



**BREEDING WOOD
WARBLERS**

© 2009 LOUISIANA BIRD CALENDAR

WOOD WARBLERS

INTRODUCTION

Nimble, energetic, boldly patterned, and brightly colored, North America's wood warblers epitomize the lavish degree of biodiversity bestowed upon the New World. One can only imagine the wonder in the ocean-weary eyes of America's first European explorers when they encountered this elegant display of living jewels, for no Old World animal group could approach such opulence in color and variety.

Even in the New World, few animal groups can match not only the diversity in colors and patterns, but also the diversity in behavior and niche-occupation possessed by the wood warblers. Some behave as nuthatches do, scurrying flat against trunks and large branches of trees while combing bark crevices for

invertebrate prey. Others act like flycatchers, adapted to catching flying insects in mid air. Some appear distinctly wren-like, replete with bobbing heads and cocked tails. Some of the ground-hugging species behave as thrushes do. But most have carved their own distinctive niches out of the wooded ecosystems of the Americas, chasing down food items in a definitively furtive style all their own.

In order to taxonomically separate them from Old World warblers (which are actually more closely related to thrushes of Europe, Asia, India, Africa, and Australia) - New World warblers are commonly referred to as "wood warblers." At least 115 species of wood warblers occur in the Americas, from Canada and Newfoundland south through all of the

United States, Mexico, and Central America, and down through northern Argentina in South America. Fifty-three of these species breed in the U.S.

Most all North American wood warbler species are highly migratory. Along with tanagers, grosbeaks, thrushes, and orioles, most warbler species are classified as Neotropical migrants, moving all the way south from their temperate breeding grounds down into the American tropics each fall, and returning north each spring. Several warbler species, however, linger within the southern reaches of the temperate zone (i.e. extreme southern California and the Gulf Coast of the United States) for the duration of each winter. These species are referred to as Nearctic migrants.



American Redstart, David Cagnolatti, photographer



Black-and-white Warbler, Greg Lavaty, photographer



Hooded Warbler, David Cagnolatti, photographer



Kentucky Warbler, Charlie Hohorst, photographer



Prairie Warbler, Greg Lavaty, photographer



Swainson's Warbler, Greg Lavaty, photographer



Prothonotary Warbler, Charlie Hohorst, photographer



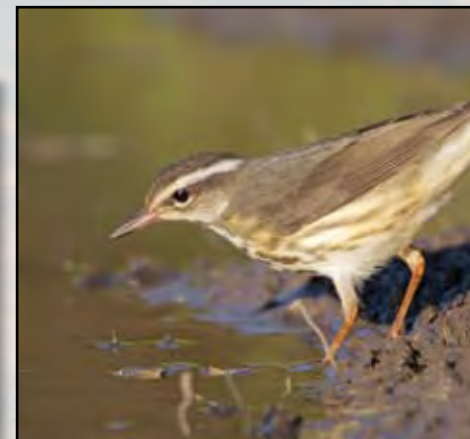
Worm-eating Warbler, Greg Lavaty, photographer



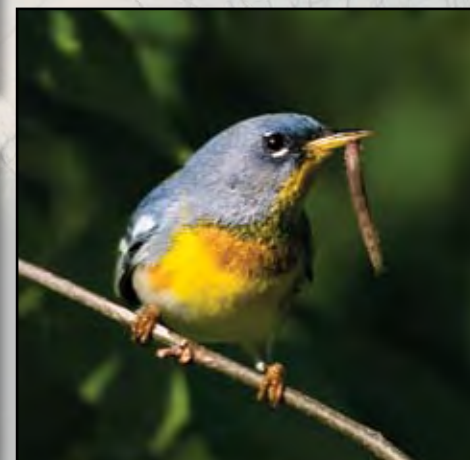
Pine Warbler, Greg Lavaty, photographer



Common Yellowthroat, Charlie Hohorst, photographer



Louisiana Waterthrush, Brian Small, photographer



Northern Parula, Charlie Hohorst, photographer

WARBLERS IN LOUISIANA



Yellow-breasted Chat, Charlie Hohorst, photographer

At least 74 distinctive habitat types and accompanying plant communities have been identified and cataloged across Louisiana's 33 million acres. Nearly half of these habitat types are wooded, most of which are used by wood warblers on a seasonal or permanent basis.

Louisiana's geographical location near the center of the North American continent and on the north-central coast of the Gulf of Mexico – at the cusp of the temperate north and the tropical south – allows our state (along with Texas) to receive and conduct a much higher-than-average amount of migratory bird traffic compared to other states. Well over half of the 810 bird species living in the United States and Canada – nearly 460 species to date – have been recorded in Louisiana. To date, 46 of the 53 warbler species native to the United States and Canada – a whopping 87% -- have been recorded in Louisiana.

During spring migration, breeding urges propel most Neotropical migrants northward directly over the Gulf of Mexico. Here in the United States, the geographical focal point of this great northbound river of birds includes the Louisiana and upper Texas coasts, where inclement weather often grounds the birds at first available landfall, creating spectacular birdwatching events known as "fallouts." During such events it is not unusual for a good birder to record 15 or more warbler species in a single outing – all within a few acres of coastal forest!

In contrast, the pace of southbound migration during the fall months is far more sedate, owing primarily to the absence of the breeding urge. Still, Louisiana is a busy place, as migrants from both the eastern and western United States trek around the northwestern and western edges of the Gulf of Mexico en route to tropical wintering grounds.

LOUISIANA IS A WARBLER-FRIENDLY STATE

Year-Round Residents – As a strong migratory group, few wood warbler species fall into this category. Moreover, the majority of warbler species within the United States breed to the north of Louisiana. Combine these two factors, and the list of potential Louisiana year-round residents is dramatically pared. Indeed, the only two species which routinely occur on a year-round basis are the Pine Warbler and the Common Yellowthroat.

Neotropical Breeders – Neotropical breeders describes those wood warbler species which nest in Louisiana, but migrate out of the state each fall and winter. Twelve species fall into this category: Northern Parula, Yellow-throated Warbler, Prairie Warbler, Black-and-white Warbler, American Redstart, Prothonotary Warbler, Worm-eating Warbler, Swainson's Warbler, Louisiana Waterthrush, Kentucky Warbler, Hooded Warbler, and Yellow-breasted Chat.



Yellow-throated Warbler, Greg Lavaty, photographer



Chestnut-sided Warbler, Greg Lavaty, photographer

Spring and Fall Transient Species – Transients include those North American migratory species which do not breed in Louisiana, but pass through the state during the spring and/or fall migration periods.

In Louisiana, 20 wood warbler species fall into this category – Blue-winged Warbler, Golden-winged Warbler, Tennessee Warbler, Nashville Warbler, Yellow Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, Cape May Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, Blackburnian Warbler, Bay-breasted Warbler, Blackpoll Warbler, Cerulean Warbler, Ovenbird, Northern Waterthrush, Connecticut Warbler, Mourning Warbler, Wilson's Warbler, and Canada Warbler.

