2008 LOS SPRING MEETING
Creole Community Center, Creole
Friday and Saturday, April 25-26, 2008
Here We Come Again!

It must be spring in Louisiana and it must be migration time, because LOS is heading to Cameron. Will there be a fall out? Join us and find out!

Friday Evening, April 25
6:00 p.m. Registration - will be at the Creole Community Center, Creole. Snacks will be provided.
7:00 p.m. Meeting and Evening Program
“Seven Louisiana Ladies Boating Down the Amazon River in Brazil with Cameras and Binoculars.” Joelle Finley will share the adventures and misadventures of the seven Louisiana ladies as they explore the fauna, flora and indigenous peoples of the great Amazon Basin.

Saturday, April 26
8:00 a.m. SE Board Member Ed Wallace will lead a field trip for those not familiar with the Cameron birding areas. Meet in the parking lot of the Cameron Motel.
6:00 p.m. Registration in the Creole Community Center in Creole
6:30 p.m. Brisket, Rice Dressing, Baked Beans, Green Salad, Dessert and a drink will be provided by David Trahan for $10.00.
7:30 p.m. Meeting and Evening Program
“Something to be Proud of: Landscape-scale Sites, Global Concentrations of Birds and Bird Conservation in Louisiana” will be presented by Melanie Driscoll, coordinator of the Louisiana IBA Program of the National Audubon Society. The Important Bird Areas program is an international site-based program built on the premise that loss and fragmentation of suitable habitat are two of the major links to declines of birds. Sites that are important to populations of birds are identified, prioritized and then monitored and worked on to help conserve birds within them. However, in Louisiana, large landscapes still exist with fairly low levels of fragmentation-causing the unusual but happy problem of too much habitat for a site-based program. Melanie will discuss how site identification in Louisiana was dealt with and show details of the sites that have been identified and nominated. She will also highlight conservation actions that have begun to occur on IBAs and detail some of the next steps in Audubon’s bird conservation efforts.

Accommodations:
Cameron: Cameron Motel 337-775-5442, Sites available for RV campers.
Hackberry: Babe’s Motel and Grill aka “La Maison d’Acaadiens” 337-762-4167, RV hookups available.
Hackberry: Spicer’s Marina 337-762-3170 or 337-762-4418, Roxanne - Owner.
Sulphur and Lake Charles have most of the major chains of motels such as Days Inn, Super 8, Hampton Inn, LaQuinta Inn & Suites, Econo Lodge, and Holiday Inn Express.

Directions to Creole Community Center:
The Creole Community Center/Fire Station is approximately 15-20 minutes from the Cameron Motel. It is ¼ mile east of the only traffic light in Creole (Parish Road 1143). It is on the right hand side of the road with a big fenced parking lot.

Submitted by Joelle Finley, Secretary
The winter meeting in Alexandria, LA was held January 25-27, 2008 at the Clarion Hotel.

Friday evening started out with a social and snacks followed by two very interesting talks from LSU graduate students from Baton Rouge. Laura Palasz talked about the Henslow’s Sparrow study she has been doing in the state the last few years, and Jonathon Valente talked about his first year King Rail study in northeastern Louisiana. During their studies, Jonathon located only two King Rails (and these were found outside the study period), whereas, Laura located many Henslow’s Sparrows throughout the state.

Saturday morning started out very cold, but that did not deter vigorous birders from trekking out to see the Sandhill Cranes and the Red-cockaded Woodpeckers. One adventurous group headed to Shreveport to see the first-ever reported Gray Flycatcher and found it right where it had been reported. Saturday afternoon remained cold as birders continued seeking out the Sandhill Cranes and ventured out to the NSU Aquaculture center for more exploring. The Saturday evening banquet at Cajun Landing was delicious and was followed by our energetic speaker, Steve Shunk, who gave a great presentation on woodpeckers. Steve is nearing completion of the Peterson Reference Guide to Woodpeckers of North America. Steve’s talk was assisted by one of our local experts, Jim Johnson, who gave a visual presentation of how wood inserts are placed in trees to provide homes for the Red-cockaded Woodpecker.

