

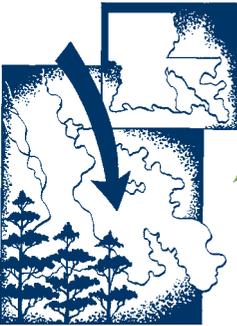
*Birding Louisiana's Legendary Coastal Zone*

2012



# BIRDING LOUISIANA'S LEGENDARY COASTAL ZONE

## *Introduction*



*"...Southern Louisiana's coastal zone is vast, encompassing over 14.5 million acres of woodlands, wetlands, grasslands and water."*

Bordered on the north by Interstates 10 and 12, southern Louisiana's coastal zone is vast, encompassing over 14.5 million acres (about 40% of Louisiana's total 33 million acres) of woodlands, wetlands, grasslands and water. The soils of the coastal zone average a mind-boggling 20,000 feet in thickness – an enormous sheet of Pleistocene/Holocene mud resulting from 1 million years' worth of the combined alluvial outputs of both the Red and Mississippi Rivers. At the very top of this mud sheet, the mucky surface soils upon which we work and play today average a mere 4,000 years in age. Topographically, the zone is mostly flat, but tilts seaward from about 50 feet in elevation along its northernmost boundary, down to about 5 feet at its juncture with the waters of the Gulf of Mexico. What little undulation that remains in the land is a by-product of a maze of ancient abandoned riverbeds and natural levees which coursed through the region at various periods of the Pleistocene. Closest to the coast, the surface soils originate from marine sands and clays constantly deposited and reworked by high-tide events like tropical and winter storms. Ecologically, Louisiana's coastal zone is a conglomeration of rivers, bayous, lakes, deciduous forests, swamps, moist prairies and marshes of many flavors, ranging from totally fresh to highly saline.

Here at the beginning of the 21st century, the coastal zone has suffered some of the most devastating blows in its history from both natural (hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Ike, along with the Great Flood of Spring 2011) and man-made (the BP oil spill of 2010) sources. Yet, nature has proven itself resilient as ever. In the short-term, the semi-tropical climate and naturally high rate of fecundity here have literally overpowered these environmental setbacks, both digesting the pollution and storm debris and regrowing the vegetation to heal its scoured marshes, swamps and woodlands.

In all, Louisiana's coastal zone remains one of the most ecologically dynamic places in the world. We remain the seventh largest deltaic system on the planet, and we still account for nearly 40% of all of the estuarine marshes – and support the largest commercial fisheries – within the lower 48 states. And from a bird-watching perspective, we remain one of the few places where, for at least nine months out of the year, 100 plus species per day lists are the rule and not the exception.

Louisiana's local and visiting birding community has carried on unflinchingly, perhaps now motivated more than ever to get out into the field and report its findings. Additionally, professional bird observers have been hired by a number of academic and governmental groups to monitor birds as closely as possible.

We like what we're seeing. We remain cautiously optimistic. We're helping out wherever we can. And as always, we're celebrating life with our own special brand of food and music, and our open-hearted, nature-loving culture.

To what we constantly hear others call "Joi de vivre," we reply,

**"COME GET YOU SOME! WE LIVE IT EVERY DAY."**

*"The coastal zone has suffered some of the most devastating blows in its history... Yet, nature has proven itself resilient... regrowing the vegetation to heal its scoured marshes, swamps and woodlands."*



*"... from a bird-watching perspective, we remain one of the few places where, for at least nine months out of the year, 100 plus species per day lists are the rule and not the exception."*



# BIRDING *through the Seasons* IN THE COASTAL ZONE



David Chauvin



Mississippi Kite,  
Charlie Hohorst

*As with most North American regions, seasonal changes drive the bird life*, which exhibits drastic changes in species composition and numbers as the seasons change. Louisiana's coastal zone is no exception. Ornithologically, the overarching theme of the coastal zone is biomass. On a year round basis, species diversity is magnificent; but it is the total number of birds – of warm bodies – that is ultimately the most spectacular draw.

*The spring migration season begins in earnest in March*, when early-migrating warblers (Northern Parula, Yellow-throated) turn up in maritime forests, swamps and bottomland hardwoods. In rice country, Little Blue Heron, Blue-winged Teal and Fulvous Whistling-Duck arrive from the south in spectacular numbers. While overwintering shorebirds linger, new arrivals such as Black-bellied and American Golden-Plovers stream in.

By mid-April bird traffic threatens to overwhelm, as the trickle of shorebirds and Neotropical migrants widens into a river. When the south wind blows, the traffic remains airborne, only lightly grounding for bits of food, water and rest. But when winds die and/or turn to the north, east, or west, the traffic grounds itself in massive style, with birds of all stripes filling virtually all habitat types. If you're into shorebirds, work the rice country and beaches, for over half of North America's native shorebird species pass through the coastal zone in spring. If it's Neotropical songbirds you're after, work the bottomland hardwoods, and more especially the maritime forests nearest the coast itself. Nearly all of eastern North America's vireo, thrush, warbler, tanager, grosbeak and oriole species filter through the zone. By mid-spring, wading birds have already organized into mixed-species rookeries in swamps, and are seen in great numbers as they commute between rookery duty and foraging grounds.

By early May, the migrant stream dwindles; but in the maritime forests, late-spring species such as Warbling Vireo, several Empidonax flycatcher species and Mourning and Canada Warblers are well worth the search. Shorebirds continue to pour through; and late spring is the best time to be looking for Baird's and White-rumped Sandpipers in the rice country.



