

LOUISIANA



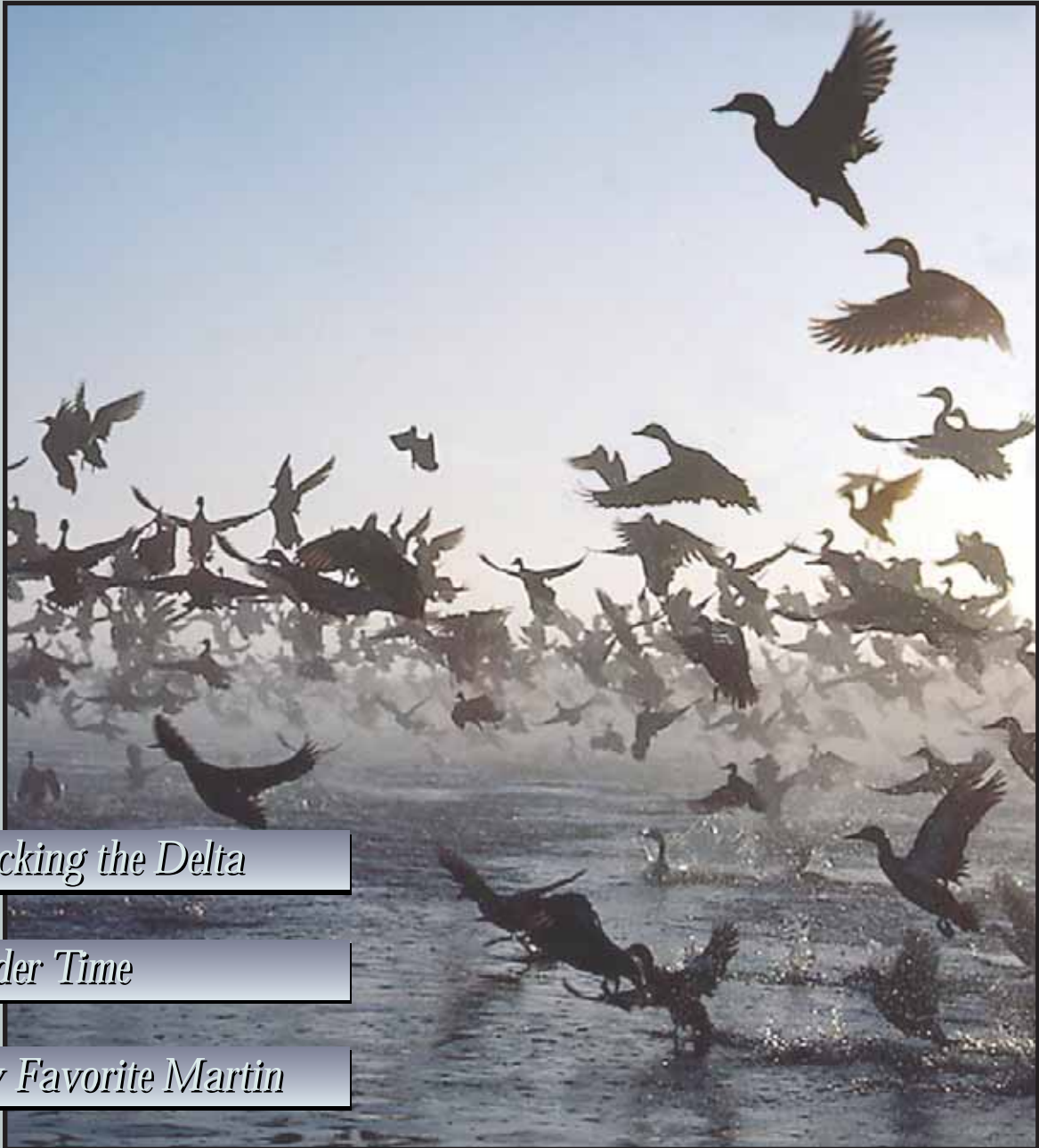
# Wildlife

FEDERATION

Number 1

Volume 35

Winter, 2007



*Ducking the Delta*

*Feeder Time*

*My Favorite Martin*

NON-PROFIT  
ORGANIZATION  
PAID  
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Baton Rouge, LA



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**Editorial Creed:** To create and encourage an awareness among the people of Louisiana of the need for wise use and proper management of those resources of the earth upon which the lives and welfare of all people depend: the soil, the air, the water, the forests, the minerals, the plant life, and the wildlife.