Sunday morning was still met with cold, but the birders held strong for their last excursions for the weekend to the Catahoula National Wildlife Refuge and to Kincaid Lake in Kisatchie National Forest. A separate group sought out the Henslow’s Sparrow to no avail but did see the Vermilion Flycatcher south of Alexandria.

Many thanks to everyone who contributed to the success of another LOS meeting.

**12,000 Mile, Fossil-Fuel-Free Birding Big Year**

16 year old Malkolm Boothroyd along with his parents, Wendy and Ken, set out on their bicycles from Whitehorse, British Columbia in June, 2007, for a Bird Year adventure. In early January, the biking, birding family passed through New Orleans on their way to Florida. They will pedal back through Louisiana on April 10-18, hoping to arrive in High Island, Texas, for a spring-migration fallout. Malkolm came up with the idea for this epic journey after reading Kenn Kaufmann’s Kingbird Highway. Malkolm’s goal is to see over 500 species. The current Big Year record is 745, but this was achieved with the aid of airplanes, boats, cars and lots of money. Remember Malkolm and his family are traveling on bicycles! As of February 19 and approaching the Everglades, Malkolm’s list stands at 452 bird species.

Louisiana brought the Boothroyd family the coldest temperatures of their journey to date along with some of the worse roads. In New Orleans, they were treated to a pot-luck dinner sponsored by the Society for Conservation Biologists in a flooded out community center just off of Banks St. The building had no heat and was open to the elements; the temperature inside must have been in the low 50s, but their PowerPoint presentation of their Bird Year was exhilarating. I asked Wendy, who is a physician, how she was doing in the cold and she confided that she was wearing her long underwear! Ken, dressed in his fleece, is a renowned photographer and lecturer. He has championed the preservation of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge for many years. Not only is Malkolm an accomplished birder (his favorite bird is the Bluethroat), but his bird photography and drawings are amazing.

Their ride east out of New Orleans was blocked by a broken Chef Mentuer Pass bridge on Hwy. 90 and they had to take a 100 mile detour around the western end of Lake Pontchartrain, sleeping one night in a marsh. Wendy writes that “It was surprisingly noisy, with frogs and rails making a racket all night long.” On the North Shore they were rewarded with several new birds for the list including Brown-headed Nuthatch, Red-headed Woodpecker and Red-cockaded Woodpecker.

Check out their wonderful website which includes many of Malkolm’s photographs and drawings at www.birdyear.com. The website will give you opportunities to make donations to bird conservation projects as well as entering Malkolm’s Bird Day Challenge.

*Thanks to Joelle Finley for submitting this article.*

Malkolm Boothroyd’s photograph of a Bluethroat.
JLO EDITORIAL BOARD UPDATE

The editorial board for the JLO is now complete. The board is now comprised of Jim Ingold, David Muth, Dan Purrington, Van Remsen, John Sevenair, and Phil Stouffer. A big thanks to you all, as well as to Jennifer, Coulson who has agreed to become the new editor.

Jim Ingold will oversee one more issue of the JLO before Jennifer takes over as editor.

Make a note …

LOS Membership Renewal Time

Membership renewals are due January 2008 for the coming year. Please check your label. If it says Dec 2006 - you owe for both 2007 and 2008 (this will be your last newsletter if you do not renew this month). If it says Dec 2007, your 2008 membership is due.

Thank you for renewing your LOS membership.

LOS NEW MEMBERS, March 2008

Carolyn Bergeron
101 Mark Twain Dr. Apt. 11
River Ridge LA 70123
504-737-2843
Cary4384@cs.com

John K. Dillon
2424 Drucilla, #94
Baton Rouge LA 70809
225-928-5468
johnkdillon@hotmail.com

LOS Membership Renewal Time

Membership renewals are due January 2008 for the coming year. Please check your label. If it says Dec 2006 - you owe for both 2007 and 2008 (this will be your last newsletter if you do not renew this month). If it says Dec 2007, your 2008 membership is due.

Thank you for renewing your LOS membership.

LOS Membership Renewal Time

Membership renewals are due January 2008 for the coming year. Please check your label. If it says Dec 2006 - you owe for both 2007 and 2008 (this will be your last newsletter if you do not renew this month). If it says Dec 2007, your 2008 membership is due.

Thank you for renewing your LOS membership.