In some cases, the combination of spring and fall presence of these species in Louisiana equals or occasionally surpasses the time that they spend on their breeding grounds! Those species with notably long (four months or more) "windows" of migratory presence in Louisiana include Blue-winged Warblers, Tennessee Warblers, Yellow Warblers, Magnolia Warblers, Black-throated Green Warblers, and Blackburnian Warblers as well as Ovenbirds and Northern Waterthrush. Those with the shortest windows (two months or less) include Cape May Warblers and Blackpoll Warblers.

By far, the most enigmatic migrant of all was the mysterious Bachman's Warbler. Historical evidence suggests that this species was once a

fairly common spring migrant through south-east LA on the way north from its Cuban wintering grounds (at least into the early 1900's), and that it may have even been a rare breeder in our bottomland forests. Then, the species suddenly disappeared; the last reliable LA report was in 1937, but there were occasional intriguing sightings into the 1970's. The Bachman's Warbler is now almost certainly extinct, probably due to massive habitat destruction on the breeding and wintering grounds

On average, transient warbler traffic is highest within the forests of Louisiana's coastal zone, but transient species can and do turn up in most any wooded habitat throughout the state.



Bay-breasted Warbler, Greg Lavaty, photographer



Cerulean Warbler, Greg Lavaty, photographer



Mourning Warbler, Greg Lavaty, photographer



Blackburnian Warbler, Greg Lavaty, photographer



Black-throated Blue Warbler, Greg Lavaty, photographer



Magnolia Warbler, Greg Lavaty, photographer

WARBLERS IN LOUISIANA



Winter Residents – The chore of procuring adequate levels of insect and invertebrate prey in most wooded habitats within the temperate United States becomes too difficult in the winter months. Thus, only the hardiest, most resourceful wood warblers are able to routinely take advantage of this situation. The Louisiana list of winter residents is appropriately short, including the Orange-crowned Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, and Palm Warbler, which join with the year-round resident and northern migrant Pine Warblers and Common Yellowthroats here each winter.

Bird Count season (December 14 - January 05) when habitats are most intensely birded. Most of the detections involve warbler species possessing tropical wintering ranges which extend north, often into the subtropical zones of peninsular Florida and the Rio Grande Valley of south Texas. Among the most regularly detected winter lingerers in Louisiana are the Black-throated Green Warbler, Yellow-throated Warbler, Prairie Warbler, Black-and white Warbler, American Redstart, Northern Waterthrush, and Wilson's Warbler. Others detected somewhat more irregularly include Nashville Warbler, Northern Parula, Yellow Warbler, and Ovenbird. Others detected somewhat more irregularly include Nashville Warbler, Yellow Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, Prairie Warbler, and Yellow-breasted Chat.

A substantial sub-category of winter resident warblers known as “winter lingerers” includes a sizable list of Neotropical migrant species in which a few individuals of each are detected in Louisiana during the winter months. Most of these detections occur during the Christmas



Black-and-white Warbler. George Jett, photographer



Orange-crowned Warbler. Greg Lavaty, photographer



Black-throated Green Warbler, Greg Lavaty, photographer



Palm Warbler, Greg Lavaty, photographer



Louisiana Waterthrush, Greg Lavaty, photographer



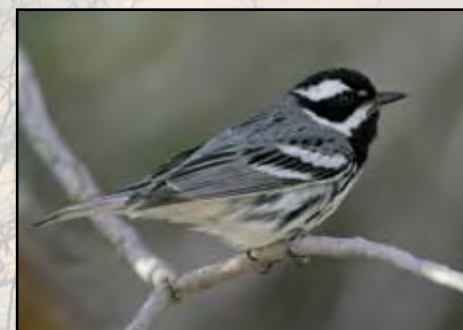
Yellow Warbler, Greg Lavaty, photographer



Red-faced Warbler, Greg Lavaty, photographer

Accidental and Casual Species Occurrences – Species termed “accidental” are those with five or fewer all-time occurrence records in a given region. Obviously, detection of an “accidental” constitutes a high point in the career of any dedicated birder. “Casual” species are those which occur very infrequently and irregularly in a given region – perhaps no more than a few dozen all-time occurrence records.

In Louisiana, the majority of accidental and casual wood warbler species occurs within the coastal zone during the winter months; and most include species native to the western United States. Of this group, the “most casual” seems to be the Black-throated Gray Warbler, a southwestern and Pacific coast species which winters as far north as southern Arizona. The rarest Louisiana species (1-3 records) include the Virginia's, Lucy's Hermit, Connecticut, and Red-faced Warblers, and Painted Redstart. Other accidental species include Tropical Parula, Townsend's Warbler, and MacGillivray's Warbler. Most accidental species are western desert or mountain dwellers with limited US distributions.



Black-throated Gray Warbler, Greg Lavaty, photographer

OBSERVING WARBLERS IN LOUISIANA

Most warblers are small, fidgety birds that live either high in the crowns of shade trees, or within dense thickets. To top it off, outside of breeding males, the females, juveniles, and non-breeding males of most species possess vague and/or confusing plumage patterns.

A painful birdwatching condition known as “warbler neck” is well-known among those who spend too many hours with binoculars lifted to raised heads in attempts to track down warblers. In most instances, successful warbler watching requires patience, endurance, and attention to detail. Good ears are helpful as well.

Warbler-watching within the stunted, low-slung cheniere forests of coastal Louisiana represents a unique opportunity for much easier observation and study. Consider that the trees of these forests rarely stand more than 25-feet in height. Next, consider that warblers

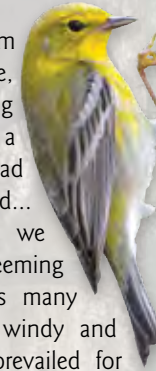
from all over the United States and Canada focus on these forests during both spring and fall migration, offering excellent views of both breeding and non-breeding plumages. Finally, consider that the worse the weather conditions (rain is best!), the more the warblers pour into these forests.

During periods of inclement weather along the coast during spring (late February through May) and fall (late August through October) migration periods, it is not unusual for experienced birders to record 10-20 warbler species during a single outing. For warbler students of any skill level, such opportunities should be seized as often as possible.

In *Louisiana Birds 1974*, George Lowery, Jr. depicts just such an event, which he witnessed on April 24, 1953 in the cheniere forests of Cameron parish.

“Shortly after midday on this particular occasion the skies became heavily overcast and the southerly winds stronger and more variable. Both the temperature and the humidity were high. Since a norther was obviously in the offing, my companion and I immediately went to Willow Island – which is not really an island but a narrow [woodland] ridge paralleling the Gulf, approximately four miles southeast of Cameron – and there made a search for transients. The only migrant that we found in this small woodland covering approximately 10 acres was a single Blackpoll Warbler. A few minutes later we walked out into a clearing not far from the Gulf beach and glanced up at the black clouds rushing overhead. Suddenly one of us noticed a succession of dark specks against the clouds, moving in the same direction as the clouds, from south to north, hence from the direction of the open Gulf, and barely in range of unaided vision. The specks, on close inspection with binoculars, proved to be hundreds of small birds.