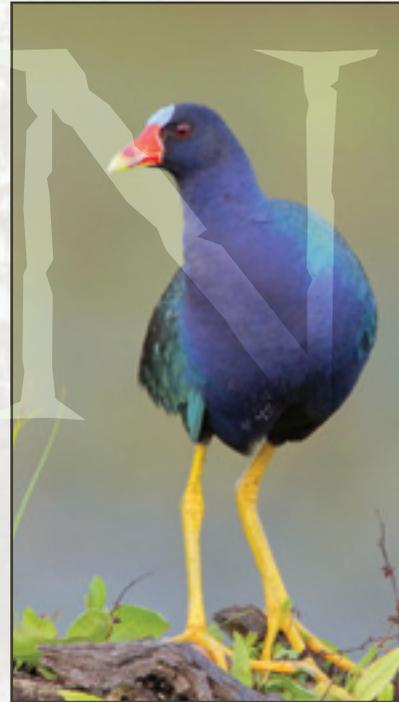
Little Blue Heron, David Chauvin



Black-bellied Plover, David Chauvin



Tufted Titmouse, Greg Lavaty



Purple Gallinule, Greg Lavaty



Red-bellied Woodpecker, David Cagnolatti



Blackburnian Warbler, Greg Lavaty



Blue Grosbeak, Greg Lavaty



David Chauvin

*Things settle down by the first of June*, with most local Neotropical species well into their nesting cycles. Still, the first week of June is the best time to check for such juicy lingering migrants such as scoters (surf is most common; black and white-winged also occasionally present) and Arctic Tern down on the beaches, where you might also run across breeding Wilson's Plover and Least Tern.

For maximum biomass effect head to the bottomland hardwoods and swamps of the central coastal zone, particularly Lake Martin, with easy access to the edge of a huge wading bird rookery as it doubles or triples in size with nestling Anhinga, herons, egrets, ibis, Roseate Spoonbill and others.

Nearby, in the bottomland hardwoods of the Sherburne Wildlife Management Area/Indian Bayou Recreational Area complex flanking either side of the Atchafalaya River just north of Interstate-10, the collective songs of densely-distributed numbers of breeding flycatchers, vireos, warblers and other songbirds makes for jaw-dropping ear birding. For maximum listening pleasure, you'll want to bone up on the songs of Great-crested and Acadian flycatcher, White-eyed, Red-eyed and Yellow-throated Vireos, Wood Thrush, Northern Parula, Prothonotary, Yellow-throated, Hooded, Kentucky, American Redstart and Swainson's Warblers, Summer Tanager and Painted and Indigo Buntings. Arrive as early in the morning as possible to catch this phenomenal symphony.

By 10:30 a.m., station yourself at the corner of LA 975 and Happy Town Road and begin scanning the skies for Swallow-tailed Kites, which are most common along the northern reaches of Sherburne Wildlife Management Area. By this time of year, and at this time of day, Wood Storks can be spotted as they rise up on thermals on their commute between roosting and foraging areas. Look for them not only here, but around all swamp habitats, as well as throughout the rice country.



Gull-billed Tern, Greg Lavaty



Indigo Bunting, David Cagnolatti



Wilson's Plover, Greg Lavaty



Least Bittern, Greg Lavaty

*The fall migration season begins early here*, with several shorebird species, along with Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, Yellow Warbler and Louisiana Waterthrush arriving throughout the month of July. Songbird migration is not near so overwhelming as it can be in spring. Instead, wave after wave of vireos, thrushes, warblers, tanagers, grosbeaks and orioles come with each puff of north wind; peaking around the third week of October.

November signals the Nearctic season, when the coastal zone receives the bulk of a massive slice of overwintering species from the north. Pelicans, cormorants, loons, rails and cranes join the usual array of year-round wading birds and seabirds, along with over 20 Nearctic species of waterfowl, 9 raptors, 23 shorebirds and many species of flycatchers, vireos, wrens, kinglets, gnatcatchers, thrushes, warblers, sparrows and blackbirds – all of which overwinter here in common to abundant numbers.



Northern Harrier, Greg Lavaty



Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Greg Lavaty



King Rail, Greg Lavaty



Roseate Spoonbill, Charlie Hohorst



Ruddy Turnstone, David Cagnolatti





David Chauvin

*Additional spice during the winter months comes with a phenomenon best described as the "Southwestern Connection,"* where numerous western/southwestern U.S. bird species, which ordinarily overwinter in Mexico, find their way into the coastal zone, where they are detected on an uncommon to rare-but-regular basis. The list is long, and usually includes species such as Cinnamon Teal, Groove-billed Ani, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Vermilion Flycatcher, Least Flycatcher, Say's Phoebe,



Yellow-crowned Night-Heron,  
David Cagnolatti



Anhinga, David Chauvin

Bell's Vireo, one or two western warbler species such as Prairie, Townsend's, or Black-throated Gray, Black-headed Grosbeak, Harris' Sparrow, Bullock's Oriole and Yellow-headed Blackbird.

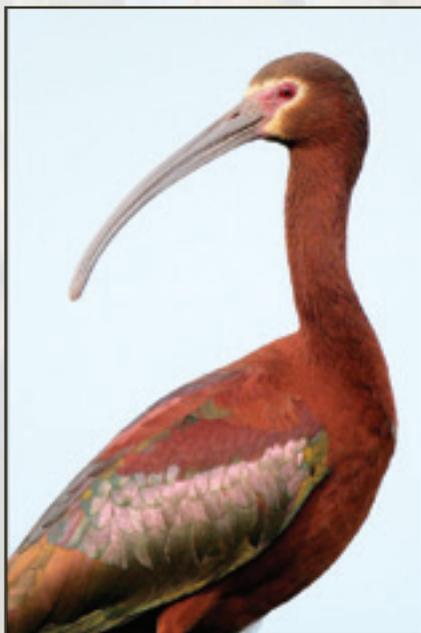
Most amazing has been the recent increasing influx of western/southwestern hummingbirds that are taking up residence in the coastal zone each winter. Buff-bellied, Black-chinned and Rufous hummingbirds are all commonly found around local gardens and feeders. Less common but regular each winter are Calliope, Broad-tailed and Allen's. More occasional are Anna's and Broad-billed. *See the "Additional Information" page at the end of this calendar to find out how to participate in local "winter hummingbird tours" in cities such as New Orleans, Baton Rouge and Lafayette.*