Make a note …

LOS Membership Renewal Time

Membership renewals are due January 2008 for the coming year. Please check your label. If it says Dec 2006 - you owe for both 2007 and 2008 (this will be your last newsletter if you do not renew this month). If it says Dec 2007, your 2008 membership is due.

Thank you for renewing your LOS membership.

Make a note …

LOS Membership Renewal Time

Membership renewals are due January 2008 for the coming year. Please check your label. If it says Dec 2006 - you owe for both 2007 and 2008 (this will be your last newsletter if you do not renew this month). If it says Dec 2007, your 2008 membership is due.

Thank you for renewing your LOS membership.

Make a note …

LOS Membership Renewal Time

Membership renewals are due January 2008 for the coming year. Please check your label. If it says Dec 2006 - you owe for both 2007 and 2008 (this will be your last newsletter if you do not renew this month). If it says Dec 2007, your 2008 membership is due.

Thank you for renewing your LOS membership.

Make a note …

LOS Membership Renewal Time

Membership renewals are due January 2008 for the coming year. Please check your label. If it says Dec 2006 - you owe for both 2007 and 2008 (this will be your last newsletter if you do not renew this month). If it says Dec 2007, your 2008 membership is due.

Thank you for renewing your LOS membership.

Make a note …

LOS Membership Renewal Time

Membership renewals are due January 2008 for the coming year. Please check your label. If it says Dec 2006 - you owe for both 2007 and 2008 (this will be your last newsletter if you do not renew this month). If it says Dec 2007, your 2008 membership is due.

Thank you for renewing your LOS membership.

Make a note …

LOS Membership Renewal Time

Membership renewals are due January 2008 for the coming year. Please check your label. If it says Dec 2006 - you owe for both 2007 and 2008 (this will be your last newsletter if you do not renew this month). If it says Dec 2007, your 2008 membership is due.

Thank you for renewing your LOS membership.

Make a note …

LOS Membership Renewal Time

Membership renewals are due January 2008 for the coming year. Please check your label. If it says Dec 2006 - you owe for both 2007 and 2008 (this will be your last newsletter if you do not renew this month). If it says Dec 2007, your 2008 membership is due.

Thank you for renewing your LOS membership.

Make a note …

LOS Membership Renewal Time

Membership renewals are due January 2008 for the coming year. Please check your label. If it says Dec 2006 - you owe for both 2007 and 2008 (this will be your last newsletter if you do not renew this month). If it says Dec 2007, your 2008 membership is due.

Thank you for renewing your LOS membership.

Make a note …

LOS Membership Renewal Time

Membership renewals are due January 2008 for the coming year. Please check your label. If it says Dec 2006 - you owe for both 2007 and 2008 (this will be your last newsletter if you do not renew this month). If it says Dec 2007, your 2008 membership is due.

Thank you for renewing your LOS membership.

Make a note …

LOS Membership Renewal Time

Membership renewals are due January 2008 for the coming year. Please check your label. If it says Dec 2006 - you owe for both 2007 and 2008 (this will be your last newsletter if you do not renew this month). If it says Dec 2007, your 2008 membership is due.

Thank you for renewing your LOS membership.

Make a note …

LOS Membership Renewal Time

Membership renewals are due January 2008 for the coming year. Please check your label. If it says Dec 2006 - you owe for both 2007 and 2008 (this will be your last newsletter if you do not renew this month). If it says Dec 2007, your 2008 membership is due.

Thank you for renewing your LOS membership.

Make a note …

LOS Membership Renewal Time

Membership renewals are due January 2008 for the coming year. Please check your label. If it says Dec 2006 - you owe for both 2007 and 2008 (this will be your last newsletter if you do not renew this month). If it says Dec 2007, your 2008 membership is due.

Thank you for renewing your LOS membership.

Make a note …

LOS Membership Renewal Time

Membership renewals are due January 2008 for the coming year. Please check your label. If it says Dec 2006 - you owe for both 2007 and 2008 (this will be your last newsletter if you do not renew this month). If it says Dec 2007, your 2008 membership is due.

Thank you for renewing your LOS membership.

