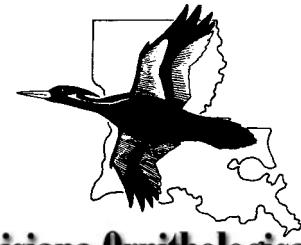


LOS NEWS



www.losbird.org

NEWSLETTER OF THE

Louisiana Ornithological Society

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**Submission Deadline Date for
Winter LOS News is
December 1, 2008**

Journal of Louisiana Ornithology
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Los-jlo@pilot.lsus.edu

2008 LOS FALL MEETING

Friday and Saturday, October 24-25

Lafayette

Hurricanes Gustav and Ike can blow us around but they can't stop us!

Thanks to the heroic work of Judith O'Neale, the fall LOS meeting will be held at the USGS National Wetlands Research Center (NWRC) in Lafayette. Lafayette recently impressed the birding world when they hosted an American Birding Association national meeting in the spring of 2007 and they will certainly impress us once again. Birding opportunities abound and the food and hospitality are legendary.

Come join us for a good time on the Bayou. There will be no dinner Saturday night and lodging will be "on your own."

Friday Evening, October 24

6 p.m. - 7 p.m. Registration at the NWRC
Light snacks will be provided.

7 p.m. - 8 p.m. Meeting and Evening Program

Jane Patterson will present "*Bird Education: Doing My Part.*" Jane is especially interested in getting kids into birding and connecting with the natural world. She will share with us what she has done to achieve that goal. She is the Baton Rouge Audubon Society Education Chair. Originally from Colorado, Jane moved to Louisiana from Michigan and we are very lucky to have her here. She describes herself as a "computer geek" in her day job and started birding in 2005 as an offshoot of gardening.

Saturday, October 25

7:00 a.m. Field Trips Meet in the parking lot of the NWRC. Dave Patton will have several trip leaders available. Maps will be available Friday night for those who want to bird on their own.

6:30 p.m. - 7 p.m. Registration. *Please note that there will be no dinner.*

7:00 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. Meeting and Evening Program

Following the election of officers for 2008-09, our program will be presented by **Dwight Cooley**.

Dwight has worked for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for the past 28 years in Florida, Mississippi, North Carolina, and Alabama. Since 2001, Dwight has served as Project Leader of the Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge Complex, a group of seven national wildlife refuges spread over 12,500 square miles of north Alabama. His professional interests revolve around migratory bird management, habitat management and restoration, and endangered species management. He holds a B.S. in Biology from Athens State University and a M.S. in Zoology and Wildlife from Mississippi State University. In his spare time he enjoys reading, fishing, and birding and has traveled extensively in the U.S., Canada, Mexico, and Central America in search of birds.

The title of his presentation will be "*The National Wildlife Refuge System Birding Initiative - Why Refuges? Why Birds? Why Now?*"

Directions to the Wetlands Center 700 Cajundome Blvd.

Eastbound on Interstate 10 (From Lake Charles, LA):

Take the Ambassador Caffery Pkwy exit (exit 100) and turn right onto Ambassador Caffery Pkwy.
 Veer left onto Bertrand Dr.
 Turn left at Eraste Landry Rd.
 Turn right at Cajundome Blvd.
 NWRC is located on the left, 1/4 mile from the intersection.

Westbound on Interstate 10 (From Baton Rouge):

Take the University Ave. exit (exit 101) and turn left onto University Ave.
 Turn right at Congress St.
 Turn right at Cajundome Blvd.
 NWRC is located on the right, 1/4 mile from the intersection.