After watching the spectacle from our clearing for 30 minutes or more, we could not resist investigating the changes that the descent of a portion of the overhead flight had effected in the 10-acre woodland... Walking back into the wood, we discovered that the trees were teeming with birds, some trees with as many as several dozen. Despite the windy and rainy weather conditions that prevailed for the remainder of this eventful afternoon, we identified 29 species of transients, including 14 kinds of warblers.” Bear in mind that efforts to observe and study warblers should be by no means limited to a few days of inclement spring weather along the coast of Louisiana. During spring migration, and especially during fall migration, many species of warblers are relatively common throughout the forests of this state.



LOUISIANA'S 2009 BIRD WATCHING DATES TO REMEMBER

Eagle Expo 2009
February 12 – 14, 2009
Morgan City
Contact 985-395-4905

Audubon Country Birdfest
April 3 – 5, 2009
St. Francisville
Contact 800-488-6502

The Great Louisiana Birdfest
April 17 – 19, 2009
Mandeville
Contact 985-626-1238

Grand Isle Migratory Bird Celebration
April 17 – 19, 2009
Grand Isle
Contact 800-259-0869

**Neotropical Songbird Tour
Atchafalaya Basin**
May 9, 2009
Sherburne Wildlife Management Area
Contact 318-793-5529

Wood Stork Day
July 18, 2009
Sherburne Wildlife Management Area
Contact 337-948-0255

Feliciana Hummingbird Celebration
July 24 – 25, 2009
St. Francisville
Contact 800-488-6502

Folsom Hummingbird Festival
September 12, 2009
Folsom
Contact 985-796-9309

For more information about these events, please visit <http://birdlouisiana.com>



Blackpoll Warbler. Greg Lavaty, photographer



Yellow-throated Warbler. Greg Lavaty, photographer



Tennessee Warbler. Greg Lavaty, photographer



Black-throated Green Warbler. Greg Lavaty, photographer



Blackburnian Warbler. Greg Lavaty, photographer



Blue-winged Warbler. Greg Lavaty, photographer



Orange-crowned Warbler. Greg Lavaty, photographer



Greg Lavaty, photographer of Pine Warbler vignette (top of page) and Worm-eating Warbler vignette (bottom of page)



Photographed by: George Jett

2009 JANUARY



SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
DECEMBER 28	29	30	31	JANUARY 1 NEW YEARS DAY Louisiana Winter Piping Plover surveys begin	2	3
4	5	6	7	8 Plant native trees and shrubs this month	9	10 Louisiana Winter Bird Atlas starts its' third season
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22 Red Maple blooms decorate the swamps	23 LA Ornithological Society Winter Meeting	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

AMERICAN REDSTART

(*Setophaga ruticilla*)

Ornithologist Harry Oberholser rightfully referred to the behavior of the American Redstart as “butterfly-like,” because it exhibits rather weak, flitting flight characterized by slow wingbeats. At just more than 5 inches long, this lithe-bodied warbler weighs only a quarter of an ounce – not much more than a heavy hummingbird and only about half that of other similarly sized wood warbler species.

Generally, redstarts are warblers that specialize in flycatching – that is, capturing flying insects on the wing, as true flycatchers do. Well-developed rictal bristles on the sides of the mouth, a relatively flat bill, long tail, wide wings, and low body weight are all useful redstart adaptations in their flycatching activities.

Within the United States and Canada, the American Redstart is the most widely distributed redstart species, occurring from eastern Oregon northward through northern British Columbia, spottily eastward through the riparian forests of the Great Basin and northern Great Plains, then more reliably through eastern Canada to Newfoundland, the Midwest, the Great Lakes, New England, the northern and middle Atlantic Coastal states, and most of the Gulf Coast.

In Louisiana, breeding American Redstarts are lightly distributed through the northern third of the state, the Florida parishes, and the middle Atchafalaya Basin, where they show a predilection for mature sycamore and cottonwood trees.

The plumage of adult male American Redstarts is jet-black and handsomely accented with salmon-orange panels on the wings and tail. Females and immature males are gray, with yellow wing and tail panels. Like all redstarts, the American Redstart habitually flicks its wings and tail open and closed when foraging along the trunks and branches of trees. This habit, coupled with distinctive plumage patterns in all sexes and ages, renders the American Redstart instantly recognizable in the field.

The American Redstart winters in the lowland forests of Mexico southward through Central America and northern South America, as well as in the West Indies. Modest numbers also regularly winter in southeastern California and southern Florida. A few lingering birds are also detected annually in southern Arizona, the Rio Grande Valley of Texas, and in south Louisiana.



Photographed by: Greg Lavarty



2009 FEBRUARY

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
FEBRUARY 1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Blooming Yellowtop fills the swamps with golden color				Eagle Expo 2009 Morgan City 985-395-4905		
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
Tiger Swallowtail Butterflies appear		Louisiana Winter Piping Plover surveys end		Louisiana Winter Bird Atlas ends its third season		
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
Spicebush Swallowtail Butterflies appear		Spring-migrating Yellow-throated Warblers appear in Louisiana's coastal zone				
MARCH 1	2	3	4	5	6	7

BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER

(Mniotilta varia)

To the untrained eye, the elegant Black-and-white Warbler might easily be mistaken for a small woodpecker as it strolls up and down the trunks and larger limbs of trees in search of insects, larvae, and eggs within bark crevices and holes. Closer inspection, however, reveals a somewhat more nimble bird, less mechanical than a woodpecker in its behavior, and more closely approximating that of a Nuthatch or a Brown Creeper. Indeed, historical ornithologists such as John James Audubon and Alexander Wilson referred to it as the "Black-and-White Creeper." As a consequence of its bark-foraging habits, it possesses shorter, stouter legs, and an extra long claw on its hind toe. It also possesses a bill that is longer and more curved compared to those of other warblers.

The Black-and-white Warbler's favored breeding/summer habitat is relatively dry, hilly, mature mixed pine-hardwood woodlands, especially those with broad-leaved species such as American beech, white oak, and southern red oak. Such forest types are common throughout the northern half of Louisiana, so it is not surprising that the majority of breeding detections in Louisiana have come from there.

Amazingly—for a bird that remains very nearly glued to trees when foraging – the Black-and-white Warbler is a dedicated ground-nester, preferring the sloped woodlands on hillsides and within ravines, where it locates its nest at the bases of trees, stumps, and fallen logs.

The Black-and-white Warbler ranges through much of Canada, from northeastern British Columbia eastward through Newfoundland. In the United States it is spottily distributed in the riparian forests of the Dakotas, northern Nebraska, eastern Montana, Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio. It is more heavily distributed in the Great Lakes region of northern Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan, and throughout New England, the middle Atlantic Coast states, most of the mid-South, and into eastern Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas.

Wintering occurs over an even larger region, from northern South America through Central America, Mexico, and the West Indies and also commonly includes peninsular Florida and the entire Gulf Coast of Texas. In Louisiana, a fairly substantial number of Black-and-Whites are found each winter, especially within bottomland hardwood forests.