Make a note …

LOS Membership Renewal Time

Membership renewals are due January 2008 for the coming year. Please check your label. If it says Dec 2006 - you owe for both 2007 and 2008 (this will be your last newsletter if you do not renew this month). If it says Dec 2007, your 2008 membership is due.

Thank you for renewing your LOS membership.

Make a note …

LOS Membership Renewal Time

Membership renewals are due January 2008 for the coming year. Please check your label. If it says Dec 2006 - you owe for both 2007 and 2008 (this will be your last newsletter if you do not renew this month). If it says Dec 2007, your 2008 membership is due.

Thank you for renewing your LOS membership.

Make a note …

LOS Membership Renewal Time

Membership renewals are due January 2008 for the coming year. Please check your label. If it says Dec 2006 - you owe for both 2007 and 2008 (this will be your last newsletter if you do not renew this month). If it says Dec 2007, your 2008 membership is due.

Thank you for renewing your LOS membership.

Make a note …

LOS Membership Renewal Time

Membership renewals are due January 2008 for the coming year. Please check your label. If it says Dec 2006 - you owe for both 2007 and 2008 (this will be your last newsletter if you do not renew this month). If it says Dec 2007, your 2008 membership is due.

Thank you for renewing your LOS membership.

Make a note …

LOS Membership Renewal Time

Membership renewals are due January 2008 for the coming year. Please check your label. If it says Dec 2006 - you owe for both 2007 and 2008 (this will be your last newsletter if you do not renew this month). If it says Dec 2007, your 2008 membership is due.

Thank you for renewing your LOS membership.

Make a note …

LOS Membership Renewal Time

Membership renewals are due January 2008 for the coming year. Please check your label. If it says Dec 2006 - you owe for both 2007 and 2008 (this will be your last newsletter if you do not renew this month). If it says Dec 2007, your 2008 membership is due.

Thank you for renewing your LOS membership.

Make a note …

LOS Membership Renewal Time

Membership renewals are due January 2008 for the coming year. Please check your label. If it says Dec 2006 - you owe for both 2007 and 2008 (this will be your last newsletter if you do not renew this month). If it says Dec 2007, your 2008 membership is due.

Thank you for renewing your LOS membership.

Make a note …

LOS Membership Renewal Time

Membership renewals are due January 2008 for the coming year. Please check your label. If it says Dec 2006 - you owe for both 2007 and 2008 (this will be your last newsletter if you do not renew this month). If it says Dec 2007, your 2008 membership is due.

Thank you for renewing your LOS membership.

Make a note …

LOS Membership Renewal Time

Membership renewals are due January 2008 for the coming year. Please check your label. If it says Dec 2006 - you owe for both 2007 and 2008 (this will be your last newsletter if you do not renew this month). If it says Dec 2007, your 2008 membership is due.

Thank you for renewing your LOS membership.
OBSERVATIONS OF PREDACEOUS WATERBIRD FEEDING BEHAVIOR
by Jay V. Huner

I regularly see Great Blue Herons in Cotile Lake next to our home in central Louisiana. I often see these impressive blue-gray birds well away from shore, sometimes in mid-lake where it is 40 feet deep or more, perched on the tops of tree trunks broken off at the water line. I thought they were perhaps feeding but did not pay much attention. I never actually saw them doing anything. Recently, I happened to spot a Great Blue Heron plunge from a stump in pretty deep water. It scrambled back on its perch and I saw a half pound bluegill sunfish “spearred” squarely on the heron’s bill. I’ve seen Anhingas, often called snake birds or water turkeys, spearing prey but never a Great Blue Heron. As I watched, the bird tried to get the fish off its beak, and I wondered if it would be able to flip it up and grab it with its open beak. After a bit of effort, the bird flew 100 yards or so to the shore where it was able to dislodge its catch.

I’ve worked with waterbirds for three and a half decades. In this paper, I thought I’d share some observations about the feeding behavior of predaceous birds like pelicans, anhinga, cormorants, and wading birds. I have seen most of the “bizarre” behaviors previously recorded by other observers, but the spear-fishing Great Blue Heron was new to me!