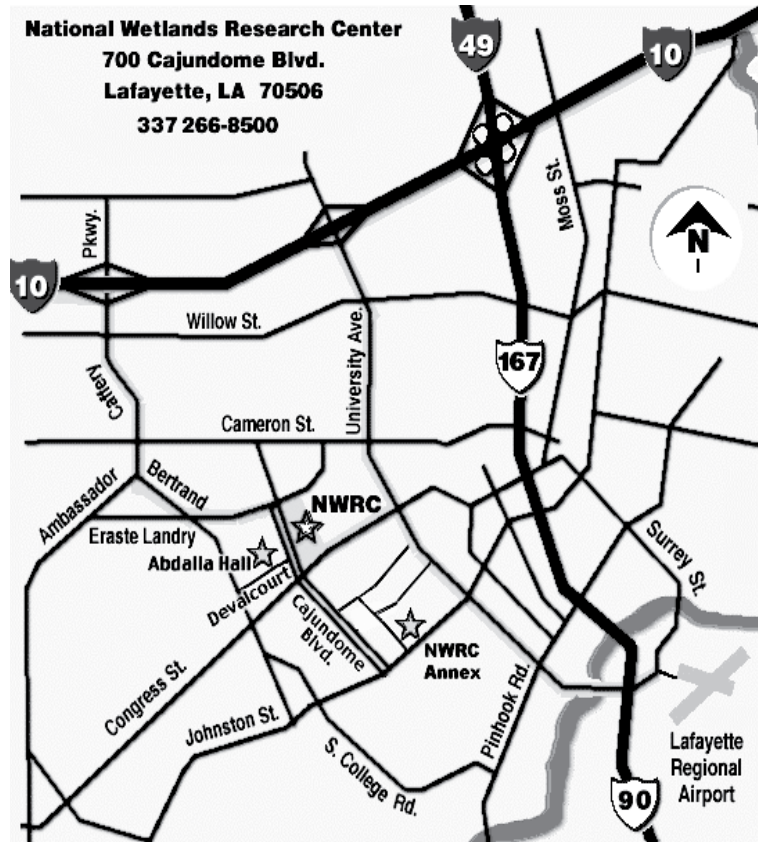
From the Lafayette Regional Airport:

Proceed from the parking lot to Airport Blvd.
 Turn left on Surrey St.
 After the first traffic light, Surrey St. becomes University Ave.
 Travel north on University Ave. to Congress St.
 Turn left on Congress St.
 Turn right at Cajundome Blvd.
 NWRC is located on the right, 1/4 mile from the intersection.

Our main hotel will be Hilton Garden Inn (1-877-792-9444) which is just around the corner from the wetlands center. Ask for LOS room price \$98 with a LOS hospitality room available. This is a very new hotel w/microwave, fridge and coffee makers.

Here are a few other options:

- Sleep Inn 2140 W. Willow 337-264-0408
- Travelodge Lafayette Center, 1101 Pinhook Road 337-234-7402
- Ramada Inn 120 E Kaliste Saloom Rd 337-235-0858
- Super 8 2224 NE Evangeline Thruway 337-232-8826
- La Quinta 2100 NE Evangeline Thruway 337-233-5610



If you need more information now, contact: jloneale@aol.com

Travel information for Lafayette:

<http://www.lafayettetravel.com/>

Hilton Garden Inn: <http://hiltongardeninn.hilton.com>

Directions to the National Wetlands Research Center:

<http://www.nwrc.usgs.gov/maps/lafayett.htm>

Make a note ...

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Fall Meeting October 24-25, 2008 Lafayette, LA

Winter Meeting January 23-24, 2009 Covington / Mandeville LA

DEADLINE

Submission deadline date for Winter LOS News
 is December 1, 2008

2008 LOS New Members as of September 2008

Shannon Antoine, Lacombe
 Shelley Antoine, Lacombe
 Wiley Ates, New Orleans
 William Baddley, Baton Rouge
 Patti Carlin, Albany
 Lori Crayon, Metairie
 Brian Early, New Orleans
 Steven Gabrey, NSU, Natchitoches
 Richard Gibbons, Baton Rouge
 Mary "Ray" Goehring, Milam TX
 Irvin Lauque, Jr., Paulina LA
 Anna Marquardt, Lafayette
 Chris & Holly Martin, River Ridge
 Christopher Merritt, New Orleans
 Pattie Murray, Greenwell Springs
 Jeanne Plaisance, Lafayette
 Anne Rheams, New Orleans
 Jacob Saucier, Baton Rouge
 Marsha Seyffert, Houston TX
 Lisa Sirman, Shreveport
 Emlyn B. Smith, Alexandria
 Anne Sobol, New Orleans
 Lindsey Torbett, Alexandria
 JoAnn White, Spring TX
 Charles Williams, Greenwell Springs
 Ed Zamadics, Lafayette

LOS New Life Members

Grace Lutschg, Baton Rouge
 Bill Vermillion, Lafayette

LOS Membership Renewal Time

Membership renewals are due January 2009 for the coming year.

Please check your label. If it says Dec 2007 - you owe for both 2008 and 2009 (this will be your last newsletter if you do not renew this month). If it says Dec 2008, your 2009 membership is due.