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**On the Cover....**

*Ducks! For over 30 years the Atchafalaya Delta has been a Mecca for ducks and duck hunters. The 1973 Mississippi River flood accelerated land building in the Atchafalaya Bay depositing tons of rich sediment. The emerging land was quickly colonized by vegetation and the process continues. The variety of ducks and other wetland fowl found on the delta is astonishing and worth a visit in any season. Photo by Jon Barry.*

## FROM THE PRESIDENT



*Terry L.  
Melancon*



I would like to offer a special LWF welcome to the new LDWF Secretary, former State Representative Bryant Hammett of Ferriday. I look forward to working with him in the future. Soon after being appointed, Secretary Hammett, an LWF member and recent Sponsor, thought to call our office while browsing through the fall issue of this magazine. He called to express his desire to work with the Federation as he pursues the conservation work of the Department and to be available to participate in LWF functions. It is nice to have people in government leadership roles that are eager to work with and be

responsive to their constituents.

By now you have probably determined whether or not your hunting season was as successful as you anticipated it to be, or if the fall and winter fishing was comparable to previous years. This time of the year is usually filled with big adventures for me but I have been slowed down by an illness this winter. The few trips that I have made here close to home have been enjoyable. I saw several species of wildlife that are somewhat unusual or were observed under unusual circumstances for my neck of the woods. Turkeys, normally a rare sight in the swamps I haunt near my home just south of Baton Rouge, have become a regular sight on our hardwood ridges. LDWF stocked this area with turkeys more than a decade ago, and while the habitat is certainly not ideal, I suspect they must have had a couple of good nesting seasons because I see that the population is increasing. For some reason unknown to me a flock of mourning doves has been making regular visits to a pipeline right-of-way near the edge of the

swamp. While they are a common sight in my yard and around the neighborhood, this flock of doves prefers the swamp - something I have never seen before. I like to call them my swamp doves.

My neighborhood is one of the fastest growing areas in the state. The development is not necessarily smart and I fear the community will suffer the consequences in the future. Just this week I saw a large track hoe grubbing out a coulee near what will be the main entrance of a large subdivision which is under construction. The little area of swamp has existed for lifetimes. It is a frequent haunt of egrets, herons and woodducks and over the years many a sack of crawfish has been netted from its waters. But alas, now it will probably be reduced to a pond with a spraying fountain just like every other new development in the neighborhood. Why the developer could not see the importance and character that this wetland could add to his development I don't

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## FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



*Randy  
Lanctot*



You might say this issue of *Louisiana WILDLIFE Federation* magazine is "for the birds." If you look through the pages you'll see something about eagles and ducks, finches, martins and grebes. I think that birds link us, a lot like social culture and music does. There's a seemingly infinite variety of them and they are ever-present in the outdoors. They are colorful and unique, interesting and entertaining, even educational. They soar and flutter like musical notes plucked by the Master. Because they are so apparent, they are easy subjects for wildlife observation, and in the South this time of year, they are abundant.

Last week I saw a little male painted bunting scratching in the rose bed outside

my living room window. I was startled to see this species so early in the year. They don't normally appear until April. I was informed by a more knowledgeable birder that a few of these strikingly-colored birds winter in our area rather than head to the tropics in the fall with others of their species. Regardless, seeing one in the yard the second week of January was a first, and a treat, for me. Another interesting find were the four white-winged doves that visited my feeder a few days ago. It's always fun to see something different from the routine, and with watching birds, you can count on it.