Basic Predaceous Waterbird Feeding Behavior

Predaceous waterbirds fall into two feeding behavior categories: hunters or probers. Hunters see their prey and grab them or spear them with their bills. Probers probe for their prey in suitable habitat and grab them when they touch them with their bills. Both hunters and probers may feed as individuals or in groups ranging from a few birds to large flocks. Sometimes hunters and probers feed together with the hunters benefiting from prey disturbed by the probers. In most cases, hunters and probers catch their prey while wading or swimming but, sometimes, hunters can secure their prey “on the wing”. I will discuss wading birds, egrets, herons, ibises, spoonbills, and storks, and swimming birds, anhingas, pelicans, and cormorants, separately.

Wading Birds

Egrets and herons are hunters. Ibises, spoonbills, and storks are probers.

Egrets and herons usually eat prey that is proportional to their sizes with Great Blue Herons, Great Egrets, and night-herons taking the largest prey including fish, frogs, snakes, and adult crawfish. Snowy Egrets and Little Blue, Tricolored, and Green Herons concentrate on smaller prey. However, there are exceptions. One study of Great Blue Heron feeding habits found some feeding on small mosquitofish. They caught several hundred at a time, each one was caught individually.

In addition, it is not unusual to find on the ground large adult crawfish bodies with their shells neatly opened from head to tail and all meat and internal organs removed; this is the way that Snowy Egrets and other smaller wading birds handle this favored prey.

Although Cattle Egrets are aptly named because they spend most of their time around cattle or farm machinery in “dry” fields feeding on insects, spiders, mice, etc, but. they will feed in recently flooded areas like rice fields and crawfish ponds and areas around drainage streams after heavy rain. In these cases they feed on both their usual prey and aquatic prey found in the recently disturbed sites. Interestingly, Little Blue Herons, normally considered to be “aquatic” birds, will join Cattle Egrets feeding in “dry” fields. In fact, there seems to be a significant niche overlap with these two species.

Most egrets and herons remain stationary or move along slowly with long pauses to catch their prey by grabbing them with their long bills. Sometimes, smaller waders like Snowy Egrets and Little Blue and Tricolored Herons will chase prey, especially small fish, across shallow water areas. They may also spread and extend one wing or both wings to create a partial or full canopy and catch prey that they can either see better in the shade or are attracted by the shaded area. However, this behavior is more often associated with the Reddish Egret, a somewhat rare species in Louisiana and is associated with coastal waters. Sometimes, these birds will stir the water with one foot to encourage the prey to move. Green Herons have been reported to drop small seeds, bits of leaves, and even bread crumbs to attract small fish into “range” of their sharp bills.

Wading bird biologist refer to a practice called “gleaning” where the birds “glean” prey, primarily insects and spiders from vegetation, most often around water’s edge. I was especially impressed to see Little Blue Herons gleaning dragonflies in early morning around the edges of ponds in the summer. When I looked closely at the behavior, I noticed that the dragonflies were covered with dew. So, their wings were wet and the normally highly-mobile dragonflies could not fly. Just as soon as the sun came up and dried the dragonflies’ wings, they flew off and the herons started to feed on aquatic prey that included aquatic dragonfly nymphs.

Plunging on prey like Brown Pelicans and various gulls do is not normally associated with herons. However, on several occasions I have seen, Green Herons “diving” from perches near the water to catch small fish. I once saw a Great Blue Heron flying about 20 feet above a catfish pond, fold its wings, and dive head first in the water to catch a catfish! The bird never hesitated in making the very uncharacteristic dive.

The term “wading bird” comes from the obvious fact that all of these birds have long legs and wade to catch their prey. However, the birds cannot wade in water deeper than their legs. The egrets and herons overcome this problem in deeper water in two ways: 1) active or passive hovering and 2) swimming. I have frequently seen Great or Snowy Egrets flying slowly just over the surface of the water, legs extended below them in a very awkward manner, and grabbing prey near the surface. This often happens when there are low oxygen conditions and fish, shrimp, and/or crawfish have come to the surface to find oxygen. The birds, because of their long legs, wings, and necks, barely stay airborne and are in what pilots call a “near stall”. I have observed continued on page 5
Continued from page 4

OBSERVATIONS OF PREDACEOUS WATERBIRD FEEDING BEHAVIOR

this form of feeding a number of times and was a bit shocked to have my truthfulness criticized by another biologist who had written a Master’s thesis about wading bird feeding habits!