Thank you for renewing your LOS membership.

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: _____

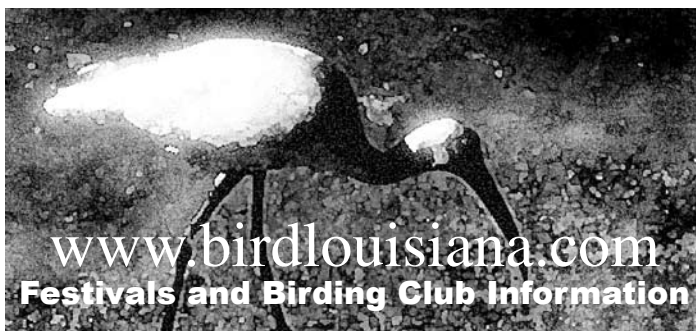
Phone:(_____)_____ E-mail: _____

DUES STRUCTURE:

___ Regular:	\$20.00/yr	
___ Family:	\$25.00/yr	
___ 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*	*Please add \$2.00 for foreign subscriptions
___ Contributing:	\$50.00/yr	
___ Sustaining:	\$100.00/yr	
___ Life:	\$300.00**	**Installments may be arranged for Life memberships
___ Family Life:	\$500**	

Make check payable to: LOS

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



Louisiana Ornithological Society

www.losbird.org

2008 LOS Spring Meeting

Minutes, April 25 - 26, 2008

Cameron/Creole

Friday, April 25, 2008

President Nancy Menasco called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m. She welcomed members and guests and asked new members to stand and introduce themselves. Nancy thanked Judith O'Neale and Marianna Primeaux for organizing the meeting, JoAnn Nunez and the Cameron Parish Tourist Commission for providing the food, Judith, Joelle Finley, Joseph Valle, Anne Rheams and Wendy Rihner for working the registration and sales tables.

Nancy introduced the officers and board of directors: President Nancy Menasco, Vice-president Linda Stewart-Knight, Treasurer Judith O'Neale, Secretary Joelle Finley, Past-president Bill Fontenot (absent) and board members Joan Brown (absent), Jackie Duncan and Ed Wallace. LOS News editor Bob Hamilton and JLO editor Jim Ingold (absent) were also introduced.

Nancy introduced the evening's speaker, Joelle Finley. Joelle has a master's degree in biology from the University of New Orleans and is retired from the LSU Health Sciences Center in New Orleans where she worked for 25 years, running a cell culture lab. She along with 6 other Louisiana ladies traveled to the Amazon River in Brazil this past summer with the New York Botanical Garden. She spoke on "7 Louisiana Ladies Traveling Down the Amazon River in Brazil with Binoculars and Cameras".

Nancy announced that Saturday's field trip will be led by Ed Wallace and will meet in the parking lot of the Cameron Motel at 8:00 AM.

Judith discussed which areas would be open for LOS week-end.

Nancy asked to please turn in name badges if not returning on Saturday. The meeting was adjourned at 8:08 p.m.

Respectively submitted
Joelle Finley, secretary

Saturday, April 26

President Nancy Menasco called the meeting to order at 7:36 p.m. She welcomed members and guests and asked new members to stand and introduce themselves. Nancy thanked Judith O'Neale and Marianna Primeaux for organizing the meeting, The Wagon Wheel of Lake Charles for providing the dinner and Judith, Joelle Finley, Joseph Valle, Anne Rheams and Wendy Rihner for working the registration and sales tables.

Nancy introduced the officers and board of directors: President Nancy Menasco, Vice-president Linda Stewart-Knight, Treasurer Judith O'Neale, Secretary Joelle Finley, Past-president Bill

Fontenot (absent) and board members Joan Brown (absent), Jackie Duncan and Ed Wallace. LOS News editor Bob Hamilton and JLO editor Jim Ingold (absent) were also introduced.

Nancy announced that Irvin Louque, Jr from Paulina is the recipient of the Youth Scholarship Fund award for Camp Chiricahua this summer. Nancy Newfield is the chair of the Scholarship Committee.

Marty Guidry presented the following LOS Awards: President's Award to the Conway LeBleu Family, Marianna Primeaux accepting; President's Award to the Cameron Parish Police Jury, Marianna Primeaux accepting; and the Dr. George H. Lowry Award to Dr. Keith Ouchley, Carol Lynn Lowry Loker accepting.