George Jett, photographer of vignette



Photographed by: Charlie Hohorst

2009 MARCH



SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
MARCH 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	APRIL 1	2	3	4

Spring-migrating Prothonotary Warblers appear (Thursday 12)

Spring-migrating Kentucky Warblers appear (Friday 20)

MARDI GRAS (Tuesday 24)

Black Swallowtail Butterflies appear (Wednesday 25)

Bayou Lafourche Paddle Trip Thibodaux 800-259-0869 (Thursday 26)

COMMON YELLOWTHROAT

(*Geothlypis trichas*)

Several species of near-ground dwelling Louisiana wood warblers exhibit wren-like characteristics in appearance and behavior, but none more so than the Common Yellowthroat, a perky, inquisitive little bird common throughout the sun-washed marshes and brushlands across the state. Structurally, it is somewhat slender, horizontally-postured, and possesses relatively short wings and a long, round-tipped tail, which it frequently cocks up when hunting. In both profile and behavior, the Common Yellowthroat is very reminiscent of a Berwick's Wren. Males and females alike are plain brown-olive above and yellow below, but the adult male also possesses a dashing, jet-black, "Zorro"-like mask across its face and down into the sides of its neck.

In temperament, female Common Yellowthroats seem somewhat shy. On the other hand, males of any age will readily investigate all manner of disruptions and intrusions upon their territories. The flight of the Common Yellowthroat is labored and short-distanced and features rapid, fluttering wingbeats. Its locomotion through dense bushes and reed beds is deft and agile as it slips rail-like between crowded stems and twigs to chase down small insects, caterpillars, spiders, and mollusks.

The Common Yellowthroat enjoys the largest breeding range of any North American wood warbler, with no fewer than 12 subspecies spread throughout almost all of the United States and Canada, from Glacier Bay, Alaska eastward through Newfoundland and southward through southern California, Arizona, and many parts of Mexico, and eastward through Florida.

The Common Yellowthroat is a year-round resident in Louisiana. As with many other year-round resident songbirds, it initiates breeding in March, prior to the onset of breeding season for the later-arriving Neotropical migrant songbirds. Its nest is a bulky, loosely-woven structure, built on or near the ground in dense vegetation and often located just above water when situated in wetland habitats.

During the winter months, Louisiana resident birds tend to move into the southern half of the state, where they are joined by migrant yellowthroats from various northern parts of the continent. During the winter months, then, southern Louisiana is absolutely filled with Common Yellowthroats, especially within the expansive marshes, spoil banks, and along agricultural irrigation canals and hedgerows of the coastal zone.

David Cagnolotti, photographer of vignette



Photographed by: Jim Johnson

2009 APRIL



SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
MARCH 29	30	31	APRIL 1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
800-488-6502						
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
EASTER		Pine Warblers begin nesting		Peak blooming of Louisiana Irises		
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
985-626-1238						
800-259-0869						
			Peak songbird migration			
26	27	28	29	30	MAY 1	2
LOS Spring Meeting	Look for Cape May Warblers at Grand Isle		Male alligators start to bellow in Louisiana marshes			

For more information, go to www.btnep.org

HOODED WARBLER

(*Wilsonia citrina*)

Perhaps no other Louisiana songbird is so dramatically ornamented in color and pattern as the male Hooded Warbler, with its brilliant yellow face and underparts, plain yellow-olive upperparts, prominent black eyes (among the largest of all U.S. wood warblers), and jet-black crown, neck, and throat, all neatly truncated across the nape and upper breast. In essence then, the male Hooded Warbler is a black-headed bird with a wide, canary-yellow mask across its face. Females are somewhat plainer, exhibiting varying intensities of the black hood.

Like the Kentucky Warbler, the Hooded Warbler is a chunky, mid-sized wood warbler that lives amongst dense shrub thickets in mature, bottomland hardwood habitats. Interestingly, females tend to remain on or very close to the ground, whereas males flit about more actively, often ascending into the lower parts of trees to chase down small flying insects. Males also tend to spread their tails in flicking fashion (like redstarts do), exposing the white webbing of their tail feathers.

As with the Kentucky Warbler, the North American breeding range of the Hooded Warbler was once probably more extensive, possibly covering all of the eastern United States. Currently, however, it is restricted to tiny, residual patches in the Midwest and Great Lakes States, becoming more contiguous into Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and southward through the Atlantic and Gulf Coastal states. In Louisiana, the Hooded Warbler remains a common nesting species in forested bottomland habitats throughout all of our 64 parishes.

Hooded Warblers are dedicated Neotropical migrants, with the overwhelming majority of birds wintering from eastern Mexico down through parts of Central America and eastward through the Yucatan Peninsula and most of the Caribbean.

Spring migrating Hooded Warblers usually begin to reach Louisiana by early March, about the same time that Northern Parulas do. Unlike Northern Parulas, however, male Hooded Warblers tend to remain quiet until the end of that month.

Hooded Warbler nests are compact cups with dead leaves woven into their exteriors. They are located no higher than 5 feet off of the ground, most often within shrubs.

Joe Turner, photographer of vignette



Photographed by: Brian Small

2009 MAY



SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
APRIL 26	27	28	29	30	MAY 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 MEMORIAL DAY	26	27	28	29	30
31						

For more information, go to www.btnep.org

KENTUCKY WARBLER

(*Oporornis formosus*)

Relatively stout-bodied, thick-billed, and short-tailed, the 5.25 inch Kentucky Warbler is a denizen of moist, expansive, bottomland forests with lots of dense undergrowth and vine tangles—one of the most common forested habitat types in Louisiana. Unmarked olive-green above and bright canary-yellow below, this warbler sports yellow “spectacles” (superciliary or “eyebrow” lines which curl around the back of the eyes) and jet-black “moustacial” stripes which curve beneath the eyes and broaden into “sideburns” along the sides of the face and neck. Its legs are bright flesh-pink in color.

Kentucky Warblers require fairly large, unbroken blocks of bottomland hardwood forest living in dense, deeply-shaded, shrub and vine thickets within the forest interior. This particular niche is becoming less common with each passing year, and the Kentucky Warbler’s breeding range is shrinking accordingly. It breeds spottily from the upper Mississippi River Valley and the Great Lakes eastward through Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Long Island, and southward through the Ohio River Valley and most of the southeastern United States, excluding peninsular Florida and the coastal woodlands along the Gulf Rim itself. In Louisiana, the Kentucky Warbler is still quite common and has been recorded breeding in all parishes north of the coastal zone.

Like most of Louisiana’s breeding wood warbler species, the Kentucky Warbler is a ground and near-ground dweller, stalking prey secreted within shrubs and on the ground itself. Its foraging style is slow and deliberate, especially for a wood warbler. On occasion it flits up into low-hanging tree limbs to snatch small insects from the undersurfaces of leaves.

This species winters in shrubby thickets within lowland forests from southern Mexico down through Central America and into northern South America. In migration, it uses most any wooded habitat but still skulks within dense shrubbery as near to the ground as possible.

Spring migrating Kentucky Warblers first show up in Louisiana by mid-March, with the bulk of the population arriving during the first part of April. During fall migration, they linger here until the end of September and a small number continue to be detected through the middle of October.