Here is an example of passive hovering. I have observed Great Egrets hovering in high winds just above Double-crested Cormorants feeding on small catfish in a catfish pond. The egrets were “stealing” fingerling catfish from the cormorants before they could swallow them. This form of feeding by stealing prey from another bird is called “kleptoparasitism”.

Most people don’t realize that all wading birds can swim. Of course, they cannot swim as efficiently as ducks, cormorants, etc., but they can land in very deep water and paddle about to secure prey. I first saw this behavior when I found Great Egrets paddling around in a catfish fingerling pond and catching fish feeding on fish feed pellets. I’ve seen both long and short-legged waders paddling about in crawfish ponds during periods of low oxygen when the prey species were seeking oxygen at the surface. I also saw a Great Egret land next to a shrimp boat and “catch” and eat unwanted fish, shrimp, crabs, etc that had been separated from the trawl and thrown over the side where it floated for a time. The egret landed in 20 feet of water and was swimming very well despite its long legs and lack of webbed feet.

All of the “hunting” wading birds will sometimes take advantage of other feeding birds to catch prey disturbed by them. Probers like ibises, spoonbills, and storks often feed in large numbers and they frighten prey that try to escape these “probers”.

Most “hunters” assemble on the edges of these birds and capture the prey flushed by the probers. American White Pelicans and Double-crested and Neotropic Cormorants will assemble in large feeding flocks to herd prey, especially minnows and shad, toward shore where they can be easily caught at the shore. As soon as a large flock of these birds starts moving towards shore, the wading birds begin to assemble along the shore to share the easily caught fish flopping in the shallows and shore.

The bills of ibis are curved down. Ibis probe for food items and snap them up when they touch them with the tips of their bills. Spoonbills have round, spoon-shaped bills and probe for prey in a similar way. Wood Storks have large, heavy bills. But, they, too probe for food items. Wood Storks, like pelicans, will feed actively at night. All three groups of “probers” can feed individually or in flocks of a few birds to hundreds of birds. They can see and pick up food items and they do so when they are fed in captivity.

Night-herons are primarily active at night and rest during the day. Study of the two species shows how they can co-exist without major disputes. The Black-crowned Night-Heron feeds primarily on fish while the Yellow-crowned Night-Heron feeds mostly on crustaceans: crawfish in freshwater and crabs and shrimps in brackish and salt waters. You probably won’t notice these birds unless you visit suitable habitat at night. These and other wading birds do leave evidence of their visits in the form of indigestible materials like shell parts, bones, and scales in the form of compressed packets that they regurgitate. These are called boli (singular bolus). That’s why you only see gray-white “plops” when various wading birds relieve themselves, especially when frightened and flying away. In flocking birds like ibises, it is not unusual to find mounds of reddish-brown boli filled with crawfish parts.

Swimming Birds

Swimming birds can actively hunt their prey or probe for their prey. The Brown Pelican and American White Pelican although fairly closely related with characteristic pelican bills have different feeding behavior. Brown Pelican plunges while flying above the water surface to catch its prey; The American White Pelican swims along the surface and generally probes for prey although it can clearly see and catch prey by grabbing for it. Large flocks of American White Pelicans often form a feeding line and drive prey, as mentioned above, toward a shore line. Prey is frightened to the shallow waters where the pelicans, and their dinner guests, enjoy good meals. They can use their large bills as scoops! A real problem for fish farmers is the fact that American White Pelicans will feed actively at night, especially if someone is driving them away from good feeding waters during the day. They don’t have to see their prey to catch them and can literally clean out a pond in several nights. They can eat fish over a pound and often eat 4-5 pounds a day.

The most common cormorant in North America is the Double-crested Cormorant whose numbers have mushroomed over the past three decades. These are very efficient hunters of aquatic prey. In fact, the Croatian name for “cormorant” translates to “black death” [for fish]. Folks around the northern Gulf of Mexico are beginning to see more and more “little” cormorants. These are Neotropic Cormorants (once called Olivaceous Cormorants) that are extending their original range northward, presumably due to warming climates. If you see the two birds together, you can see that the Double-crested Cormorant is much larger and has a much shorter tail. Both species actively hunt prey, mostly fish, underwater. As mentioned previously, they will form large moving flocks to drive prey into shallow waters where they can easily catch them. Interestingly, both species of cormorants have come to feed heavily on crawfish in Louisiana’s crawfish ponds. Many cormorant “experts” still do not believe that crawfish can be an important component of the cormorants’ diet.