Nancy introduced the evening's speaker, Melanie Driscoll. Melanie came to the National Audubon Society from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, where she most recently worked on a nocturnal flight-call monitoring project performed at military bases. Previously, Melanie had worked for two and a half years as the supervisor of field research and project leader for the House Finch Disease Survey, a project examining the ecology and transmission of Mycoplasmal conjunctivitis in House Finches. Melanie got her Master's in Biology from the State University of New York College of Environmental Science & Forestry, studying how landscape composition moderates edge effects on the nesting success of Wood Thrushes in central New York. Previously, she spent three years as a community forestry Peace Corps volunteer in Suphanburi, Thailand. She lives with her indoor-only nest predator, Michelin, in Baton Rouge, LA. Melanie enjoys birding, hiking, and canoeing, but has been too busy coordinating to do most of these activities! Her talk was "Something to be Proud of: Landscape-scale Sites, Global Concentrations of Birds and Bird Conservation in Louisiana".

Jane Patterson announced that the upcoming BRAS program on May 1 on the LSU Campus would be on the Whooping Crane.

VP Linda Stewart-Knight called the check list. 204 species were observed including a Ferruginous Hawk found by Dittmann/Cardiff. (Another 11 species were added for the week-end including Black Rails heard by Phillip Wallace and Curt Sorrels.)

Nancy asked that everyone return their name badges and help to pick up the tables and chairs. The meeting was adjourned at 9:19 p.m.

Respectively submitted
Joelle Finley, secretary

LOS SENDS IRVIN LOQUE TO CAMP CHIRICAHUA

Irvin who is a freshman at McNeese this fall began birding in 2004. He had been reading Tom Sylvest's articles in the local newspaper and decided to take up birding. In 2005 he put out his first hummingbird feeders. After only seeing a couple of hummers a day, Katrina hit. After that, the hummers were all over and he got hooked. Since then he has been actively gardening for summer and winter hummingbirds with plants from Mr. Tom Sylvest. He has also been photographing birds. His love of photography may have helped him get into birding. He has also been banding with Nancy Newfield on several occasions in the summer and winter seasons. He competed in the 2006 International Science Fair in Indianapolis with a project about the habits of birds. It compared the ranges of different birds with the ranges of their preferred foods. He recently did an experiment with nectar and hummingbirds with the aid of Dennis Demcheck.

Here is Irvin's Camp Chiricahua Trip Report.

"I arrived in Tucson and met Dave Jasper, Rob Day, Jennifer Duberstein, and the rest of the other campers. After a shuttle to the hotel, we immediately started birding in the vicinity of the hotel. We first saw a Cactus Wren building a nest in a palm tree, and a Great-tailed Grackle displaying. A Gila Woodpecker was on the Saguaro in the parking lot. There were several Verdins, Cardinals, and White-winged Doves in the vacant lot next to the hotel. We also spotted the first Ash-throated Flycatcher and Lucy's Warbler of the trip in a small wooded area near the Hotel.

At the Sweetwater Project, we saw several species of ducks, including Mexican Mallards and Cinnamon Teal. The spotting scope was also trained on a Harris's Hawk on the far side of a pond. The first Western Kingbird also didn't disappoint.

The next morning we arrived at the Sonora Desert Museum and immediately found a Cactus Wren nest, Gilded Flickers, and the only Purple Martins of the trip. Feeding in the flowers on the museum's grounds were Anna's, Black-chinned, and Costa's Hummingbirds. Along with the variety of birds were many species of lizards and reptiles.

On the drive to Portal there was an astounding variety of new species encountered. New birds in the scrubland were Scaled and Gambel's Quail, American Kestrel, Swainson's Hawk, Chihuahuan Raven, Curve-billed Thrasher, and Burrowing Owl. We stopped at a wastewater pond where we saw a rare American White Pelican, American Avocets, Least Sandpipers, and numerous other shorebirds. As we were approaching the Chiricahuas, we observed a family of Burrowing Owls. When we arrived at the Roth house in Portal, we were immediately greeted by Acorn Woodpeckers and the resident Blue-throated Hummingbird.