Talking about birds puts me in a good frame of mind to look at the challenges of the new year. In some respects, this will be a watershed year for Louisiana, and I don't mean because we are having one of the rainiest Januaries ever. The tragic hurricanes of 2005 are distant enough to allow for calm and progressive thinking about the future of our state. There's enough "edge" to both state and national politics for ideas to emerge that can meaningfully address longterm health, economic, conservation, and other quality of life issues. Of course,

the sword of politics has two edges, opportunity on one side, danger on the other. This will be the year, I hope, that the people of our state adopt a plan to live better on the coast, a practical and doable plan that avoids the poor assumptions and mistakes of the past. That plan will include what will be done for protection from storms from the Gulf and for restoration of the land that has vanished before our eyes over the past 80 years. That land, between our communities and the sea, not only provided the space and friction to reduce threats to more inland areas from storms, it was Nature's cornucopia of abundance that seeded and nurtured a large portion of Louisiana's economy and culture. The plans and programs should distinguish between want and need, between gamble and reality. That is essential. We'll be spending a lot of other people's money. The "Louisiana Speaks" process is ongoing, as is the development of the Master Coastal Protection (and Restoration) Plan. It is vital that all citizens take notice and be involved in the processes. Take the survey. Visit the

*Continued on page 26*



# Ducking the Delta with J. W. and Gus



*Mudflats quickly populate with wetland plants on the emerging delta landscape.*

*by Randy Lanctot*

It was early in the week and I was at the office working my way through a pile of “todos” when the phone rang. It was the call I’d been waiting for, for years!

“Hey, boy, you want to make a hunt next week?” came J. W.’s voice over the line. He was inviting me to join him for a few days of duck hunting on the Atchafalaya Delta. Although he had made the offer a time or two before, it had been on short notice requiring spontaneous acceptance, something work and other obligations too often prevent me from doing. Now, he was actually giving me advance notice and a couple of days to decide.

I pondered the invitation, my mind peering over the horizon into next week. This could work, I thought. I accepted without further hesitation and took down the details. I would meet J. W. next Wednesday at “Serenity,” his little houseboat moored in a pass of the west delta, and hunt with him and Gus the next three mornings. He gave me instructions on how to get to the landing and what to bring — food & beverage, gun, ammo, camo, sleeping bag, the usual personal items and extra gas for the

duck boat. “Did I mention GAS?” he reminded.

I was pumped; my heart lighter, the world brighter as I anticipated the adventure.

Atchafalaya Bay is where I cut my Louisiana duck hunting teeth. It was the mid-seventies and the Bay’s reputation as a

haven for waterfowl and a duck hunter’s paradise was just beginning to seep beyond local knowledge. In the company of other LSU wildlife grad students, we probed the fowling prospects of the newly-emerging delta. The big Mississippi River flood of 1973 produced land almost overnight as billions of cubic feet of sediment-laden water diverted through the Atchafalaya Floodway and spilled into the sprawling bay. Delicacies like delta duck potato, a mallard favorite, proliferated in the new mud, along with a variety of aquatics savored by the storied canvasback and other divers. Willows sprouted on the higher ground with bull rush, roseau cane and other grasses and moist-soil waterfowl food plants invading the openings and edges. Just getting to the bay was an adventure. Piloting small aluminum boats stacked with decoys and other gear down the Intracoastal Waterway and then the Lower Atchafalaya River in pitch blackness, aided by the superfluous beam of small headlamps, then, as the delta rose from the bay in the growing dawn light, with skeins of ducks, wading and shorebirds filling the horizon in every direction....we shivered like retrievers in anticipation.

A few years later, Governor Edwards claimed the developing delta for the state and the Atchafalaya Delta Wildlife Management Areas was established. If for nothing else, that one act of wisdom is worth



*Houseboats are restricted to a designated mooring on the Atchafalaya Delta Wildlife Management Area.*



*"Serenity"- home sweet home on the delta.*

remembering Edwin Edwards for.

That was then and this was now, though. It had been a long time since I had hunted Atchafalaya Bay and I tried to refresh my memory of where the landing was, the best way to get there and what to expect. Since I had written down J. W.'s instructions, at least as I understood them, I figured that it would be a breeze. I'd be running my old Louisiana Traveler boat which was certainly sea-worthy enough, but had not been in the water for months. I spent the next few evenings piling my waterfowling gear on the floor in the spare bedroom and getting the boat and trailer ready with freshly-charged battery, new gas, tire, lube and light check. After I ran the outboard on the hosepipe for a few minutes, I was satisfied that the rig could make the trip.