Anhingas are often called “snake birds” or “water turkeys”. An Anhingas body sinks quickly once it enters the water and about all one can see is a long, slender neck and small head with a very long, sharp bill – hence the name “snake bird”. Anhingas have large, impressive round tails with contrasting black, brown, and white rings which they display – hence the name “water turkey”. Now, just to confuse you a bit more, cormorants really do not have impressive tails but are often called “water turkeys”, too. In any event, Anhingas catch most of their prey by spearing it. It is certainly impressive to see a 6-10 inch bass or sunfish skewered on an Anhinga’s bill.

Cattle Egret
Photo by Michael Musemeche

continued on page 6
OBSERVATIONS OF PREDACEOUS WATERBIRD FEEDING BEHAVIOR

Continued from page 5

Conclusions

Predaceous waterbirds are large, conspicuous birds and are often very attractive. Many species will assemble in large flocks to feed, to roost, and to nest. This behavior creates quite a spectacle and adds much to the enjoyment of a day in the field. Impoundments managed for crawfish production are among the best places to observe feeding behavior of many species, especially when the ponds are being drained in the spring or summer. The waterbird-crawfish impoundments at South Farm located in the Sherburne complex just north of I-10 on the east side of the Atchafalaya Basin are drained every year during the month of July. It is one of the best publicly accessible places to view huge flocks of wading birds feeding in the deep South.

SUGGESTED READING


by Jay V. Huner
Louisiana Ecrevisse
428 Hickory Hill Drive
Boyce, LA 71409
318 793-5529
piku@classicnet.net

Louisiana’s Second Record of Fork-tailed Flycatcher
By Phillip Wallace and David Muth

Late on the afternoon of February 17, 2008, after a day of conducting surveys in Plaquemines Parish for the Louisiana Winter Bird Atlas, David Muth and Phillip Wallace were headed north along Louisiana Highway 23, hoping to get home for Sunday dinners. They made a u-turn and pulled over to investigate a Western Kingbird seen by Wallace to fly up to the power lines just downriver from the Conoco-Phillips refinery at Alliance. While checking out three kingbirds in the pecan trees, Wallace spotted a Fork-tailed Flycatcher. Incredulous, Muth, who could not see the tree from the driver’s side, jumped out and immediately spotted the silhouetted bird. Still certain that Wallace must be hallucinating, he shifted position to get better light. He ran back to the car, and both grabbed their cameras to begin the process of documenting Louisiana’s second record of Fork-tailed Flycatcher.

Unlike the one-day-wonder first record, found by Gary Broussard near Lelieu in Vermilion Parish on November 15, 1996, and seen on the same day by Paul Conover, this individual turned out to be quite cooperative. Dan Purrington, after breaking the world land speed record, joined Muth and Wallace and saw the prize two minutes before the Fork-tailed, a Scissor-tailed, and 15 Western Kingbirds went to roost in an adjacent citrus grove at 5:48 p.m. The next morning Louisiana birders began trekking down to Plaquemines Parish to see the bird. Fortunately, it was faithful to the area and had a regular routine of hanging out with the kingbirds and Scissor-tailed Flycatcher in the late afternoon before going to roost near the same location. This spectacular tropical species was seen subsequently by many Louisiana birders as well as birders from out of state, with the last reported sighting being February 29.

