice

Trip leader: Ed Wallace

Date: Saturday, Feb. 3, 2007

Time: 6:45 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Full day trip.

Meeting place: Quality Inn parking lot.

Join Ed Wallace on this all day birding trip to Venice.

Target birds for the trip include mostly wintering ducks, shorebirds and waders, and migrant, vagrant and resident passerines, including wintering warblers. A few target species are White-winged Doves, Scissor-tailed Flycatchers, *Myarchis* flycatchers, Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow, and Seaside Sparrow. **You might want to pack a lunch for this trip—food is hard to find in the Venice area.**

HALF-DAY TRIPS Saturday and or Sunday

Le Conte's Sparrow and Birds of the Bonne Carré Spillway

Trip leaders: Ron Stein and Melvin Weber

Date: Saturday, Feb. 3, and Sunday, Feb. 4, 2007

Time: 7:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. Half-day trip.

Meeting place: Quality Inn parking lot.

Join Ron Stein and Melvin Weber on half-day trips to the Bonne Carré Spillway in search of the LeConte's Sparrow and other grassland sparrows. The Spillway is a good area for raptors, and Bald Eagle and Osprey are expected. Common birds we expect to see are Meadowlark and American White Pelican. Eastern Bluebird is possible and there is a chance of seeing Rough-winged Swallow. Ron and other local birders are working on a spillway checklist that they hope to pass out on the field trips.

Magical Hummingbird Gardens

Trip leader: Linda Beall

Dates: Saturday, Feb. 3 and Sunday, Feb. 4

Time: 7:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. Half-day trip.

Meeting place: Quality Inn parking lot.

Join Linda Beall on this half-day trip birding backyards of southeastern Louisiana in search of winter hummingbirds. Trip destinations are not finalized at this time because winter hummingbirds are still arriving. We will advertise the destinations closer to the meeting, when the locations of the most interesting winter hummingbirds are known. If the early arrivals (e.g., Buff-breasted, Calliope, and Anna's Hummingbirds) are any indication of what is to come, February may have an interesting variety.

Birds of Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve

Trip leader: Wendy Rihner

Date: Saturday, Feb. 3, 2007

Time: 1:00 p.m. – 4:30 a.m. Half-day trip.

Meeting place: Quality Inn parking lot.

Join Wendy Rihner on half-day trip birding the Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve. The bottomland hardwood forests and swamps of Jean Lafitte NHPP provide lovely scenery for bird watching. We will search for winter warblers and other passerines. This is a great place to see Barred Owls up close.

Birds of Audubon Park

Trip leader: Glenn Ousset

Date: Saturday, Febr. 3, 2007

Time: 1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Half-day trip.

Meeting place: Quality Inn parking lot.

Audubon Park. Some interesting target birds include Black-bellied Whistling Ducks (sometimes seen in spectacular numbers), White-winged Dove, Bronzed Cowbird, and Eurasian Collared Dove. Fulvous Duck is a possibility.

The lagoons offer close up looks at Wood Duck and other waterfowl. Anhinga is likely. Winter warblers and vireos frequent the Live Oaks and scrub.

Northshore Birding Hot Spots

Trip leader: Chris Brantley

Date: Sunday, Feb. 4, 2007

Time: 6:45 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. Half-day trip.

Meeting place: Quality Inn parking lot.

Join Chris Brantley on a half-day trip to birding hot spots on the north shore of Lake Pontchartrain. We will begin at the Mandeville Lakefront and then choose between a few other locations like the Northlake Nature Center, Pelican Park, and Fountainebleau State Park. The Mandeville area of the lakefront usually has Common Loon, Brown Pelican, Bufflehead, Canvasback, and sometimes Redhead. Other birds sometimes seen here include Long-tailed Duck and Great Black-backed Gull. If trip participants are interested, we can also travel to Big Branch Marsh National Wildlife Refuge in search of Red-cockaded Woodpeckers.

Hurricane Katrina Levee Break Tour

Trip leader: Joelle Finley

Date: Sunday, Feb. 4

Time: 8:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. Half-day trip.

Meeting place: Quality Inn parking lot.