The next morning most of us woke up at five o'clock to bird downtown Portal. We saw Bridled titmouse, Sulfur-bellied Flycatcher, Brown-crested Flycatcher, and flocks of Blue Grosbeaks. At the lodge behind the store, we observed Broad-billed and Violet-crowned Hummingbirds, along with the common Black-chinned Hummingbirds. After breakfast, we loaded the vans and headed out to Rodeo, NM. On the way we saw Greater Roadrunners and Eastern Meadowlarks (Lillian's) along the border road between Arizona and New Mexico. We visited a metal barn and found a couple Barn Owls. Back at Portal, in the afternoon we got our first looks at a pretty cooperative Phainopepla. That night we went owling and found Elf Owls in a tree next to the Portal Post Office. We also found Whiskered

Screech-owls and Western Screech-owls in the forests surrounding Portal.

On a cool, cloudy morning, we went to South Fork and got our first looks at Painted Redstart, Hepatic Tanager, and Elegant Trogon. A Trogon flew and landed less than twenty feet from us offering awesome photo opportunities. At the Southwest Research Station we saw Black-Throated Gray Warblers, Bushtits, and a Rufous Hummingbird. Later, when we birded Herb Martyr Road, we saw Band-tailed Pigeon, Say's Phoebe, and Plumbeous Vireo.

The next day we birded down Paradise Road. We saw Bullock's Oriole, Scott's Oriole, Lesser Goldfinches, and far looks at a Pygmy Owl. Along Gin Rd. were Bendire's Thrasher, Crissal Thrasher, Rufous-crowned Sparrow, and Black-chinned Sparrow. That night, we got really good looks at a Spotted Owl. On Day 6, we went near Rustler and saw a Mexican Chickadee, Western Wood-pewee, and Spotted Towhee along with countless numbers of flying termites. At the Paradise Road Junction, we had a chance encounter with a high flying Zone-tailed Hawk.

The next day at the Ash Springs Trail, we got looks at Broad-tailed Hummingbird, Dusky-capped Flycatcher, Red-faced Warbler, and Warbling Vireo. Around noon, back at the Roth House a Golden Eagle was spotted. This merely foreshadowed an exciting experience later in the camp. Later in the day, we visited The Gates' house in Portal to look for hummingbirds. We saw a male Rufous in all his brilliance, a Violet-crowned, and a beautiful Broad-billed Hummingbird along with the very common Black-chinned Hummingbirds. There were also Black-headed Grosbeaks and Pyrrhuloxia there. Soon after, we returned to Roth's House just before a storm. After a couple hours, Cave Creek began running. The rushing water hurled a huge tree across the driveway.

On Day 8, we made our way from Portal to the San Pedro River Inn. On the roadside on there was a Ladder-Backed Woodpecker on an Agave stalk. We stopped at White-water draw for a short time for shorebirds. We spotted Solitary Sandpipers, Greater Yellowlegs, and a Long-billed Curlew flyover. As soon as we arrived at the San Pedro River Inn, we were greeted by a astounding Vermillion Flycatcher. Afterward, we noticed the Tropical Kingbirds. Over the ponds there were several Cliff Swallows eating insects. In the surrounding areas of the San Pedro Inn, we found a Yellow-breasted Chat and Botteri's Sparrow.

The following day, we visited the San Pedro National Riparian Conservation Area and saw a couple Varied Buntings, and Cassin's Sparrow. Then we visited a private yard and saw a male and female Lucifer Hummingbird and Mexican Eastern Bluebirds. The female Lucifer had an extremely long bill. There was also another male Rufous Hummingbird, along with several Anna's, Broad-billed, and Black-chinned Hummers in this yard. We hiked behind the yard to find a Gray Hawk but we instead found Wild Turkey. Day ten was unparalleled in exciting bird activity. It started as a normal day; we hiked in Miller Canyon, a high altitude area, and saw Steller's Jay, an unexpected bird for the elevation. Then a Painted Redstart nest was observed along the trail. It had several hatchlings. This was a sign of things to come. We spotted Red-faced Warblers, a Broad-tailed Hummingbird, and a Magnificent Hummingbird.

Later that same day we visited a bookstore at Ramsay Canyon. After browsing the bird related books, above the parking lot, we witnessed an amazing spectacle that was unraveling. We first spotted a pair of Golden Eagles circling the top of these steep mountains.