Jim Johnson, photographer of vignette



Photographed by: Brian Small

2009 JUNE



SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
MAY 31	JUNE 1 <small>Louisiana Summer Bird Atlas starts its third season</small>	2	3	4	5 <small>Red-spotted Purple Butterflies peak in southern Louisiana</small>	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16 <small>Alligators begin building nests and laying eggs</small>	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	JULY 1	2	3	4

For more information, go to www.btnep.org

LOUISIANA WATERTHRUSH

(Seiurus motacilla)

This large (6 inch), heavy-bodied (0.75 oz) wood warbler looks and acts nothing like the dainty, sprightly, wood warblers. Instead, this shy skulker makes its living on the ground, teetering like some sandpipers do as it walks along the edges of water courses in search of terrestrial and aquatic insects, small worms, scorpions, crustaceans, and fishes.

Though it behaves more like a thrush and possesses the plain brownish upperparts and whitish-brown streaked underparts of a New World thrush, structurally the Louisiana Waterthrush is more wren-like in appearance. Its grayish-brown face is marked by a prominent white supercillium ("eyebrow") line, and the combination of its short tail and long, stout, pale bill renders it wren-like indeed in profile. Its flesh-pink legs, however, are relatively long and sandpiper-like.

Very specific in its habitat requirements, the Louisiana Waterthrush selects deep, secluded woodland thickets, always adjacent to small, clear-running streams – the faster the better. In locales such as these, it builds its bulky, cupped nest, often secreted within the streambank, the roots of wind-thrown trees, or at the bases of stumps.

The breeding range of the Louisiana Waterthrush extends from the upper reaches of the Mississippi River Valley in Minnesota and Wisconsin, eastward sporadically through central New England, and southward through all of the Atlantic and Gulf Coastal states, into eastern Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas. In Louisiana, its breeding range is predictably restricted to the northern parishes where sandy, spring-fed, clear-running streams occur.

Louisiana Waterthrushes appear in Louisiana in early to mid-March, as they filter back northward from wintering grounds in Mexico, Central America, and parts of the West Indies.

Here in Louisiana, Louisiana Waterthrush nesting begins in early April. Birds apparently waste little time in completing their reproductive duties and departing from their breeding grounds as the first "fall" migrants begin appearing in south Louisiana by the last week of June! The fall migration period is relatively short, with few records beyond mid September.

David Cagnolotti, photographer of vignette



Photographed by: Greg Lavaty

2009 JULY



SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
JUNE 28	29	30	JULY 1	2	3	4 INDEPENDENCE DAY
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
	Migratory Bird Treaty Act signed into law on this day in 1918		Louisiana Summer Bird Atlas ends its third season			Wood Stork Day Sherburne Wildlife Management Area 337-948-0255
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
	Fall-migrating Yellow Warblers appear				Felician Hummingbird Celebration St. Francisville 800-488-6502	Red Admiral Butterflies appear
26	27	28	29	30	31	AUGUST 1

NORTHERN PARULA

(Parula americana)

Only 4.5 inches long and weighing about one-third of an ounce, the Northern Parula is Louisiana's smallest warbler. And because it spends most of its time high in the canopy of mature shade trees, it is also one of the most difficult of our warblers to observe. Adult males and females possess very similar steel-blue to slate-blue upperparts, punctuated by a yellowish-green mantle directly between the wings. Broken white eye-rings decorate the eyes, and the wings possess a pair of short white wingbars. From below, the belly, vent, and undertail coverts are all nearly immaculate white, but the throat and breast are yellow and banded across with cinnamon-orange. In males, the orange band is bordered above with blue-black.

Short-tailed and short-necked, the Northern Parula is very similar to a chickadee in both size and profile. Moreover, it forages almost exactly like a chickadee, scurrying through twigs and foliage and often hanging upside down in order to inspect the undersurfaces of leaves in search of small insects, larvae, eggs, and spiders. Indeed, the genus name and the common name of this bird – Parula – is the diminutive of Parus, the genus of chickadees and titmice.

In the northern parts of its range, the Northern Parula often associates with hemlocks, whereas in Louisiana, it is often associated with live oaks, apparently a favored tree, especially along woodland edges (as opposed to forest interiors); it is most often found from the mid through the upper parts of the crown. Northern Parulas will also descend into shrub thickets and/or dense and rank herbaceous vegetation to feed, especially during fall migration.

The Northern Parula's breeding range is substantial, stretching from southeastern Manitoba through Nova Scotia and southward through the U.S. Gulf Coast. It winters in eastern Mexico south through Central America and in the West Indies northward through almost all of peninsular Florida.

In Louisiana, the Northern Parula is one of the first of the Neotropical songbirds to arrive each spring, with singing males detected in the southern third of the state by the last of February or the beginning of March.



Photographed by: Michael Gray

2009 AUGUST



SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
JULY 26	27	28	29	30	31	AUGUST 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					

Migrating Cloudless Sulphur Butterflies appear

Gulf Fritillary Butterflies appear

Cloudless Sulphur Butterflies migrate into Louisiana

Fall Yellow Warbler migration peaks in Louisiana's coastal zone

Alligator eggs begin hatching

PRAIRIE WARBLER

(Dendroica discolor)

This active, 4.5 inch bird is one of the few wood warblers which habitually pumps its tail, particularly as it dashes through small trees and shrubs in search of prey. Besides the usual warbler fare of small insects, insect eggs, and caterpillars, the Prairie Warbler also commonly takes moths and butterflies on the wing, as well as deerflies, grasshoppers, ants, and spiders.

In addition to the tail pumping behavior, the Prairie Warbler is further distinguished from many other warbler species by its totally yellow underparts punctuated with sides and flanks heavily streaked with black. Its yellow face is also striped with black and/or olive coloration, and it possesses a telltale dark blotch at the sides of the neck near its juncture with the throat. Its two wingbars are most often tinged with yellow and do not visually stand out. From below, even its undertail coverts are tinged with yellow, leading into a white undertail framed by dark club-shaped markings. Structurally, the Prairie Warbler appears rather short-billed and long-tailed compared to other wood warblers.

In both nesting and foraging, Prairie Warblers prefer shorter, open-canopied woodlands such as shrubby forest edges and, most especially, "cutover" pine forests in which newly regenerating pine saplings are clustered with plenty of open spacing between the clusters. Ecologically, such habitats are classified as "early secondary successional" woodlands. Because of the temporary, fast-changing nature of these early successional woodlands, Prairie Warbler populations in any given area or region are difficult to keep tabs on, as they tend to change locations along with changing habitat conditions.

The Prairie Warbler ranges spottily from southeastern Iowa eastward through the Great Lakes states and southern New England, then more commonly southward through the Ohio River Valley and the Atlantic Coastal and Gulf Coastal states westward through eastern Texas and eastern Oklahoma. Though difficult to track in the breeding season, Wiedenfeld and Swan's (**Louisiana Breeding Bird Atlas 2000**) shows Prairie Warbler nesting throughout the northwestern third of Louisiana as well as within the eastern half of the Florida parishes.