Join Joelle Finley on this half-day trip to visit sites of levee breaches caused by Hurricane Katrina. Joelle knows all too well the damage caused by levee failure. We may also see gulls and other birds associated with the canals.

Birding by Canoe in the Manchac Wetlands

Trip leader: Byron Almquist

Date: Sunday, Feb. 4, 2007, Half-day trip.

Times: 7:45 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Lunch: Byron will furnish a lunch with a choice of po boys, Zapps potato chips, a variety of fruits and ice tea.

Cost: \$35 for one paddler or \$65 for two paddlers (includes lunch). If someone has their own canoe or kayak, there will be a \$10 credit per paddler.

Registration and payment: To register send an e-mail message to Byron (byron@canoeandtrail.com) (phone: 504-834-5257) with your name, the names of other members of your party who will attend, e-mail addresses and cell phone numbers. **Please sign up in advance because there is a trip minimum.** Payment will be cash or check only (no credit cards) on the day of the trip; checks to be made payable to: Canoe and Trail. Meeting place: Quality Inn parking lot.

The Manchac Wetlands is a vast wooded area of approximately 200 square miles located west of Lake Pontchartrain with the cities of Ponchatoula to the north, Gonzales to the west and LaPlace to the south. Elevated portions of interstates 10 and 55 run through the Manchac Wetlands. This forested area is a “true” swamp that is wet year round due primarily to rainfall and wind driven water from Lakes Pontchartrain and Maurepas. The wetlands are almost completely inaccessible except for a few streams on the west side and a sprinkling of canals. Fortunately for the paddler, access into the east side of the wetlands is possible by paddling through historic Shell Bank Bayou, decades old oil and lumber canals, cypress lined slender lakes and a fresh water marsh. This route through such a varied cluster of habitats will give the paddling visitor an idea of what the Manchac Wetlands are like.

Fall Meeting Report

October 27, 2006 - Grand Isle

President Bill Fontenot presided over the annual meeting of LOS. A good turnout for a fall meeting of 60 registrants enjoyed a great weekend, in spite of the rain which left lots of standing water around the island.

Friday night, Bill Vermillion, Gulf Coast Joint Venture Bird Conservation Program, gave an interesting talk on the progress of the joint venture. Saturday night, Chris Brantley, USACE biologist, spoke on "The effects of Hurricane Katrina on Birds in SE LA." He had some interesting before and after slides of the area. Thank you to both Bill and Chris for speaking at our meeting.

The following officers were elected: President Bill Fontenot, Vice-President Nancy Menasco, Secretary Joelle Finley, Treasurer Judith O'Neale and Southwest Board Member Jackie Duncan.

Judith O'Neale presented the treasurer's report. LOS has an overall balance of \$23,580.46, \$10,000 of this is restricted funds for Life Memberships and \$2,600 is in the Ted Parker Youth Scholarship Fund. Our biggest expense this year was the printing and mailing of the LOS News.

Our special thanks to Kay Radlauer and Dennis Demcheck

who devoted many hours over the past four years to getting the LOS News out to our members.

The checklist was called by Dave Patton on Saturday night and 157 species were seen, the most notable being a Black-throated Grey Warbler on the beach in the state park.

Richard Gibbons is looking for volunteers to work on the Louisiana Winter Bird Atlas. You can get more information at www.LSU.edu/birdcenter or call (225) 578-6901.

Former President Karen Fay is planning a trip to Peru in November of 2007. A portion of the cost will benefit LOS. For more details, please call Karen at 225-784-0052 or email her at lamskite@aol.com.

We would like to thank the Grand Isle Community Development Team for providing a variety of snacks on Friday night and an excellent banquet on Saturday night. Great job ladies! (and gents!)

Thanks also to our dedicated volunteers, Joelle Finley, Joseph Vallee, Elouise Mullen and Judith O'Neale, who devoted extra time to meeting registration and sales.