That done, I readied for a weekend deer hunt immediately ahead. Since this story is about ducking, the only thing I'll say about the deer hunt is that I had a great time and did harvest a nice buck. There would be fresh venison to share with J. W. and Gus.

I was running late when I pulled the boat out of the carport. I'd be lucky to get to camp before dark and was counting on the day's lingering light to "keep 'er between the buoys" when navigating the channel.

J. W.'s camp is located in the western part of Atchafalaya Bay, referred to by some as the Wax Lake delta to distinguish it from the Lower Atchafalaya River delta. Same bay and same delta, but the more recent Wax Lake Outlet, which was dredged to give added flood protection to the Morgan City

Area, has formed its own distinctive delta

within the delta complex. I had never been to "The Wax" before, so it would be unfamiliar territory, from the landing to the designated houseboat mooring. After backtracking a few times while trying to match J. W.'s directions with my surroundings, I arrived at a very nice landing off LA 182 west of Morgan City. It appeared to be the one J. W. described over the phone, but it seemed strange that there were no other vehicles or trailers in the lot. Since it was the middle of the week and close to dark with the wind whipping white caps from a frontal passage, it made sense that few boaters would be out. But none? That should have told me something. I put my launch fee in the slot and backed down the ramp.

The sun was setting as I put the boat in and secured my gear and several boxes filled with ice and supplies. I buttoned my shirt up to the collar, zipped the life vest and got underway despite my growing



*J. W. piloting the duck boat.*





*Poule d'eaus scatter ahead of the boat.*

doubts. I navigated south toward Hwy 90 expecting a bridge to pass under. There was no bridge, just a dead end and closed flood-gate. Must be the other direction, I thought. So I turned the wheel and headed back up past the landing, just knowing the channel would break to the west giving passage to the outlet. By this time it was dark. I was running with the paltry aid of a penlight headlamp and my boat's navigation lights. The big beam was at home in the garage. I made a mental note: Bring the light next time, dummy! After burning a couple gallons of gas, I was back at the landing, demoralized and pulling out. Later I would learn that I had been cruising in Bayou Teche.

I tried to call J. W. to report my status, still hoping to make the run before bedtime. No reception. It was almost 8 PM when I stopped at a convenience store. After talking a few minutes with the night manager, I at once recognized the error I made interpreting J. W.'s directions. I reconsidered changing a night run down the white-capping outlet and opted for a hotel room and early morning start. But first, for peace of mind and a good night's sleep, I rode down to the landing. There it was in the logical place, the parking area scattered with vehicles and trailers. I'd been better off without those directions, I thought.

As if planned, a freight train rumbled by the hotel about 3:30 AM, a perfect wake-up call. I hustled to reload and secure the boat with everything I had removed to the locked

cab of my truck and room the night before. The hotel was a little on the sleazy side and I didn't want gear, gas tanks and battery to "walk away" in the night. The exertion got my blood flowing and I was on my way.

I was the first to the landing, but even at that early hour, a small line of vehicles trailering boats and carrying duck hunters cued up as I launched. I was edgy as I cranked the motor and pointed the bow down the outlet in the windy darkness. Done this before, I thought. I relaxed and enjoyed the thrill of a nighttime cruise on unfamiliar water.

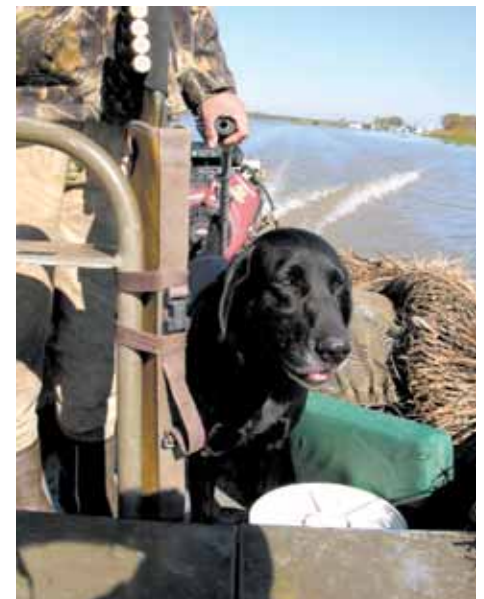
Fortunately, the Wax Lake Outlet is arrow-straight and roomy enough for safe navigation, even by a stranger in the dark of night. The run from the landing to the camp was about 11 miles and it was comforting to think that I could no longer get sidetracked (like the day before); that the sky would get lighter rather than darker as I proceeded. After the first barge tow pushed up the channel past me, I focused all my attention on reaching Serenity in one piece.