Belted Kingfisher, Greg Lavaty



Common Yellowthroat,  
Charlie Hoborst



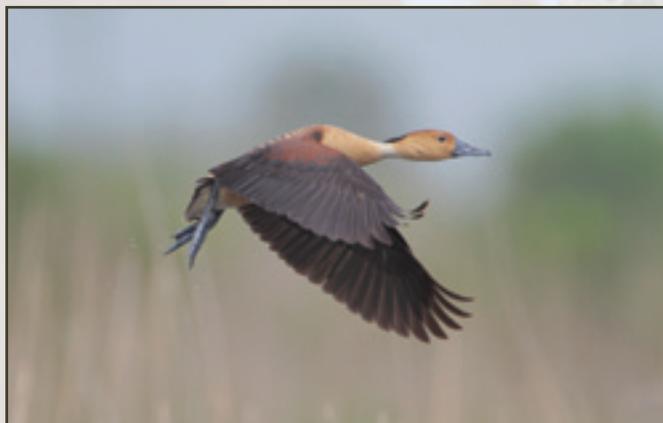
White-faced Ibis, David Chauvin



Chipping Sparrow, Greg Lavaty



Vermilion Flycatcher, Thomas Finnie



Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, Greg Lavaty



## LOUISIANA'S 2012 *Bird Watching Dates to Remember*

- EAGLE EXPO 2012  
February 10-11, 2012 \_\_\_ Morgan City \_\_\_ 985-395-4905
- 2012 LOUISIANA BIRDFEST  
April 13-15, 2012 \_\_\_ Mandeville, North Lake Nature Center \_\_\_ 985-626-1238
- GRAND ISLE MIGRATORY BIRD CELEBRATION  
April 20-22, 2012 \_\_\_ Grand Isle \_\_\_ 800-259-0869
- WADERS IN WORKING WETLANDS: SHOREBIRD EXTRAVAGANZA  
May 4, 5 & 6, 2012 \_\_\_ Southwest LA \_\_\_ 225-642-5763
- NEOTROPICAL SONGBIRD TOUR  
May 12, 2012 \_\_\_ Sherburne Wildlife Management Area (Atchafalaya Basin) \_\_\_ 318-793-5529
- WOOD STORK DAY  
July 14, 2012 \_\_\_ Sherburne Wildlife Management Area \_\_\_ 337-948-0255
- FELICIANA HUMMINGBIRD CELEBRATION  
July 27 & 28, 2012 \_\_\_ St. Francisville \_\_\_ 800-488-6502
- FOLSOM HUMMINGBIRD FESTIVAL  
September 8, 2012 \_\_\_ Folsom \_\_\_ 985-796-9309
- YELLOW RAILS & RICE FESTIVAL 2012  
October 24 - 28, 2012 \_\_\_ Jennings \_\_\_ 225-642-5763

*For more information about these events, please visit [www.birdlouisiana.com](http://www.birdlouisiana.com)*



Roseate Spoonbill, *Alan Murphy, Photographer*

# January 2012

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 NEW YEAR'S DAY	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16 MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31	1	2	3	4

## Lacassine Pool

“Lacassine Pool” is a 1600-acre impounded marsh that is part of the larger 35,000 acre Lacassine National Wildlife Refuge located in southwestern Louisiana. This area is swarming with bird life on a year round basis. Common nesting birds frolic through great rafts of blooming Pickerel Weed, American Lotus, White Water Lily and Duck Potato (*Sagittaria spp.*). Common nesting species include Fulvous Whistling-Duck, Mottled Duck, King Rail, Purple Gallinule, Common Moorhen and Common Yellowthroat. Frequent summer visitors include nearby nesting species such as White Ibis, Roseate Spoonbill, Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, Black-necked Stilt, Mourning Dove and Fish Crow.

In fall and especially winter through early spring, ducks crowd into the Pool. Ubiquitous species include Gadwall, American Wigeon, Mallard, Mottled Duck, Blue-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler, Northern Pintail and Green-winged Teal. Deeper pockets of water often hold “diving” species such as Canvasback, Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, Lesser Scaup and Ruddy Duck.

Raptors such as Cooper’s and Red-tailed hawk, Northern Harrier and others frequently patrol the area, so keep your eyes focused on the horizons and utility poles. Spectacular American Alligators are also commonly observed throughout the pool area in all but the coldest mid-winter days.

Nearby, one can find mature Live Oak habitats including fruiting trees and shrubs that attract vireos, thrushes, tanagers, flycatchers and orioles. Walking trails, biking trails and canoeing trails provide ample opportunity to view the refuge’s natural landscape. Look for all of the above mentioned birds, plus others like Carolina Wren, Prothonotary Warbler, Indigo Bunting and Orchard Oriole in summer, and Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Yellow-rumped Warbler and others in winter, and a kaleidoscope of various colorful songbirds during fall and in particular spring when migration is in full swing.