The bird was thoroughly documented with many photographs and videos. The excellent flight shot by Bill Bergen, which accompanies this article, shows that the bird has unnotched primaries, indicating that it is either a female or immature male, as communicated to the authors by Steve Cardiff. That means that the best field mark for determining the subspecies photographically, namely, the extent of notching in the outer primaries of adult males, is out the window. Although final determination of subspecies may be impossible, the date and its plumage features, including a pale mantle color and prominent white collar (which may not be diagnostic) point toward monachus, which is the subspecies ranging from southern Mexico to north-central Brazil. Most North American Fork-tailed which can be pinned down to subspecies are from the highly migratory nominate race from southern South America; however, some of

continued on page 7
Gray Flycatcher (Empidonax wrightii) Banded in Bossier Parish: A First State Record

By Jim Ingold

On Thursday 24 January 2008, Terry Davis and Jeff Trahan were birding the Benton quad for the Louisiana Winter Bird Atlas on Deen Point Road. They stopped at a cattle lot to bird (Figure 1) and they spotted a Gray Flycatcher (Empidonax wrightii) which it turns out was the first record of the species for the state. Details of the original observation can be found on the Louisiana Rare Bird Committee site on the LOS webpage at: http://www.losbird.org/lbrc/grfldavisa.htm.

On Sunday 10 February, I tried to capture the bird for banding with the help of Terry, Jeff, and Rosemary Seidler. We put up three mist nets in areas where we had seen the bird travel during past observations. We netted a Northern Mockingbird, lots of White-crowned Sparrows, a couple of Northern Cardinals, and a Carolina Chickadee all of which were released unbanded. The flycatcher just missed two different nets, but after waiting a long time and having the bird disappear, we gave up for the day.

Two weeks later on Sunday 24 February Jeff, Terry and I tried one more time, this time putting the 10’ net poles on five foot extensions to make them higher. The bird was heard when we first arrived but did its disappearing act again while we set up the nets. We waited and banded the area. After removing a female Northern Cardinal from one of the nets, a Bewick’s Wren was caught in the same net. Since this species is not common, I decided to band the wren and took it took my truck for processing. After we were done with the wren, Terry and I were walking back towards the net and I said to Terry, “Is that a bird in the net?” This was the same net that caught the wren as well as the net site where we had almost caught the flycatcher two weeks earlier. Terry ran to the net and low and behold it was the Gray Flycatcher!

I removed the bird from the net, placed it in a holding device, a white athletic sock, and took it to the truck for processing. Empidonax flycatchers can be just as hard to identify in the hand as in the field and there are complex measurements to take and other observations that need to be made. Luckily this species has one character that the others don’t and that is a white edge to its outermost tail feather (Figure 2). It also helped that this bird was already identified by expert birders based on behavior (tail pumping and whit call) and plumage. The bird was banded with a size zero band (2440-11382) and its wing chord was taken (70 mm; this measurement ranges in this species from 63 – 76 mm; Pyle 1997) and it was weighed (11.66 g; mean mass is12.5 g and ranges 11.3–14.5 g; Dunning 1993); so this bird was at the low end of weight for the species. Sex can not be determined by plumage so the sex is unknown but plumage characteristics told me that the bird was a “second year” bird which means it hatched out in the summer of 2007.

As of 8 March, the bird was still present and doing fine. I would like to state that the banding of this bird was only possible because of the dogged determination and birding skills of Terry Davis. He reads about birds all the time and studies the field guides so that when he spots a new bird he will be able to identify it. This is the second species that Terry has found and added to the state avifauna, the first being the Ringed Kingfisher found by Terry and John McBride in Shreveport in November of 1999.


Figure Legends

Figure 1 This is the site where the flycatcher spends its time. Photo by Jim Ingold.
Figure 2 Tail of the Gray Flycatcher; note the white outer edge of the outer most tail feather. Photo by Jeff Trahan.
Figure 3 Head shot of the Gray Flycatcher. Photo by Jeff Trahan.
‐ PRE-REGISTRATION FORM ‐

LOS 2008 SPRING MEETING – CAMERON/CREOLE, LA
APRIL 25-26 • CREOLE COMMUNITY CENTER, CREOLE
PLEASE SUBMIT BEFORE APRIL 21, 2008

Name(s): __________________________________________________________

Address: _____________________________________________________________________

City, State, Zip: _____________________________________________________________________

Phone: __________________________________________________________________________

Email: __________________________________________________________________________

Number registering for meeting ______ at $10.00/person = $ ____________

Number for banquet ______ at $10.00/person = $ ____________

2008 Membership Dues = $ ____________

Total = $ ____________

Complete form and send with check payable to LOS by April 21, 2008 to:
Judith O’Neale, 504 Whitebark Drive, Lafayette, LA 70508-6362
337-981-1011 or JLOneale@aol.com