There was a little crescent moon rising before the sun that helped keep me oriented as the channel passed through Wax Lake toward the delta. Sensing proximity to the cut where the house boats would be moored, I intently searched the west bank hoping to see lights from the camps of early-rising hunters that would guide me to Serenity. There was nothing but darkness so I continued down the channel. Before I knew it, the channel opened to the bay. Wind and waves

bucked the hull as I swung it around and idled back in the direction from which I came, wondering how I could have passed the designated houseboat area without seeing it. I drifted off course and found myself stuck in the mud. By that time dawn was creeping and I knew I'd be late for the morning hunt.

I was somewhat amazed at how calm I was. After killing the motor, I sat down for a moment to assess the situation, then trimmed it up and grabbed the push-pole to free the boat from the mud. A few minutes later I was back underway, more confident of my position. I noticed lights to the left and proceeded toward them. There were the house boats and a few hunters prepping for the morning's hunt. I realized then that when I had passed this point in the dark, the hunters were still in bed. That's why there were no lights. This close to the hunting ground, there was little need to get up so early. Rather than search for Serenity, I asked one of the hunters for J. W.'s location. "Over there," he said, pointing to a little white houseboat on the other side. "Go get his \_\_\_ out of bed." I eased across and saw Gus, tail wagging, perched on the deck.

I was surprised there was no activity in the camp, so I hollered to J. W. that I had finally arrived. A moment later he emerged from the doorway. "How'd you get here?" he asked. I guess he was still waking up. "How else?" I replied, gesturing to my boat. "You came in the dark?" he questioned. "When you didn't show up yesterday I thought you decided not to come." He said something



*Gus keeps his place beside J. W. on the ride back to the camp.*



*Two lures hang from the hooks on the houseboat "porch."*

about being impressed with my navigation skills. I shrugged. "It's a long story. Let's go hunting."

First there was orientation. J. W. gave instructions on what gear to leave on the deck and what could and should not be brought in the cabin, when and where to clean off boots, and the sequence of loading gear and loosing the lines when shoving the duck boat off. Then, there was a mental walk-through of duties required to set up the boat and decoy spread for the hunt. "Aye, Aye, Sir," I was thinking (but not saying). Some details sunk in. Others would have to be repeated, several times, over the next couple of days. I was too fired up for hunting to absorb everything at once.

It was well past sunrise when we set off with Gus to a submerged flat way out in the bay. A rule of thumb for hunting the delta is to get as far out into the bay as you can safely hunt, which, if you have a duck boat, is as far out as the water is still shallow enough to set the spuds. That first set was a doozy. Although the spud stakes were pointed, the sand below was reluctant to yield under my "jooging" as J. W. called the motion of working the spuds up and down through guide holes that were welded to each corner of the boat. Even J. W. with his considerable heft struggled. "Sometimes it takes awhile," he said as I pressed my full 160 pounds to the task. We were both sweating in our heavy waders when we finally drove the stakes to their full length. That finished, we spread 6 dozen decoys off either end of the boat.

"Keep them thick," J. W. admonished more than once. We obviously had different concepts of what "thick" was. Then we raised the blind frame which was covered with woven grass and we stuck palmetto fronds in the mesh to provide added screening and to break up the angular outline. I fastened the



*Evening falls over the Atchafalaya Delta.*

step for Gus off the bow and we draped grass "skirts" to cover the openings fore and aft, and over the deck to reduce glare. I was impressed with J. W.'s system and understood why he likes to have company on these

hunts. Having just had his knee replaced, setting this rig up solo would be a challenge, and impossible in bad weather regardless of physical condition. Gus took his spot between us and we settled back to talk and watch the sky for approaching birds.