*For more information on Lacassine Pool or other nearby birding sites, contact the Jeff Davis Parish Tourist Commission at 337-821-5521 or visit their website at [www.jeffdavis.org](http://www.jeffdavis.org).*



Black-crowned Night-Heron, *Russ Norwood, Photographer*

# February 2012

## Cotten Road

### AT KEMPER WILLIAMS PARK

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
29	30	31	1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10 EAGLE EXPO 2012 <i>Morgan City 985-395-4905</i>	11
12	13	14 VALENTINE'S DAY	15	16	17	18
19	20 PRESIDENTS' DAY	21 MARDI GRAS	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29 LEAP DAY	1	2	3

Cotten Road is a quiet, 3-mile access road which grades from hard-surface to gravel. It traverses a wonderful array of habitats before terminating at the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway.

The most common habitat along Cotten Road is bottomland hardwood forest, comprised mainly of water oak, sweetgum, hackberry, swamp red maple and red bay trees. In addition, in certain places, the ground is picturesquely covered with colonies of southern shield fern. (Note: These woodlands and habitats along Cotten Road should be birded from the roadside only, as they are all privately-owned).

The woodlands host many species of birds, from raptors to songbirds. During the summer nesting season, common species include Mississippi Kite, Red-shouldered and Broad-winged hawks, Barred Owl, Red-bellied, Downy, Hairy and Pileated woodpeckers, Acadian Flycatcher, White-eyed and Red-eyed vireos, Blue Jay, Fish Crow, Carolina Chickadee, Carolina Wren and Prothonotary, Hooded and Kentucky warblers.

During the winter months, expect additions such as Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Eastern Phoebe, Blue-headed Vireo, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, American Robin, Cedar Waxwing, Yellow-rumped Warbler, White-throated Sparrow and Rusty Blackbird. Spring and fall migrations, bring additional species of vireos, thrushes, warblers, tanagers, buntings and orioles into these woods.

Cotten Road also traverses a couple of canals and a large "bar-pit" (ecologically, more like an ox-bow lake) before terminating at the even-larger Intracoastal Waterway. The cattails, rushes and other emergent vegetation associated with the edges of these waterways can hold an amazing assortment of bird life, especially during the spring, fall and winter months. Possibilities include American and Least bitterns, Double-crested and Neotropic cormorants, Common Yellowthroat, Swamp Sparrow, Red-winged Blackbird and Orchard Oriole, just to mention a few. Look for wading birds (especially Great and Snowy egrets and Little Blue, Green and Tricolored herons) in these and other wet areas as well.

*For more information on Cotten Road at Kemper Williams Park or other birding sites in St. Mary Parish, contact the Cajun Coast Convention and Visitors Bureau at 800-256-2931 or email [info@cajuncoast.com](mailto:info@cajuncoast.com).*



Northern Parula, *Joe Turner, Photographer*

# March 2012

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
26	27	28	29	1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

## Lake Arthur BOARDWALK AND PARK

This 6-acre municipal park is studded with numerous mature live oaks, which are indigenous, evergreen and possess massive rounded canopies that fill with songbirds during spring and fall migration as well as throughout the winter months. During spring migration, look for common transient species such as Blue-winged, Northern Parula, Tennessee and Magnolia warblers. The live oaks should also be good for Red-eyed and Yellow-throated vireos, Summer and Scarlet tanagers and Baltimore and Orchard orioles from late March through late April.

The all-weather scenic overlook perched on the edge of Lake Arthur provides an excellent platform for scanning the lake and lake shore. Bald cypress forests surround much of the lake. Pay particular attention to the many wading birds found here such as Double-crested and Neotropic cormorants, Anhinga, Great Blue Heron and Great and Snowy egrets. The Lake Arthur area is known for huge concentrations of wintering waterfowl that begin showing up in earnest during the month of October and lasting through till the early spring months. Millions of ducks and geese pour into the area around the lake during this time of the year.

Seabirds such as Laughing Gull and Forster's Tern are present year round; and during migration periods additional species such as Franklin's, Bonaparte's, Ring-billed and Herring gulls and Caspian, Least and Black terns turn up regularly.

*For more information on Lake Arthur Boardwalk and Park or other nearby birding sites, contact the Jeff Davis Parish Tourist Commission at 337-821-5521 or visit their website at [www.jeffdavis.org](http://www.jeffdavis.org).*



Painted Bunting, *Greg Lavaty, Photographer*

# April 2012

## Grand Isle's

### LANDRY LEBLANC TRACT

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8 EASTER	9	10	11	12	13 2012 LOUISIANA BIRDFEST <i>Mandeville, North Lake Nature Center</i> 985-626-1238	14
15 FESTIVAL CONTINUES	16	17	18	19	20 GRAND ISLE MIGRATORY BIRD CELEBRATION <i>Grand Isle</i> 800-259-0869	21
22 CELEBRATION CONTINUES	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	1	2	3	4	5

No other forested tract in coastal southeastern Louisiana has hosted more birds and birders than the legendary "Landry Leblanc woods" in Grand Isle. This 19-acre, live oak-dominated site functions as a virtual Neotropical songbird magnet during spring and fall migration periods (March-May/August-October). This particular coastal forest or "cheniere" as it is known locally, functions as crucially-important "stopover habitat" for Neotropical migrant songbirds crossing the Gulf of Mexico. The list of individual species is long, and includes at least 8 species of flycatchers, 8 species of vireos, 9 species of thrushes and mimic thrushes, 12 species of tanagers, grosbeaks, buntings and orioles and nearly 40 species of warblers. This coastal forest ecosystem along with others play an important ecological role for migrating songbirds particularly during periods of inclement weather associated with the passage of cool fronts.

Stories abound of days when more than 15 species of warblers, along with numerous vireos, flycatchers, thrushes, mimic thrushes, grosbeaks, tanagers and orioles, have been recorded within a few hours here. Additionally, this is probably the best site in Louisiana for viewing Cape May and Black-throated Blue warblers, 2 of the state's least common Neotropical migrant warblers.