Birding Report From Devin Bosler

As many members of LABIRD know, the LOS Fall Weekend was held in Grand Isle, LA for a second consecutive meeting as a replacement location due to hurricane associated problems in Cameron. Grand Isle, however, serves as a perfect back-up site to Cameron, providing overall exceptional birding and equal opportunities for rare/noteworthy birds. Such was the case this weekend, which produced not one, but a few casual vagrants and rare fall migrants. The weather played a major role in Saturday's sightings with strong NNW winds the previous night and well into the day. The winds preceded a very wet and strong cold front that moved through on Friday. On Saturday, the beaches were modestly reminiscent of Cape May, NJ as many raptors, mainly accipiters, fought to stay over land. Also of note, was a wave of warblers that flew in off the gulf (predominantly Palm Warbler) after being displaced by stiff north winds overnight. Saturday began with overcast skies and windy conditions, clearing by late morning with steady winds continuing throughout the day. These weather conditions proved conducive for birding, grounding land bird migrants at the southern-most extent of land. The birding

on Sunday was much less exciting with clear and calm conditions prevailing throughout the day. Best highlight on Saturday, 28 October, consisted of an adult female BLACK-THROATED GRAY WARBLER in the dunes adjacent to the campground in Grand Isle State Park, first discovered at approximately 835 AM and was visible at times through 930 AM. The warbler was loosely associated with a group of Palm Warbler, but observation was difficult and sporadic due to the bird feeding low in patches of Croton and various dune grasses amongst a dense stand of dead Wax Myrtle, etc. Other highlights at the state park included Franklin's Gull, SWAINSON'S HAWK, Chimney Swift, CAVE SWALLOW, and other very mentionable species. The birding was much better than anticipated and for the most part, the whole weekend was a great success. Another busy week of writing 3x5 cards and long forms lies ahead, but it's an important part of the sightings, and rather pleasing to me. Thanks to all members for a very enjoyable weekend in Grand Isle, LA! Good Birding, Devin Bosler LSU-Baton Rouge debybo1@lsu.edu [Devin is one of the very good young birders involved with the LSU Bird Club]

On Birdsong

By Bill Fontenot

There's one (or more) of us in every birding crowd: "Ear Birders." Birders who typically pay as much or more attention to bird sounds than to bird sights. Birders constantly tuned in to the sonic landscape, often at the expense of the visual landscape.

"Wow. Cerulean Warbler!" exclaims a birder.

Everyone trains binoculars up into the designated tree.

"Where?"

"There! Just up from the big fork. . ."

"Red-shouldered Hawk," mutters the ear birder.

"What?" chide the others.

"Huh? Oh. Nothing. Red-shouldered Hawk calling out there. Southwest....oh! There goes a Hairy Woodpecker. . ."

At which time the others dismissively jerk back to the Cerulean Warbler.

Looking back, it seems strange that I came so late into ear birding. I had my first piano lessons in 1961, picked up the guitar in 1966, played and sang in school musicals and choir in 1967. And so on. I'm a musicophile.

How is it then – after taking up birding in 1971 – that it wasn't until 1986 that I got into ear birding? Before then, I distinctly remember regarding the American Robin's winter verbage as wearisome. Ditto for that of the Cedar Waxwing. And I can barely remember even noticing the spring songs of the Wood Thrush and Prothonotary Warbler at all, before then.

"Then" occurred in March of 1986 when I hired on as a bird guide for the Lafayette Natural History Museum. I remember immediately charging into the bottomland hardwoods of Acadiana Park at the northeastern edge of the city in order to brush up on my birding skills (I had spent the previous 4 busy years in the oilfield), only to contract my first ever case of "warbler neck" from chasing Northern Parulas, Yellow-throated Warblers, and other early spring woodlanders through the high, dense, oak-gum canopy there. Oh my. No stunted, 12-15' coastal chenier canopy this was. This would never do.

Directly, I purchased both of Donald Borrer's "Eastern Birds" and "Western Birds" bird song cassette tapes from the museum gift shop. Ah yes. There were my Acadiana Park birds; and so much more. Once I realized that my ears were pre-trained pretty well to remember musical sounds, it was all downhill. Learning the first few local woodland bird songs was only a small challenge; and once I knew several of those, I then had solid reference points from which to proceed.