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CAMP CHIRICAHUA *Continued from page 5*

Then, to our surprise, a pair of Peregrine Falcons, a long awaited bird for the trip, started to dive bomb and mob the eagles. As the Peregrines would catch up to the eagles, the eagles would do a barrel roll to avoid talons in their backs. Right when the eagles' claws were up towards the falcons' claws the falcons would abort their dive just in time to avoid being caught by the eagles. This amazing spectacle went on for several minutes with neither side giving up. The much faster Peregrines were always on the offensive with the larger eagles just defending themselves. The Peregrine Falcons must have had a nest on the cliff that they were defending. This was the most awesome bird activity I've ever witnessed.

Also at Ramsay Canyon, we saw our only White-eared Hummingbird. It was among many Anna's, Black-chinned, Broad-billed, Broad-tailed, and Magnificent Hummingbirds. That night after looking for Poorwills, we met Jon Dunn.

The next morning we left the San Pedro as early as we could. We reached Patagonia Lake and found Double-crested and Neotropical

Cormorants. We looked for Black-capped Gnatcatcher there also. At a rest stop we got good looks at a Thick-billed Kingbird perched in a dead tree. At a rest stop near Kino Springs, we finally got our first looks at Gray Hawks. We also saw our only Black Vulture there. Across the road, we got good looks at Yellow-billed Cuckoos. We stopped at Kino Springs to find a Black-bellied Whistling Duck, but we instead found another Gray Hawk and witnessed it being mobbed by a pair of Western Kingbirds. They would land on its back and peck on its head. In Madera Canyon we spotted a regular but rare Flame-colored Tanager. It allowed good looks through the scope. We didn't see a Rufous-winged Sparrow until the desert about twenty minutes from Tucson. When we did, I also got a great look at a Black-throated Sparrow. This stop in the desert proved to be the last birding of the trip.

After our return to Tucson, we took a well-deserved dip in the pool and reflected on the trip. Camp Chiricahua was a memorable experience that I will remember for the rest of my life."

MY TRIP TO TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

By Karen Fay

When my friend, Harriett Pooler, invited me to Trinidad & Tobago, I was hesitant. I had been there twice already, but Harriett's neighbor, Ron, offered us a free place to stay, and I had missed the Yellow-legged Thrush before. The question was: "When did she want to go?" We opted for early March, as long as we got back for her son's birthday. I really wasn't expecting to see much that was new -- Au contraire.

We arrived late on Friday, 29 February. Ron picked us up at the airport. His apartment was on the third floor of a newly constructed building without an elevator. Ron was really nice and never complained about lugging our baggage up the stairs. Perhaps the care packages from his wife helped. He even slept on a mattress on the floor so we would have beds. The plumbing was a problem, there was no hot water in either the kitchen or bathroom sinks, the shower was overwhelmed by any flow higher than a trickle, and the toilet flushing mechanism was tricky. However we were very glad to be there, grateful to Ron for sharing his place, and excited to get started on our birding adventure.

The next day we visited Caroni Swamp and sewage ponds at Trincity. We found Yellow-headed Caracara, Scarlet Ibis, Red-capped Cardinal, and my first lifer, a Masked Yellowthroat, there. Large-billed Terns were working the Trincity settling ponds along with a rather tame flock of Southern Lapwings. Wattled Jacanas and Yellow-hooded Blackbirds were everywhere, and little Pied Water-tyrants bounced around the solid mat of water hyacinth. We were killing time until our evening flight to Tobago.

We arrived in Tobago well after dark. Most of Tobago is a string of picturesque coastal villages in isolated bays with lovely beaches and lots of tourists. We stayed at the Cuffy River Inn, a small bed and breakfast that Harriett had found, was nestled in the lower elevations of the tropical rain forest of the Main Ridge. The road there was like a forgotten detour to the past. The Cuffy River Inn, a colonial manor, was simple, but elegant with large open verandas, spacious rooms with individual balconies, and wonderful food. As we dined on barbeque oxtail, we watched a White-tailed Nightjar feasting on insects attracted to the lights -- perfect!

If you have never been to Tobago, a trip to Little Tobago is just

about a requirement. The boat launches from the beautiful Blue Waters Inn located near Speyside, where I had stayed before. The "pet" Rufous-vented Chachalacas still roamed the parking lot, and the Ruddy Turnstones were nearly as tame as they picked up discarded tidbits around the feet of café patrons -- filling in for the lack of House Sparrows, I guess.