As you work through the Landry Leblanc woods, be sure to cast your eyes toward the ground on occasion, as a substantial number of the migrant species can be found on or near the forest floor. Examples are Wood, Hermit, Gray-checked and Swainson's thrushes, Veery, Gray Catbird, Northern and Louisiana Waterthrushes, Ovenbird and Hooded, Kentucky and Swainson's warblers.

Of course Grand Isle itself offers a diverse array of habitats, from quiet pockets of salt marsh and shallow bays to deeply shaded live oak forests, moist grass meadows and miles of beach. The island itself is not only important for songbirds but also a myriad of others species including waders, shorebirds, raptors and waterfowl. Each of these areas provide important foraging habitat for many species of birds throughout the year.

*For more information on the Landry Leblanc Tract or other birding sites on Grand Isle, contact the Grand Isle Tourist Commission at 985-787-2559 or email [tourism@Grand-Isle.com](mailto:tourism@Grand-Isle.com).*



Tricolored Heron, *David Chauvin, Photographer*

# May 2012

## Fourchon Road

### COMPLEX

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
29	30	1	2	3	4	5
					WADERS IN WORKING WETLANDS: SHOREBIRD EXTRAVAGANZA <i>Southwest LA</i> 225-642-5763	
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
WADERS IN WORKING WETLANDS <i>Southwest LA</i> CONTINUES						NEOTROPICAL SONGBIRD TOUR <i>Sherburne Wildlife Management Area (Atchafalaya Basin)</i> 318-793-5529
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
MOTHER'S DAY						
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31	1	2
	MEMORIAL DAY					

This locale, a hot spot of both fishing and oil field interests, is named Fourchon ("forked") due to the fact that this is where Bayou Lafourche finally splits into two streams, less than a mile before it reaches the Gulf of Mexico. For birding purposes, the two specific habitats within this complex have proven to produce outstanding results: 1) Bay Tartellon, which runs for several miles along the right (west) side of State Highway 3090 and 2) the Fourchon Beach, which lies at the winding terminus of State Highway 3090.

Strongly influenced by tides, Bay Tartellon is often dotted with exposed shoals and mud flats during low water periods, creating prime foraging habitat for shorebirds which often congregate here by the thousands, especially during migration and winter periods. Though traffic on State Highway 3090 can be heavy at times, the road shoulders are wide enough to comfortably pull off and get a more leisurely look at the shorebirds, pelicans, seabirds, wading birds, waterfowl and others which utilize this system for feeding and loafing. Although not necessary, a spotting scope and tripod make studying the birds at Bay Tartellon much easier. Make sure to scan the skies/horizons for raptors such as the Peregrine Falcon which prefers Fourchon in the fall, winter and early spring.

Like Grand Isle Beach, which is located just east of Fourchon, Fourchon Beach is lovely in any season. Wildflowers almost constantly bloom along the back beach/dune areas, and seabirds and shorebirds abound on the beach itself, especially during spring, fall and winter. Also, keep an eye out for flycatchers and songbirds within the scrub vegetation between the Bayou Tartellon Bridge and the beach.

*For more information on Fourchon Road Complex or other birding sites in Lafourche Parish, contact the Bayou Lafourche Convention and Visitors Bureau at 877-537-5800 or email [info@visitlafourche.com](mailto:info@visitlafourche.com).*



Forster's Tern, *Brian Small, Photographer*

# June 2012

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
27	28	29	30	31	1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17 FATHER'S DAY	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

## Highway 57 AND FALGOUT CANAL ROAD

This far south, nearly to the Gulf of Mexico itself, roadways are traditionally built along the natural levees associated with north-south bayous. Rare indeed is the opportunity to build east-west roadways. Louisiana Highway 57 between the communities of Cocodrie and Dulac, and the Falgout Canal Road between the communities of Dulac and Theriot, are among the very few examples of east-west roadways connecting associated north-south bayous/roadways deep into the marsh country. Moreover, these east-west roadways are very quiet, with astonishingly wild and beautiful scenery along their paths.

Although the drive along Louisiana Highway 57 and Falgout Canal Road is sure to please at any month of the year, it is during the fall, winter and early spring months when bird life is at its peak. During those cooler months, Double-crested and Neotropic cormorants, Great Blue Herons, Roseate Spoonbills and other large wading birds/allies pack into the shallow marsh pools, foraging for fish and other prey. Waterfowl, especially Gadwall, Mallard, Northern Shoveler and Blue-winged and Green-winged teal are also in abundance between November and February. Common Loon, though somewhat uncommon here, is another waterbird to watch for.

Keep an eye on the skies for Turkey and Black vultures, Bald Eagle, Red-tailed Hawk, Osprey, Peregrine Falcon and other large raptors. Seabirds such as Laughing and Ring-billed gulls and Forster's, Gull-billed and Caspian terns also commonly occur here.

*For more information on Highway 57 and Falgout Canal Road or other birding sites in Terrebonne Parish, contact the Houma Area Convention and Visitors Bureau at 800-688-2732 or visit the web site [www.houmatravel.com](http://www.houmatravel.com).*



Red-tailed Hawk, *Greg Lavaty, Photographer*

# July 2012

## Fabacher ROAD

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1	2	3	4 INDEPENDENCE DAY	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14 WOOD STORK DAY <i>Sherburne Wildlife Management Area</i> 337-948-0255
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27 FELICIANA HUMMINGBIRD CELEBRATION <i>St. Francisville 800-488-6502</i>	28
29	30	31	1	2	3	4

With a total length of 6.0 miles, Fabacher Road traverses a prairie-dominated landscape that represents what much of southwestern Louisiana might have looked like before the turn of the 20th century. The habitat here is predominately remnants of coastal tallgrass prairie occasionally dotted with shrubs such as marsh elder, groundsel and wax myrtle, furnishing a perfect home for Northern Bobwhite, Dickcissel and Blue Grosbeak.