Since it was getting late in the morning, with a light breeze, partly cloudy skies and relatively warm temperatures, the duck activity was light. There were a few divers about, and I bagged a beautiful drake redhead and a hen for my first ducks of the season while J. W. scratched on some teal and do gris. He looked at his gun with irritation. "Your on today," he complimented. I'm sure my wing-shooting reputation for sporadic and sometimes no accuracy had preceded me, but after the journey to get here, the pressure was off. I was relaxed and having fun. "Just pointing and shooting," I said. We whiled away the time assessing the qualities of mutual friends and acquaintances. I bagged a straggling ringneck before we pulled up and went in.

I enjoyed the scenic ride back, watching poule d'eau scatter ahead of the boat and harriers gliding and dipping low over the marsh. The place was a huge playground for many species in addition to waterfowl, and

for people, mostly hunters who braved the boat ride, the weather, mud and the strenuous field work of setting up to shoot ducks.

*Continued on page 27*



# Feeder Time!

By Randy Lanctot

“Yikes, low 20s and I haven’t put out my feeders yet,” I thought as I listened to the weather radio in the kitchen. “They’ll just have to hunker down till the weekend.”

It was mid December - about the time of year I usually hang the silo feeder and the thistle “socks” to provide the birds in the neighborhood a winter snack. But I had been busy with other things and the cold weather crept up on me. By Saturday I had a fresh sack of black sunflower seeds along with safflower and thistle seeds. I filled the silo feeder with the sunflower and safflower seed making attractive, contrasting black and white layers in the feeder and hung it, along



*A silo style bird feeder being used by house finches.*

with the two “socks” bulging with thistle seed, on a line strung between the garage and the muscadine trellis in the backyard. Surprising to me there was not much activity over the next few days, despite the recent cold temperatures. I should have remembered that it takes a while for the birds to locate the goods.

I do not feed in the spring, summer and fall months. For me, there are just too many other yard things to do to make tending and watching feeders an attractive pastime. In the winter, though, watching birds at a feed-

er is high entertainment and provides a real spirit boost during this often dreary time of year. Of course, there are more reasons to feed than that. For those curious about nature, it is of great interest to know the resident and visiting wildlife in the neighborhood, to compare the variety and abundance of species from year to year in response to weather patterns and population trends, and to one-up fellow feeders by being the first to observe a new migrant or unusual species.

I know others, like my mother way up in Illinois, who keep the feeder (or should I say, feederS) going all year long. There’s one hanging from the soffit, another just outside the kitchen window, one on a stand just far enough from the apple tree to keep squirrels from leaping to it, and a couple hanging from tree limbs that are usually empty. She’ll tell you that the action at the feeders is better than watching Dr. Phil. Despite the irritation of wiping out all the feed and chewing up the feeders, even the bold and greedy fox and gray squirrels bring a smile with the drama and action they bring to the scene. She made a request, though, that on my next visit I bring the pellet rifle in addition to “J” my Jack Russell terrier. (She didn’t say to bring the Dutch oven, but....).

One truth should be told here; feeding birds is more for the feed provider than for the birds. Wildlife can fare well enough without handouts from people. There may be a few exceptions and circumstances that warrant artificial feeding to help wildlife survive a brief extreme situation, but those are uncommon. Really, if birds needed people to feed them to survive, there wouldn’t be very many around to feed.

It took a few days for the action to pick up at the silo feeder. First the English sparrows (exotic weaver finches that make a nuisance of themselves by displacing native species and tucking their messy nests in every available cranny, nests that absorb moisture and rot the wood under the eaves of your home), then the mourning doves and house finches came in flocks. The cardinals noticed the action and timidly darted in to pick up a sunflower seed, then back to the peace of the muscadine arbor. Here and there came a titmouse after the safflower, and a Carolina chickadee or two. The chicks pick a safflower

seed and then go to the vines where they pin the seed against a vine to pry it out of the hull. Not able to resist the action, there came a diminutive kinglet, a ruby-crowned. This is one of my favorite birds. Mostly drab olive plumage helps to keep it under cover, but a distinct white eye ring, a tiny tuft of ruby feathers on the back of its head and highly animated movement along with its bold and curious nature combine to give this little bird a whimsical, endearing character. On occasion I’ve had them join me in the deer stand, just to see who else was up there in that tree. An insect-eater, the kinglet didn’t visit the feeder, but gleaned scale insects and other tiny bugs from the vines.