Photographed by: Greg Lavaty

2009



SEPTEMBER

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
AUGUST 30	31	SEPTEMBER 1 <hr/> Fall-migrating Canada and Mourning Warblers peak	2	3	4	5
6	LABOR DAY	8	9 <hr/> Silver-spotted Skipper Butterflies peak	10	11	12 Folsom Hummingbird Festival Folsom 985-796-9309
13	14	15	16	17	18	19 <hr/> Fall-migrating Northern Waterthrushes peak
20	21	22	23	24	25 <hr/> Fall-migrating Nashville Warblers peak	26
27	28	29	30 <hr/> First wintering Palm Warblers arrive	OCTOBER 1	2	3

For more information, go to www.btnep.org

PROTHONOTARY WARBLER

(Protonotaria citrea)

Robust, flashy, loud, and curious, the Prothonotary Warbler is probably the most commonly observed breeding wood warbler species in Louisiana. According to ornithologist George Lowery, Jr. (*Louisiana Birds 1974*), this bright yellow bird was said to be named "by the Creoles of Louisiana," after the legal advisor to the pope – the prothonotary – who wore yellow vestments. It has also been nicknamed the "Golden Swamp Canary" by Louisiana trappers and fishermen who encounter it daily during the summer months.

Large-billed, with prominent black eyes set off by a clear yellow face, the Prothonotary Warbler is a husky 5.5 inch bird, larger than average for a wood warbler. Yellow covers its entire head, breast, and belly, leaving only immaculate-white vent and undertail. Its plain (non-barred) wings and back are bluish-gray. Indeed, the Prothonotary Warbler is by far the brightest thing going within the somber swamp habitats in which it lives.

In the United States, the Prothonotary Warbler breeding range includes the southern Great Lakes region eastward through New Jersey, and southward through the entire Gulf Coast. Here in Louisiana, it probably breeds in every parish and always near water, whether it be wooded lake shores, swamps, riverbanks, bayous, or sloughs. To the delight of many, it is one of the only Louisiana warblers that will nest near human habitation – again, so long as those habitations are at least a stone's throw from permanent water. One of the few cavity-nesting wood warbler species, the Prothonotary Warbler nests in the 2-15 foot height range, often in abandoned woodpecker holes.

Prothonotary Warblers depart from their nesting locales rather early, often by early July, to gather in communal roosting sites. Similarly, fall migration begins early with the bulk of the population gone by mid-September. So attached are they to wet woodland habitats that they cling to swamps and river floodplains even during migration. Wintering grounds include the swamps associated with the Yucatan Peninsula, Central America, and northern South America, particularly northern Columbia and Venezuela. During some winters, a lingering bird or two are occasionally detected stateside along the Gulf Coast.

Greg Lavaty, photographer of vignette



Photographed by: Brian Small

2009

OCTOBER



SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
SEPTEMBER 27	28	29	30	OCTOBER 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

Monarch Butterflies peak in Louisiana's coastal zone

First wintering Orange-crowned Warblers appear

First wintering Yellow-rumped Warblers appear

Louisiana Ornithological Society Fall Meeting

SWAINSON'S WARBLER

(Limnothlypis swainsonii)

Like the Worm-eating Warbler, the Swainson's Warbler is a husky, drab-colored wood warbler of moist understory thickets that prefers bottomland hardwood and low pine forests to upland hardwoods. The combination of plain brown upperparts, dingy white underparts, a broad, whitish supercillium "eyebrow," short tail, and a relatively long, heavy bill cause the Swainson's Warbler to superficially resemble a Carolina Wren. And like the Carolina Wren, the Swainson's Warbler is a near-ground dweller, foraging through leaf litter, suspended leaf clusters, and other nooks and crannies in search of insects, larvae, spiders, centipedes, and the like.

The Swainson's Warbler is uniquely southern in its U.S. distribution, confined primarily to the southern Atlantic and Gulf Coastal states. It has also been recorded breeding in southern Illinois, eastern Kentucky, southwestern West Virginia, and even on the Delmarva Peninsula, hinting that its breeding range was once substantially larger than it is today. Within the northern reaches of its U.S. breeding range, the Swainson's Warbler shows a strong predilection for occupying streamside rhododendron thickets in mountain regions. In Louisiana, breeding Swainson's Warblers have been recorded in nearly every parish north of the coastal zone, save for a few northern tier parishes and the southwestern prairie parishes.

Swainson's Warblers' nests are bulky, often roofed affairs, almost always located within large clusters of dead leaves that accumulate on the tops of low, understory shrubs. Bottomland hardwood forests and canebrakes are the nesting habitat of choice.

Swainson's Warblers seek out similarly moist, densely-vegetated, bottomland understories on their wintering grounds, which include most of the West Indies, especially the Greater Antilles and Jamaica, as well as the Yucatan Peninsula and Belize. It also makes use of mangrove swamps in these regions.

Swainson's Warblers remain rather late on their breeding territories with some birds still singing well into August or even September in some parts of the breeding range. In Louisiana, most of our Swainson's Warblers depart by the end of September.



Photographed by: Joe Turner



2009 NOVEMBER

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

For more information, go to www.btnep.org

YELLOW-BREASTED CHAT

Icteria virens

At seven inches in total length and nearly one ounce in weight, the Yellow-breasted Chat is by far the largest of the North American wood warblers. It is also the least warbler-like in appearance, behavior, and habitat preference, so much so that the debate as to its relationship with the wood warbler clan raged on and off for many years. Most recently, DNA studies have confirmed that it is indeed a wood warbler, seeming to have settled the controversy once and for all.

Structurally, the Yellow-breasted Chat is reminiscent of the mimic thrushes (mockingbirds, thrashers, catbirds), possessing a somewhat large but streamlined body, a stout, slightly curved bill, and long legs and tail. Its unmarked upperparts range from olive to olive-gray, depending on geographical range, and its underparts are mostly a rich, saturated, lemon-yellow. Its belly and undertail are white, and thick, bright white "spectacles" and "moustacial" stripes boldly frame its face.

Habitat-wise, Yellow-breasted Chats require exceedingly dense shrub thickets and are especially fond of thorny briar thickets for nesting purposes.

Yellow-breasted Chats are widely distributed through the United States and southwestern Canada, but their western range is confined mostly to the scrub oak and juniper brushlands associated with the riparian corridors of larger river valleys. In the eastern United States they range contiguously from the southern Great Lakes through western New York and Long Island, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey, southward through the Ohio River Valley, the eastern edge of the Midwestern states, and down through the Atlantic and Gulf Coastal states. In Louisiana, the Yellow-breasted Chat has been recorded nesting in every parish.

Spring migrating Yellow-breasted Chats do not begin arriving in Louisiana until April and are not abundantly detected until the end of that month. Settling into their dense and thorny territories, they construct well-concealed, but ill-constructed cup-like nests no more than a few feet above ground level. They forage low to the ground as well, taking small insects, spiders, and crustaceans, as well as a moderate amount of fruit, including blackberry, elderberry, huckleberry, wild strawberry, and wild grape.

Greg Lavaty, photographer of vignette



Photographed by: Alan Murphy

2009

DECEMBER



SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
NOVEMBER 29	30	DECEMBER 1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14 Annual Christmas Bird Count Season begins	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25 CHRISTMAS DAY	26
27	28	29	30	31	JANUARY 1 NEW YEARS DAY	2

YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER

(Dendroica dominica)

Like the Pine Warbler, this long-billed, medium-sized warbler (5.00-5.25 inches) possesses a tell-tale “creeping” style of foraging, treading somewhat slowly along larger branches while probing its bill into bark crevices, leaf bases, and the like. It also often exhibits a more kinetic foraging style more typically associated with warblers.