Things get really interesting during the spring and fall migration seasons, as well as during the winter months. During migration, all manner of songbirds, from warblers to finches, orioles and grosbeaks find food and shelter within the hedgerows. From late July through the winter, flycatchers make substantial use of the hedgerows, prairie shrubs and utility lines. In August and September, keep an eye out for species such as Eastern Wood-Pewee, Least and Alder flycatchers, Eastern Kingbird and Scissor-tailed Flycatcher. Species such as Ash-throated Flycatcher and Western Kingbird turn up with some regularity during this period as well.

During the winter months, this area is nearly unparalleled for its sparrows and raptors. At this time, Chipping, Field, Savannah, Song, Swamp, White-throated and White-crowned sparrows are all abundant. During migration periods (and occasionally during the winter months), additional sparrow species such as Clay-colored, Vesper, Lark, Grasshopper, Fox, Lincoln's and Harris's sparrows often turn up.

Many forms (especially Eastern, Western and Fuertes') of Red-tailed Hawks are common here between September and March. The horizons, power lines and shrub tops should also be carefully scrutinized for rare species such as Swainson's and Ferruginous hawks, which seem to turn up here at a more frequent rate than most other sites in Louisiana.

*For more information on Fabacher Road or other birding sites in Calcasieu Parish, contact the Lake Charles/Southwest Louisiana Convention and Visitor's Bureau at 800-456-7952 or online at [www.VisitLakeCharles.org](http://www.VisitLakeCharles.org).*



Black Skimmer, *Alan Murphy, Photographer*

# August 2012

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
29	30	31	1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	1

## Cameron East JETTY FISHING PIER AND RV PARK

This site offers safe, leisurely looks at not only birds, but also up-close looks at petroleum and fishing industry boats of all sorts as they glide out of the Calcasieu Ship Channel and into the open Gulf of Mexico. Look for pods of Atlantic Bottle-nosed Dolphins either escorting the oil boats or tailing (along with scads of gulls and terns above) the fishing/shrimping boats as they cull their catches on the way back to port. Mount the ramped/elevated/railed concrete fishing pier running alongside the rock jetties for a better glance.

This is also one of the few sites along the southwestern coast of Louisiana where salt-marsh habitat may be easily accessed and inspected. Walk through either or both of the two gates located at the eastern and southern borders of the park and suddenly you are on low elevated ridges traversing salt marsh. Look for salt-marsh specialties such as Clapper Rail, Seaside Sparrow and Nelson's Sparrow (fall/winter only), along with various small plovers and sandpipers like Wilson's and Semipalmated plovers and Least and Western sandpipers.

Mount the wooden observation tower at the terminus of the eastern trail/gate for a breathtaking panoramic view of the extensive tidal flats which stretch eastward for several miles. A diverse group of seabirds, shorebirds and wading birds routinely use this flat for roosting, preening, loafing and foraging. For observers equipped with spotting scopes, seabirds such as Brown Pelican, American White Pelican (fall/ winter/ spring), Laughing Gull, Royal Tern, Caspian Tern, Sandwich Tern (spring/ summer/ fall), Black Skimmer and wading birds like Reddish and Snowy egrets are nearly always present. Shorebirds such as Black-bellied Plover, Sanderling, Ruddy Turnstone and Willet are common there as well. While you are up there, don't forget to look to your north into more marsh habitat for glimpses of additional seabirds like Gull-billed Tern and waders such as White Ibis, Roseate Spoonbill and Black-crowned Night-Heron.

*For more information on Cameron East Jetty Fishing Pier and RV Park or other birding sites in Cameron Parish, visit the Cameron Parish Tourist Commission online at [www.CreoleNatureTrail.org](http://www.CreoleNatureTrail.org).*



Purple Gallinule, *Ronnie Gaubert, Photographer*

# September 2012

## Pointe-au-Chien

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
26	27	28	29	30	31	1
2	LABOR DAY	4	5	6	7	8 FOLSOM HUMMINGBIRD FESTIVAL <i>Folsom</i> 985-796-9309
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

### WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA

Located between the small communities of Montegut in Terrebonne Parish and Galliano in Lafourche Parish, the 29,000 acres of Pointe-au-Chien State Wildlife Management Area are almost totally comprised of brackish and salt marsh habitat. However there are a few bottomland hardwood ridges running through the site. One of these, located on the far western edge of the management area in Montegut, is easily accessible by foot, and supports a rich and diverse woodland bird community. Simply pull into the Wildlife Management Area parking area at the end of Dolphin Street and walk down the road while birding the woodland edge on either side.

The road edges are colonized by live, water and swamp-chestnut oaks, hackberry, American persimmon and other bottomland hardwood trees and shrubs, most of which are filled with birds on a year round basis. During the summer months, expect to see Red-shouldered and Broad-winged hawks, Mourning Dove, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Red-bellied and Downy woodpeckers, White-eyed Vireo, Blue Jay, Carolina Chickadee, Carolina Wren, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Brown Thrasher, Common Yellowthroat, Northern Cardinal and Painted and Indigo buntings.

Common winter birds to keep an eye out for include Sharp-shinned Hawk, American Kestrel, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Eastern Phoebe, Tree Swallow, House Wren, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, American Robin, Orange-crowned and Yellow-rumped warblers and Swamp, Song and White-throated sparrows.

During spring and fall migration periods, any number of migrating flycatchers, vireos, thrushes, warblers, tanagers and orioles common to most of the eastern U.S., are possible. Refer to the available checklist for the most commonly-recorded species.