The goldfinches didn’t show until the day after Christmas. That’s about right for my yard in Baton Rouge, based on my feeder experience over the years. They come between Christmas and New Years days. By January 3rd I had a couple dozen working over the thistle socks. The American goldfinch comes south with white wing bars and mostly olive plumage, but as winter wanes, the males will gradually molt into the breeding suit that earns them the name “wild canary” on the breeding grounds up north. (When I see one on my Mom’s feeder and call her attention to a goldfinch, she says, “Oh, there’s a wild canary.” That’s what we called them when we were kids, too, frequently coming upon them while exploring the now mostly-gone prairies of those wonderful times.)

If you attract goldfinches to your feeders, you may notice that the birds disappear as spring nears, but a week or two later, they are back. This time most of the males have made the transition to the bright yellow under black wing breeding plumage. What I think is happening is that the birds that disappear from the feeder have begun their migration north while those showing up later in their new yellow suits are birds that wintered further south. They stop and spend a few days to fuel up before resuming their flight to the breeding grounds. It’s hard to imagine a more striking combination of color than the bright canary yellow of the goldfinches against the new green leaves of spring.

If you haven’t tried it, now is a good



time to get started feeding birds. I recommend trying a thistle sock which is available in most garden sections of retailers like Lowe's, Home Depot and WalMart as well as



*Thistle "socks" are a favorite of the American goldfinch. The birds extract the thistle seed through the sock mesh.*

local hardware and garden stores. The thistle seed is fairly expensive, but a few pounds, or a sock-full will probably get you through the rest of the goldfinch season. Silo-style feeders are a good choice for feeding other seeds. You can spend \$10, or more than \$50 on these rigs. Fill it with black oil sunflower seed to attract cardinals and other finches, mourning doves, chickadees and titmice. It's a fun, easy and relatively inexpensive way to enjoy wildlife while learning a little something about the wild world we live in.

Note: An important precaution to avoid unintended bird mortality associated with feeding is to locate your feeder away from windows with large reflective surfaces. Birds perceive the sky reflected off a window as the real thing, and when a disturbance causes them to flee the feeder, they may hit the window at breakneck speed causing, you guessed it, a broken neck. If such collisions occur, either move the feeder or apply paper cutouts to the window so the birds will recognize it as a surface rather than open air. Another precaution is to locate bird feeders where the feeder and the area around them, including the ground under them, is not susceptible to ambush by your or your neighbor's roaming cats. It's a bird feeder, not a cat feeder!

#### **The Big Feed**

You may have heard that the East Baton

Rouge Public Library is participating in a program called "The Big Read: One Book/One Community." It's a community-wide reading program sponsored by the Baton Rouge Area Chamber (covering 9 parishes) and funded with \$20,000 from The National Endowment for the Arts with several other prominent supporting funders. The idea is to get everyone to read the same book ("To Kill A Mockingbird") with the thought that it will help bring the region together through citizens sharing the experience of reading the same good book, and talking about it and how it relates to their community. This is a serious endeavor and I think that it's an excellent idea. It got me to thinking, though, that feeding birds and talking about what you observe to other feeders is another way for a community to share an educational and thought-provoking experience. We could call it "The Big Feed." Just about everyone with a place to hang a bird feeder could participate, although there's a little more expense involved than with just borrowing or buying a book. But for a cheap or handmade feeder and \$10 worth of feed, anyone can "join the club," so to speak. You don't have to go all out with multiple feeders and tons of seed. Plus, it's WILD and more entertaining than most books, and raises lots of good questions, some with answers, some



*Three male goldfinches in bright breeding plumage make a stop at the feeder before resuming their migration north.*

without. The Big Read/The Big Feed. Sounds like a good idea to me.

*Bare Cypress: Continued from page 13*

conspicuous birds can be spotted. Remember, over 175 bird species can be found in the area through the course of a year.