Over time, I began to meet other bird-listeners; first in local Lafayette birders like Dave Patton and George Broussard. Now I had ear-birder comrades to discuss bird voice subtleties with. Soon, bird voice ID proficiency had my personal day lists and Christmas bird count lists growing by 30% or more. Next, I got involved with the North American Breeding Bird Survey, which actually requires a good ear for birdsong. Lastly, I began meeting and birding with ear-birders from other places and backgrounds – most notably, I suppose, professional ornithologists such as Van Remsen, Donna Dittmann and Steve Cardiff.

Make a note ...

Upcoming Meetings 2007

Winter Meeting – La Place February 2-4, 2007

Spring Meeting – Lafayette April 23-28, 2007
in conjunction with ABA Convention, Lafayette, LA

DEADLINE

Submission deadline date for Spring LOS News
is March 1, 2007

Meanwhile, I had initiated a weekly “nature column” for the local Lafayette newspaper. It would not be long before my rambling elucidations on bird sounds found their way to print, doubtlessly to the dismay of many readers, particularly as time went on and my infatuation grew into obsession. Gradually, “tea-kettle tea-kettle tea-kettle tea-kettle,” and “see-saw see-see” and “sweet-sweet-sweet-sweet-SWEET!” and “thack!” and “peet-SUH!” and “car...car” and “prrrrrrrt!” began to displace more and more ordinary words like “bird” and “wingbar” and “nature.”

Recently, I’ve been feeling twinges of concern that readers might be growing weary of my fascination with bird voices. By the same token, after 20+ years of column installments, I’m still hanging on to the notion that this column should carry the most impressive news of natural events and phenomena during any given week, for it is both awkward and difficult to write of uninspiring things, particularly when one does not have unlimited time to write.

It’s interesting that just when I began to harbor such doubts that I received 2 books; one from Lafayette backyard naturalist Barbara McConnell, called Why Birds Sing, and the other from New Orleans naturalist Chris Hightower, entitled The Singing Life of Birds. Oh-oh. Gasoline for the fire.

In Why Birds Sing, philosophy professor/jazz musician/composer David Rothenberg puts forth an awesomely-researched, and truly delightful argument that birds sing not only to attract mates and defend territories (arguably, the only 2 reasons found to be acceptable by evolutionary biologists), but also for the more acerbic reasons: 1) Because they can, and 2) Because they like to.



Whoa. So how does a person go about proving such definitively fancy notions? First by actually experiencing a bird “jamming” with him and his clarinet at the National Aviary in Pittsburgh, PA. Next, by researching the dickens out of the subject. Not only does Rothenberg execute a near-unabridged round-up on all of the scientific literature, but he also provides an almost ethereal set of discussions on musical composers who were most directly inspired by bird song. Talk about fascinating!

It is doubtful that Rothenberg was ever totally convinced of the veracity of his premises. Nevertheless, he puts on a brave battle that forces even the most skeptical scientist in us to at least consider the possibilities. He capsulizes his quest with comments such as, “What fascinates me most about this question is how it illuminates the disparities among the many human ways of knowing. Information does not really touch experience. A lovely piece of music actually says nothing at all. Birds certainly sing to find love and to find home, but these reasonable purposes do not deny joy.”

And in the other corner is Don Kroodsma, lifelong professional ornithologist, and evolutionary biologist to the core. Though The Singing Life of Birds reeks of joy and wonder at the natural world, through it all, he barely questions the stronghold that natural selection has on his thinking. Ultimately, he cannot afford to, for as he himself concludes, evolutionary biology is what he does for a living.

Even still, Kroodsma’s musings can and do satisfy the most romantic recesses of our minds, as he writes about his subject with such love, and such passion. Consider that this guy has forsaken tens of thousands of the best sleeping hours over the past 40 years, simply to be with his subjects in order to catch their first songs of the day; to feel and to see what they are feeling and seeing. Compelling stuff; and every bit as entertaining and thought-provoking as Rothenberg’s work.

Kroodsma, who once appeared together with the upstart Rothenberg on a National Public Radio show, chided the latter about his notion of at least some bird song as art for art’s sake. “I don’t think so, David.