*For more information on the Pointe-au-Chien Wildlife Management Area or other birding sites in Terrebonne Parish, contact the Houma Area Convention and Visitors Bureau at 800-688-2732 or visit the web site [www.houmatravel.com](http://www.houmatravel.com).*



Blue Grosbeak, *David Chauvin, Photographer*

# October 2012

## Saint Bernard STATE PARK

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
30	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8 COLUMBUS DAY	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24 YELLOW RAILS & RICE FESTIVAL 2012 <i>Jennings</i> 225-642-5763	25	26	27
28 YELLOW RAILS & RICE FESTIVAL 2012 <i>Jennings</i> CONTINUES	29	30	31	1	2	3

Located a mere 18 miles from the French Quarter in New Orleans, this wonderful 358-acre park contains many amenities, including picnic shelters, restrooms, a pavilion, swimming pool and campsites.

American alligators roam through the park's maze of manmade lagoons, joining the wide variety of mammals such as eastern cottontail and swamp rabbits, raccoon, Virginia opossum, gray squirrel, mink and river otter.

As with most forested sites within Louisiana's coastal zone, the woodlands at St. Bernard State Park are bottomland hardwood in nature, containing live and water oaks, swamp red maple, hackberry, green ash, red mulberry, sweetgum and dwarf palmetto. Common year round avian inhabitants within the forest include Black and Turkey vultures, Wood Duck, Red-shouldered Hawk, Barred, Great-horned and Eastern Screech owls, Red-bellied, Downy, Hairy and Pileated woodpeckers, Blue Jay, Carolina Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Wren, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Brown Thrasher, Common Yellowthroat, Northern Cardinal and Common Grackle.

Neotropical species arrive in early to mid-spring to nest, including Green Heron, Mississippi Kite, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Acadian Flycatcher and White-eyed and Red-eyed vireos, along with Northern Parula, Prothonotary and Hooded warblers. Wave after wave of other spring migrants arrive between late March and early May, most spending only days before continuing their journey northward. Some of these include Summer and Scarlet tanagers, Blue and Rose-breasted grosbeaks, Indigo and Painted Buntings and a host of various warblers species common to forested habitats.

Interesting winter visitors include Red-tailed Hawk, American Kestrel, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Northern Flicker, Eastern Phoebe, Blue-headed Vireo, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Orange-crowned and Yellow-rumped warblers, and Swamp, Song and White-throated sparrows.

*For more information on St. Bernard State Park or other nearby birding sites, contact the St. Bernard Parish Tourism Commission at 888-278-2054 or visit [www.visitstbernard.com](http://www.visitstbernard.com).*



Golden-crowned Kinglet, *Greg Lavaty, Photographer*

# November 2012

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
28	29	30	31	1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12 VETERANS DAY	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22 THANKS- GIVING DAY	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	1

## Sam Houston Jones STATE PARK

Sam Houston Jones State Park contains a mature mix of upland pines and riparian hardwood forest, as well as cypress-tupelo swamps, and open river waters. Interestingly, geologists have determined that the oldest of southwestern Louisiana's "chenieres" is located here, at the confluence of the Houston River and the West Fork of the Calcasieu River.

"Cheniere" is a Cajun French term meaning "oak grove," and is used to signify a peculiar brand of coastal woodland dominated by coast live oak (*Quercus virginiana*), and situated atop ancient "stranded" Pleistocene beach ridges located at regular intervals inland of Louisiana's present-day coastline.

During spring and fall migration periods, coastal chenieres play a crucial role in providing temporary shelter and nutrition to Neotropical songbirds as they transition between tropical South America and Central America, and temperate North America. Between March-May and August-October, coastal chenieres are a favorite stop over for migrant flycatchers, vireos, thrushes, warblers, tanagers, grosbeaks and orioles.

While walking the nature trail, or visiting any of the campsites, cabins, picnic areas, or boat ramps associated with the park, be on the lookout for resident birds such as Anhinga, Red-shouldered Hawk, Barred Owl, Pileated Woodpecker, Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Wren, Eastern Bluebird and American Crow; for as you move southward toward the coast in search of other birding spots, species such as these will become increasingly difficult to find.

During fall and winter, the list of birds to look for here at the park will be augmented by the arrival of numerous short and long-distance migrants such as Osprey, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Eastern Phoebe, House Wren, Golden-crowned and Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Yellow-rumped Warbler and others.

*For more information on Sam Houston Jones State Park or other birding sites in Calcasieu Parish, contact the Lake Charles/Southwest Louisiana Convention and Visitors Bureau at 800-456-7952 or online at [www.VisitLakeCharles.org](http://www.VisitLakeCharles.org).*



Blue-winged Teal, *Greg Lavaty, Photographer*

# December 2012

## Sabine National WILDLIFE REFUGE

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
25	26	27	28	29	30	1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31	CHRISTMAS DAY				

The Sabine National Wildlife Refuge Headquarters serves as a gateway for the 220,000-acre refuge. The Blue Goose Trail overlook provides visitors with a leisurely introduction to the vast belt of fresh, brackish and salt marshes that dominate Louisiana's coastal zone.

The moss-draped Live Oaks should be carefully perused, especially during spring and fall migration periods when all manner of Neotropical songbirds – particularly warblers – may be encountered within these massive canopies.

During the winter months, one or more Merlin habitually adopts these oaks to serve as their own headquarters. With a little patience, you should be able to detect these birds as they fit in and out of the live oaks. Check also for over wintering or “lingering” warblers which are rare waifs from the western U.S. In the late winter of 2003, for example, a Townsend's Solitaire spent several weeks here. Also during this time of year, check the edges of the Spartina grass clumps for King Sora and Virginia rails.

Many species of waterfowl enjoy this marsh from November-February. Look for them in the air, as well as in the water along the edges of the many quiet pools dotting the marsh. Dabbling ducks comprise most of the waterfowl found at this location. Blue-winged and Green-winged teal are abundant here as are Mallard, Gadwall and American Widgeon.