We promptly took off for Little Tobago, where the landing has much improved compared since my first landing in 1997. Then we had to strip off our shoes and socks, put valuable optics in plastic bags, jump out of the back of the boat, and wade to the shore. This time we just stepped onto a jetty. After a steep climb, the view from the top of Little Tobago was spectacular: lots of nesting Brown Boobies, a few Red-footed Boobies and scores of Magnificent Frigatebirds drifted over the turquoise water. I was glad I brought my scope; otherwise the looks at the Red-footed Boobies would have been disappointing. In the scope you could see the gular pouches fluttering and cooling the birds in the powerful sun. The highlight though was seeing several Red-billed Tropicbirds sitting with their chicks a few feet off the trail.

The next day, the Main Ridge Forest Reserve was our destination. Two Great Black-hawks circled over the ridge, as we got ready to strike out onto the trail. The purveyor of rental mud boots who is usually at the trailhead of Gilpen Trace was not there, but our guide, William, the head ranger for the reserve thought it would be ok. Easy for him to say -- he had his own pair of boots! It was not too bad, but I was glad I had my walking stick. We saw glimpses of Rufous-breasted Wren, beautiful looks at a pair of Plain Antvireos, flashes of White-tailed Saberwings and a scope view of a Copper-rumped Hummingbird sitting on a nest. Gilpen, a term for a kind of tool used to cut trails, is the most popular trail in the reserve. It is visited by many tourists, some wearing sandals sans binoculars. When the trail got crowded, we headed to the Neplig (Gilpen spelled backward) Trace. After slogging through a substantial amount of mud, we finally got great looks at the bird I had missed before, the Yellow-legged Thrush. While we were admiring the thrush, we heard some "churring" noises that our guide immediately recognized as Blue-backed Manakins. After

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TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO *Continued from page 6*

slipping through a little more mud, we were ecstatic to see two males performing their mating dance on a fallen log. Each male took turns hopping over the back of the other. This was done so rapidly and in such a frenzy that we figured a female must be close by waiting to judge the champion leap-frogger. That was really neat!

Then it was back to Trinidad. Mukesh, our wonderful guide (thanks to Harriett's Audubon connections), picked us up at the airport, took us to a local eatery for breakfast and then to our first stop, the Aripo Livestock Center. Besides cows, the livestock center also raises water buffaloes. In the buffalo field, we saw Orange-fronted Yellow-finches (lifer), Red-breasted Blackbirds, White-winged Swallows and a stately Cocoi Heron, all under the watchful eye of a Peregrine Falcon. A little marshy area had White-headed Marsh-tyrant and a nesting pair of Pied Water-tyrants along with the usual Wattled Jacanas, Southern Lapwings, and Yellow-hooded Blackbirds. As we approached the woods behind the center, we stopped to look at a Green-rumped Parrotlet and noticed a few Ruddy Ground-doves. I had just mentioned that I needed Plain-breasted Ground-dove when Mukesh, the magician, told me to take a better look at one of the ground doves further to the right. Wow, a Plain-breasted Ground-dove! Further along in the woods we saw a number of different flycatchers, a cute male White-bearded Manakin, and a loud Black-crested Antshrike.

Lunchtime found us at the beach in Manzanilla, munching on huge rotis (local Indian dish with meat or vegetables wrapped in a tortilla-like shell made of lintels, chickpeas and corn – yummy!) watching a storm come in. Our afternoon was mostly rained out, but, we did see a Savannah Hawk, a Common Black-hawk, and the head and tail of a nesting Pearl Kite at Nariva Swamp.

We spent the next day at the Asa Wright Nature Center in the hills overlooking the Arima Valley. Once a coffee plantation with a sprawling main house and lots of cabins and trails, its landscaping is spectacular with vervain and the like to attract hummers. Fruit and sugar water feeders off the veranda offer unparalleled opportunities for observations of hummingbirds, tanagers, honeycreepers, oropendulas, agoutis and iguanas. Bananaquits swarmed over the hummer feeders early. Every adult bananaquit had two squawking youngsters on its heels. We were just in time to see a male Tufted Coquette, perhaps the cutest bird in the world. I love them! Mukesh then took us on a well-constructed trail to see an oilbird grotto. The trail led down to a small stream, bisecting a huge rock, and providing ledges for oilbirds to nest. The Nature Center has added artificial ledges to help the colony grow. The owl-like oilbirds rocked a bit in agitation and blinked back red eye-shine when the light hit them. The chicks were already the size of the adults. We didn't stay long to minimize disturbing them, but we got great looks. I got an Euler's Flycatcher (lifer) on the trail back. Mukesh said they were easier to identify than other empidonaxes because of their behavior of flycatching close to the ground.