It's really like a simple business transaction. The chickadee is saying 'hey sweetie, here I am,' and the female is checking him out, and will either approve or disapprove."

"Nature," countered Rothenberg, "is not a business."

Moreover, from reading his book, it's fairly easy to discern that Kroodsma feels at least something of a dilemma. At times he seems to be fighting the urge to admit the possibility that creatures other than humans might possess things like emotions, aesthetic sensibilities, etc. Early in his book, in commenting on the songs of robins, he writes, "I like it that robins 'carol,' though it might not seem professional of me. To carol is to 'sing joyously' according to my dictionaries. I cannot attribute joy to the robin, but I do know that phrase is entirely accurate if I attribute the singing to the robin and the joy to those of us humans who relish its songs. . ."

And later, tip-toeing around anthropomorphism with all his might in writing about the singing of a male mockingbird he befriended, he states, "The pleasure need not register consciously, as it might perhaps in us, but nevertheless something akin to pleasure must there to make the male mocker sing as he does. In the same sense, I want to believe that he 'enjoys' singing, that doing what he does so well satisfies some inner need. . ."

Finally, both authors do a superb job of discussing how birds sing. The biology/physiology of birdsong borders on the miraculous. Both also offer amazing commentary on the incredible speed and pitch frequency of a typical (if there truly is anything approaching "typical") songbird trill. Kroodsma's description of the song of the Winter Wren is as humorous as it is death-defying. Rothenberg further yucks it up by asking readers to imagine a human who can "sing like a bird," postulating that such a scene would appear – if indeed it could appear – ridiculous.

I've only touched upon a few of many intriguing points made by these guys. Those interested in more depth are heartily advised to read the books.

Louisiana Ornithological Society

www.losbird.org

LOS New Members

September 2006

Suzanne Broussard, Gonzales
Wayne Curtis, New Orleans
Tina & Howard Mielke, New Orleans
Kevin Morgan, Baton Rouge
Warren Preble, Abita Springs
Jane Patterson, Baton Rouge
John Saer, New Orleans
Judith Steward, Ph.D, New Orleans
Louis Trahan, Lafayette

New Life Member – Tommy Walker, Kenner

2007 LOS Membership Renewal Time

Membership renewals are due **January 2007** for the coming year. **Please check your label.** If it says Dec 2005 - you owe for both 2006 and 2007 (this will be your last newsletter if you do not renew this month). If it says Dec 2006, your 2007 membership is due.

Thank you for renewing your LOS membership.

2007 LOS MEMBERSHIP FORM

Please join today!

*Dues are payable January 1st of each year;
Please check your mailing label for expiration date.*

Renewal New Member

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone:(_____)_____ E-mail: _____

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___ Regular: \$20.00/yr

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___ Junior (under 14): \$7.50/yr

___ Student: \$10.00/yr

___ Senior (over 65): \$15.00/yr

___ Senior Family: \$20.00/yr

___ Library \$15.00/yr*

___ Contributing: \$50.00/yr

___ Sustaining: \$100.00/yr

___ Life: \$300.00**

___ Family Life: \$500**

*Please add \$2.00
for foreign
subscriptions

**Installments may
be arranged for
Life memberships

Make check payable to: **LOS**

Send to: Judith L. O'Neale, LOS Treasurer
504 Whitebark Drive, Lafayette, LA 70508-6362



Judith O'Neale
Louisiana Ornithological Society
504 Whitebark
Lafayette, LA 70508

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Dues are payable in January of each year; Please check your mailing label.

- PRE-REGISTRATION FORM -
LOS 2007 WINTER MEETING – LAPLACE, LA

FEBRUARY 2 - 4 • Quality Inn - La Place

PLEASE SUBMIT BEFORE JANUARY 15!

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Number registering for meeting _____ at **\$15.00/person** = \$ _____

Number attending buffet _____ at **\$22.00/person** = \$ _____

Dues = \$ _____

Total = \$ _____

Complete form and send with check payable to LOS by January 15 to:

Judith O'Neale

504 Whitebark Drive

Lafayette, LA 70508-6362

Phone: 337-981-1011 email: jloneale@aol.com