The refuge also features a 1.5-mile accessible walkway which loops out into an extensive freshwater marsh. During the summer months, local breeding birds here include Marsh Wren, Barn Swallow, Eastern Kingbird, Common Yellowthroat, Orchard Oriole and the gaudy Purple Gallinule. Wading birds frequent this marsh on a year round basis. Look especially for Little Blue and Tricolored herons, as well as Roseate Spoonbills.

*For more information on the Sabine National Wildlife Refuge or other birding sites in Cameron Parish, visit the Cameron Parish Tourist Commission online at [www.CreoleNatureTrail.org](http://www.CreoleNatureTrail.org).*

# COASTAL ZONE *Bird Conservation* ISSUES

*Following the great flood of 1927*, artificial levees were raised along the entire lengths of the Mississippi and Atchafalaya Rivers, effectively starving the coastal zone of its annual/historical deposits of sediment and fresh water which maintained a substantial degree of hydraulic and geophysical pressure against habitat-destroying encroachment of seawater from the Gulf of Mexico. A myriad of marsh and swamp canals constructed during the twentieth century greatly exacerbated

the land loss process. Land conversion has gobbled up hundreds of thousands of acres of freshwater marsh, coastal tall grass prairie, swamp and bottomland hardwood habitat.

With most coastal restoration programs still in the planning stages, the first decade of the twentieth century has seen even harsher levels of habitat destruction in the form of “mega-storms” such as hurricanes Katrina, Rita, Ike and Gustav, and culminating with the BP oil

spill of 2010. Meanwhile revised rates of coastal land loss were released by the U.S. Geological Survey in the spring of 2011, estimating annual land loss between 1985-2010 at over 16.5 square miles per year – or about one football field per hour. Nearly 1,900 square miles of land have been claimed by the Gulf of Mexico since 1932, equivalent to about 25% of the coastal zone’s total land mass.

*Suffering already from coastal erosion*, beach/barrier island and maritime forest habitats were hit hard by tidal surges – 12-15’ walls of seawater – during hurricanes Katrina, Rita, Ike and Gustav. Beach/barrier island restoration projects have already been initiated, as have marsh restoration projects, designed to restore the landscape to its previous function. Consisting of

mere thousands of acres to begin with, maritime forest habitat restoration has been stymied by private-property issues. One of the few bright spots in this issue has been restoration efforts at Peveto Woods Sanctuary, owned and managed by the Baton Rouge Audubon Society ([www.braudubon.org](http://www.braudubon.org)). With multiple pots of federal, state and private monies made available through recent hurricane and oil spill disaster relief funding, we can only wait and see that they find their best use.

AS ALWAYS, WE'VE GOT HIGH HOPES.



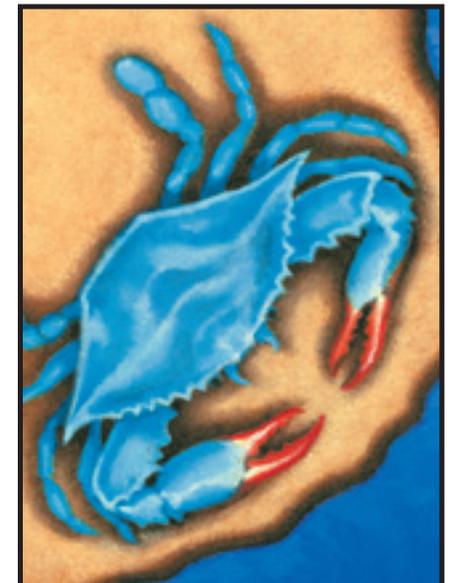
# Additional Information

## ON COASTAL ZONE BIRDING OPPORTUNITIES

*Serious birders who are planning trips to the coastal zone should subscribe to LABIRD-L ([www.museum.lsu.edu/~Remsen-Remsen/LABIRDintro.html](http://www.museum.lsu.edu/~Remsen-Remsen/LABIRDintro.html)), a statewide email discussion group for Louisiana birds and birders. This list-serve dishes up a steady stream of near-real-time birding reports in Louisiana, always with heavy focus on the coastal zone. If you know the dates and locations of your anticipated trip, feel free to solicit more detailed information by posting a "request for information" to the list. You're sure to get multiple replies.*

*Since the late 1940s, the Louisiana Ornithological Society ([www.losbird.org](http://www.losbird.org)) has been active in collecting and archiving Louisiana bird data, and in assisting its members in sharpening their birding skills.*

Two LOS meetings are held each year in the coastal zone (Cameron or Grand Isle), usually coinciding with peak spring and fall migration periods, when dozens of birders engage in day-long field trips, regrouping each night to report results. The LOS website is also a good source for annual birding festival announcements such as the **Grand Isle Migratory Bird Festival** ([www.btnep.org/subsites/grandisle/grandislehome.aspx](http://www.btnep.org/subsites/grandisle/grandislehome.aspx)) held in late April of each year, the **Yellow Rails and Rice Festival** ([www.snowyegretenterprises.com/Snowy\\_Egret\\_Enterprises/YRARF\\_2011.html](http://www.snowyegretenterprises.com/Snowy_Egret_Enterprises/YRARF_2011.html)), held each fall in the rice country, and various winter **hummingbird garden tours** held in various coastal zone cities (see especially [www.braudubon.org](http://www.braudubon.org)).



# BTNEP

BARATARIA-TERREBONNE  
NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAM

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# South Louisiana

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17. New Orleans Metropolitan  
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19. Audubon Aquarium of the Americas  
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20. Audubon Zoo  
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*For more information  
contact any of these locations.*



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