After huffing and puffing our way back, we took a short trail to see Golden-headed Manakins on their lek. Many males were in evidence, one not too far off the trail. The black and yellow puffballs got going a little when a female came through. I could not tell if she was impressed, but the males were not doing their "Michael Jackson moonwalk", so I guess she was not. It was a bad time of day to visit a lek. On the way to see the Bearded Bellbird, we went to a White-bearded Manakin lek. You could hear it before you could see any of the birds. I think this little black-and-white rascal should be renamed the popcorn manakin because of the sounds it makes as it bounces around its little display area. We could also hear the "wunk" of the Bearded Bellbird. Further down the trail, the sound got much louder.

This individual must have been Asa Wright's star performer because he was perched just above the bearded bellbird sign with his picture on it. He was a handsome devil: mostly white with jet-black wings and a chocolate brown head with dreadlocks dripping from his neck, which vibrated with every "WONK."

The next day, Mukesh took us to look for a bird that I did not dream we might see – the Trinidad Piping-guan. The guan is very rare and keeps to dense forest where access is limited, but for the last several years, a group of piping-guans have been found along a road leading to a communications tower. The narrow road was shrouded in mist as we bumped along. We found Gray-breasted Martins at the top and every now and then a Gray-rumped Swift would zoom by, almost at eye level. Mukesh played a tape of the guan, and we could hear one calling back, but it was very far away. Farther down the road we met up with Mukesh's uncle, Jogie, who told us that recent work on the power lines had scared off the guans. Jogie, an excellent and very patient birding guide, was the guide for my first Trinidad trip in 1997 with Nancy Newfield. It was great to see him, but I wish he had better news. Well, at least we heard one.

For most of the rest of the day, we birded the Blanchisseuse Road, which leads to Asa Wright. We had all three beautiful male trogons: White-tailed, Violaceous and Collared. We also had great looks at Turquoise, Speckled and Bay-headed Tanagers and a pair of Violaceous Euphonias. We got gorgeous looks at an iridescent Rufous-tailed Jacamar – just think hummingbird on steroids. Standing at an overlook, Mukesh spotted a large raptor that was an Ornate Hawk-eagle. I could tell it had the hawk-eagle shape, but could not make out any features because of the bad lighting and distance. We got a better look at a Gray-headed Kite as it soared down the valley. We heard Barred Antshrikes everywhere and saw a very handsome male. You can definitely call him the proverbial jailbird, since he's barred black and white all over. We heard scores of bananaquits (me: "Mukesh, what's making that call?"; Mukesh: "That's a bananaquit." Later, me: "Mukesh, "what's ... " Well, just repeat ad infinitum).

We went back to Asa Wright for our last birding day. The feeders were really hopping with bananaquits, and lots of Crested Oropendolas, White-lined, Silver-beaked, and Palm tanagers, Green and Purple Honeycreepers and a beautiful male Red-legged Honeycreeper. A male Red-crowned Ant-tanager made an appearance. There were more hummingbirds at the feeders this time – White-necked Jacobins, Copper-rumped Hummingbirds and White-chested Emeralds, a few Blue-chinned Sapphires, a female Black-throated Mango and a female Tufted Coquette doing a bumblebee impression.

Harriett wanted to see some snakes, so we traversed a less-used trail, which we had been told was our best chance. We needed to be there first thing in the morning, but that was impossible because of traffic and distance. We didn't see any snakes, but we did see Great Antshrikes, Plain Antvireos, White-flanked Antwrens, and a Streak-headed Woodcreeper. Back at the veranda, we got great looks at a male Lineated Woodpecker, Blue-crowned Motmot, and a Double-toothed Kite. I was able to spend a fortune on pottery and jewelry at their wonderful gift shop. Fortunately the bill was not quite as high when expressed in American currency. Now I just had to get it all home. Harriet and her extra large bag came to the rescue!!

We finally had to say goodbye to Trinidad & Tobago and Ron and his touchy toilet and low-flow shower. Harriett and I agreed that it was a great trip. Asa Wright was wonderful. If we go again, we might see a fer-de-lance or even a piping-guan -- good reasons to go back.



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