Four recognizable subspecies of the Yellow-throated Warbler exist, the most striking being the resident subspecies of the Bahamas, *Dendroica dominica flavescens*, which possesses an exaggeratedly long and decurved bill, resembling that of a Brown Creeper’s.

All adult Yellow-throated Warblers possess bright yellow breasts and throats, handsomely bordered by black-streaked sides and cheeks. Like the Northern Parula, Yellow-throated Warblers have steely-blue upperparts, set off by white underparts, wingbars, and supercilia “eyebrows” which extend back onto the sides of the neck. Also like the Northern Parula, the undertail of the Yellow-throated is primarily white, set off by rather vague, dark, club-shaped edges. The Yellow-throated’s tail is proportionately much longer than that of the Northern Parula’s.

In Louisiana, Yellow-throateds seem to use both pines and bald cypress for nesting, although bald cypress, especially those with Spanish moss, seem to be preferred. There they build either hanging pensile nests within the moss itself or cup-shaped nests on horizontal branches and forks.

In the United States, Yellow-throated Warblers range from New Jersey westward to southeastern Kansas, and southward through southern and eastern Texas through the Gulf Coast and into the Bahamas. In Louisiana, breeding Yellow-throateds have been recorded throughout most of the state, but more scarcely so in the riparian forests of the southwestern prairie parishes and the longleaf pine parishes of western and southeastern Louisiana.

Migrating Yellow-throated Warblers can be found in most any woodland in Louisiana, including urban forests. A few overwinter here each year, primarily within urban forests in southern Louisiana, although at least one winter record (13, January 1980) comes from as far north as Shreveport, Louisiana. The bulk of the U.S. population overwinters in eastern and southern Mexico, southward through Costa Rica. Eastern U.S. birds tend to overwinter from extreme southeastern South Carolina southward through peninsular Florida in the riparian forests of the southwestern prairie parishes and the longleaf pine parishes of western and southeastern Louisiana. George Lowery, Jr. (*Louisiana Birds 1974*) mentions both dry mixed pine-oak forests and wet bottomland swamps as preferred breeding habitat in our state.

Yellow-throated Warblers are notoriously early spring migrants in Louisiana, with the first few trickling into the southern parishes as early as mid-February. The bulk of our nesting birds arrive in March, and depart as early as late August, with a few detections extending as late as the last of October.

Greg Lavaty, photographer of vignette

BARATARIA-TERREBONNE NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAM

PROTECTION OF HABITAT FOR MIGRATORY AND RESIDENT BIRDS

Nearly a decade ago, the **Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program (BTNEP)** began the implementation of one of its priority action plans – an action plan entitled **Protection of Habitat for Migratory and Resident Birds**. The first step toward implementing that plan was to gather up interested folks – those who shared a passion for birds whether they were birders, ornithologists, wildlife managers, avian tourism professionals, or just interested citizens. Each year, this group was responsible for developing project concepts that addressed issues outlined in the plan. Initially, much of the focus has been on education. More recently however, BTNEP has undertaken habitat restoration projects as well as research and monitoring efforts. Below is a summary.

For a free copy of any reports, posters, videos, calendars, or other products, contact us at **(800) 259-0869**, send an email request to Sandra at sandra@btnep.org or download pdf versions at www.btnep.org.

EDUCATIONAL PRODUCTS

One of the first bird related educational products developed by BTNEP was the documentary video entitled **Wings Over the Wetlands**. This 30-minute video presented information on Louisiana's habitats and the connection to the many millions of birds that can be found here. **Wings Over the Wetlands** was aired on Louisiana Public Broadcasting channels and local outlets soon after it was developed. Today we still distribute many copies of this video and have now included it along with two other documentary films on coastal Louisiana as part of a DVD package.



Soon after releasing the documentary video, BTNEP developed a poster that served as a companion piece. The title **The Habitats of Barataria-Terrebonne: Their Importance to Migratory and Resident Birds** focuses on Louisiana's wet-



land habitats and the connection of those habitats to birds. Other information pertaining to

Louisiana's success stories, particularly those that involved the Brown Pelican and Bald Eagle were also presented, as were examples of those birds that are now extinct including the Passenger Pigeon and Carolina Parakeet. Later, this information was updated and reformatted as an 8.5 X 11-inch publication.

More recently, BTNEP developed a report on Louisiana's cheniere habitats entitled **Vanishing Before Our Eyes: Louisiana Cheniere Woods and the Birds that Depend on Them**. This report presents information on the natural history of cheniere landforms (coastal woodlands) and their connection to birds. Chenieres are rather unique habitat types specific to the northern Gulf Coast occurring from eastern Louisiana into eastern Texas. There is a strong ecological connection between these habitats and Neotropical migrants particularly in the spring during inclement weather. These coastal forests provide for phenomenal birding opportunities where many species of songbirds can be seen during a single outing.



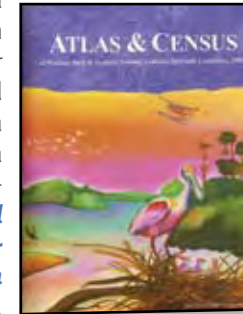
To increase awareness of bird migration patterns and the importance of Louisiana's habitats to migratory birds, BTNEP developed a **poster focusing on Louisiana's role for both temperate and Neotropical migrant birds**. The poster presents a few examples of different migrant birds depicting both their breeding ranges and winter ranges while showing Louisiana as an important stopover for transient migrants and important habitat for winter (temperate) migrants.



MONITORING AND RESEARCH

In 2001, BTNEP partly funded and collaborated with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S.G.S. National Wetlands Research Center to conduct aerial surveys of colonial nesting wading bird and shorebird colonies through-

out the lower half of the state. Although we were unable to statistically show declines in many populations of these species, the data do indicate a continued downward trend in the population of many of our colonial nesting wading bird and shorebird species. The 2001 data were combined with earlier data and were presented in a technical report entitled **Atlas and Census of Wading Bird & Seabird Nesting Colonies in South Louisiana 2001**. Then, in 2006, BTNEP funded a new aerial survey and again partnered with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, U.S.G.S. National Wetlands Research Center, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Gulf Coast Joint Venture Office to determine the impacts of Hurricane Katrina and Rita on colonial nesting wading birds and shorebirds. These data along with that of previous surveys and data collected during the 2008 breeding season will be compiled as part of an updated wading bird/shorebird atlas in the near future.



Throughout the spring and early summer of 2005, BTNEP worked in collaboration with the National Audubon Society and the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries to conduct a ground survey along the entire Louisiana coast to develop a baseline of information on select species of beach nesting birds including Wilson's and Snowy Plovers, American Oystercatchers, and Least Terns. This ground survey represented the first time that a holistic effort to cover the entire Louisiana coast has ever been undertaken. Beginning in April 2005, teams of biologists, research assistants, and interested birders combed the headland and barrier island beaches across the coast from the Chandeleur Islands in the east to the Sabine River in the west locating breeding pairs of these birds and using GPS to identify their locations. Data collected during this project was presented in a technical report entitled **Status of Select Beach-Nesting Birds in Coastal Louisiana 2005**. Another similar effort will likely be initiated in 2010 where the data will be used to suggest trends in populations of these birds.



BIRD FESTIVALS

For years now, BTNEP has worked with numerous organizations including the Grand Isle Port Commission, Grand Isle School, Grand Isle Tourist Commission, Landry House Bed & Breakfast, Louisiana Ornithological Society, Orleans Audubon Society, Terrebonne Bird Club, The Nature Conservancy of Louisiana, Town of Grand Isle and many others to hold the annual **Grand Isle Migratory Bird Celebration**. Now in preparation for its eleventh year, the annual gathering has grown from a one-day event in the late 90's to a now three-day festival that offers Grand Isle residents and interested birders numerous opportunities to see and learn about many different species of birds. The forests, back barrier marshes, and sandy beaches of Grand Isle are considered one of the premiere birding destinations in North America. The island's hackberry, live oak, and red mulberry forests are particularly important to many species of colorful songbirds including tanagers, buntings, grosbeaks, warblers, vireos, thrushes, and many others.



HABITAT RESTORATION

In 2001, the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program and the Greater Lafourche Port Commission fostered a partnership with other organizations to **reestablish a chenier ridge and adjacent coastal marsh habitats in southeast Louisiana.** These ridge habitats and associated wetlands are extremely important to millions of migrating Neotropical songbirds that cross the Gulf of Mexico in the spring each year on their way back to breeding grounds in the eastern United States and Canada.

Constructed in phases, each of the three components will mean the restoration of more than 100 acres of chenier ridge/marsh habitat. Both phases one and two are currently under construction, representing the western reach of this project. Both grasses and woody plants native to Louisiana are currently being planted.

Woody plants that are being used include those that are known to be important to Neotropical migrating songbirds including live oak, red mulberry, hackberry, yaupon, and others.

This restoration project has occurred largely through the generous contributions of numerous funding partners. To date, project partners include the following: Greater Lafourche Port Commission, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Louisiana Department of Natural Resources, Natural Resource Conservation Service, ConocoPhillips, Shell Oil Company, Gulf of Mexico Foundation, Gulf of Mexico Program, and the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program. Each of these partners has provided funding/labor resources to make this project a reality.

Recently identified as a sanctuary where no consumptive use is allowed, the finished area will be one of the premier bird-

ing destinations in Louisiana. Boardwalks, foot bridges, observation platforms, signage, and an interpretive center will be constructed to promote avian tourism at the site.

COMPLETING THE AMERICAS WETLAND BIRDING TRAIL

To complete parts of the America's Wetland Birding Trail, the BTNEP program has funded and coordinated with a number of organizations to begin construction of boardwalks, observation platforms, kiosks, and parking areas at select sites that comprise the trail. Most recently, BTNEP partnered with the Orleans Audubon Society and the Houma Area Convention and Visitors Bureau to begin construction of a parking area at the **Marguerite Moffett sanctuary site south of Houma, LA.** In the near future, construction begins on an 800-foot boardwalk, observation platform and kiosk at the site.

Another recent partnership with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries is resulting in the construction of two separate observation platforms, kiosks, and a boardwalk at the **Pointe aux Chene Wildlife Management Area.**

Other partnerships with organizations including the Louisiana Nature Conservancy, Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium, Woodlands Trails and Park and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have resulted in the construction of trails, foot bridges, and kiosks at several sites throughout southeast Louisiana. Future projects with new partners are in the works.

These projects represent just some of the activities in which the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program has been involved. For more information on these projects and others, visit our web site, www.btnep.org.



BTNEP

BARATARIA-TERREBONNE NATIONAL ESTUARY PROGRAM

This document was published by:

Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program
Nicholls State University Campus
P.O. Box 2663
Thibodaux, LA, 70310
1-800-259-0869

Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program thanks **ConocoPhillips Company** for their generous contribution in printing this calendar.


ConocoPhillips

Front Cover, photographers clockwise from top left: Louisiana Waterthrush - David Cagnolatti, Kentucky Warbler - Jim Johnson, Prairie Warbler - Greg Lavaty, Common Yellowthroat - David Cagnolatti, American Redstart - Greg Lavaty, Black-and-white Warbler - Greg Lavaty, Swainson Warbler - Greg Lavaty, Yellow-throated Warbler - Greg Lavaty, Prothonotary Warbler - Greg Lavaty, Yellow-breasted Chat - Greg Lavaty, Hooded Warbler - Joe Turner, Northern Parula - Greg Lavaty



Boardwalk, Dennis Demcheck, photographer

For more information, go to www.btnep.org

SOUTH LOUISIANA



AMERICA'S WETLAND BIRDING TRAIL

1. I-10 Eastbound Welcome Center
337-589-7774
2. Sabine National Wildlife Refuge Visitors Center
337-762-3816
3. Southwest Louisiana Convention & Visitors Bureau
337-436-9588
4. Rockefeller State Wildlife Refuge
337-538-2276
5. Cameron Prairie National Wildlife Refuge
337-598-2216
6. Lacassine National Wildlife Refuge Headquarters
337-774-5923
7. Lafayette Convention & Visitors Commission
337-232-3737
8. Acadiana Park Nature Station
337-291-8448
9. Vermilion Parish Tourist Commission Visitors Center
337-898-6600

10. Atchafalaya Welcome Center
337-228-1094
11. Lake Fausse Pointe State Park Visitors Center
888-677-7200
12. Iberia Parish Convention & Visitors Bureau
888-942-3742
13. Tabasco® Pepper Sauce Factory
337-365-8173
14. Cajun Coast Convention & Visitors Bureau
Franklin, LA 70538 • 337-828-2555
15. Cajun Coast Convention & Visitors Bureau
Patterson, LA 70392 • 985-395-4905
16. Louis Armstrong International Airport
Kenner, LA 70062
17. New Orleans Metropolitan
Convention & Visitors Bureau
504-566-5011

18. Audubon Louisiana Nature Center
504-861-2537
19. Audubon Aquarium of the Americas
800-774-7394
20. Audubon Zoo
866-487-2966
21. Houma Area Convention & Visitors Bureau
985-868-2732
22. Wetlands Acadian Cultural Center
985-448-1375
23. W.J. DeFolice Marine Center LUMCON
985-851-2800
24. Lafourche Parish Tourist Commission
985-537-5800
25. Grand Isle State Park Visitors Center
985-787-2559
26. Grand Isle Tourist Information
985-787-2997

27. Plaquemines Tourism Center
Belle Chasse, LA 70037 • 504-394-0018
28. Barataria Preserve Visitors Center Jean Lafitte
504-589-2330
29. BREC's Baton Rouge Zoo
225-775-3877
30. State Capitol Welcome Center
225-342-7317
31. Tickfaw State Park Nature Center
888-981-2020
32. Fontainebleau State Park
888-677-6451
33. I-10 Slidell Welcome Center
985-646-6451

For more information or a copy of an
America's Wetland Birding Trail brochure,
contact any of these locations.



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Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program thanks ConocoPhillips for their generous contribution in printing this calendar.