#### **Eagle Expo Soaring Into Second Year**

The Second Annual Eagle Expo will be held in Morgan City on February 8-10, 2007. The Eagle Expo is a tribute to the return of the American Bald Eagle. This year's events include a series of boat tours into Lake Verret, Bayou Black, the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway via Bayou Boeuf and the Atchafalaya Basin. Other events include a welcome reception, an evening social and dinner with presentations at the Louisiana State Museum at Patterson sponsored by the America's WETLAND Campaign, breakfast, seminars and a picnic lunch at Brownell Memorial Park, a designated birding sanctuary.

The Cajun Coast Visitors & Convention Bureau has partnered with the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program, the America's WETLAND Campaign, Louisiana Department of Wildlife & Fisheries, Louisiana Department of Natural Resources, Brownell Memorial Park & Carillon Tower and volunteer birding enthusiasts to host an event that will showcase the American Bald Eagle along with numerous species of birds and wildlife found within the Atchafalaya Basin and surrounding areas. The inaugural Eagle Expo was held February 3-4, 2006, and sold out with nearly 50 participants, including some out-of-state visitors. This year, the CCVCB will be able to accommodate nearly 100 participants on boat tours in search of these majestic birds.

For a complete event schedule, costs and a registration form, please visit the Eagle Expo website, <http://eagles.btnep.org> or contact the Cajun Coast Visitors & Convention Bureau at (985) 395-4905; <http://www.cajuncoast.com>. For more information about Southern Bald Eagles, contact the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program - <http://www.btnep.org>.



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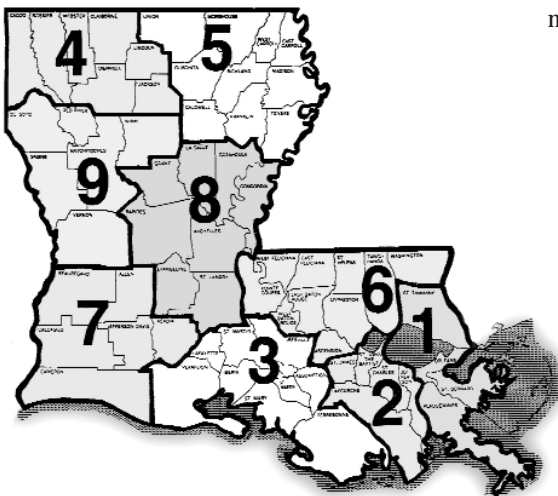
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# My Favorite Martin

By Randy Lanctot

Purple martins are not just *my* favorite herald of spring, but the favorite of tens of thousands of martin “landlords” around the country who diligently maintain nesting gourds or multi-room apartment houses for these chatty sky rockets. The deep, black-purple plumaged mature male “scouts” may



Martins gather on 8-holer before laying begins.

have already arrived along the Louisiana coast and should be appearing over my yard around the end of the month (January). I’ll hear a faint but unmistakable chortling way up in the blue yonder while weeding the flower beds or pruning the roses, and squint skyward to see if it’s just my imagination or one of the neighborhood mocking birds warming up to fool me all spring with its mimicry. But sure enough, there he’ll be, a speck in the blue, “scouting” the landscape below for attractive apartments and attentive landlords. If by then I haven’t raised my 2 houses on their poles, I’ll drop everything and get to it. Not all wannabe martin landlords are chosen. Success or lack thereof is the topic of friendly ribbing, even among some of my associates down at the state capitol who, though usually on the wrong side of the fence on conservation issues, have a soft spot for martins. It’s especially fun to inform them that “I got ‘em” when they don’t.

In March, a little hen or two will appear on one or both of the “houses” along with soon-no-longer-to-be bachelor males, and the housekeeping will begin in earnest. A late cold front will find them, come evening, all jammed into the same compartment with the

last one in’s tail sticking out the entry hole. I’ll smile, but say a little prayer for quick relief from the cold. Martins feed solely on flying insects which are sparsely available, if at all, when the temperature drops, and an extended spring cold front can cause significant mortality.

The purple martin is our largest species of swallow, and like all swallows, has the spectacular flying skills needed to intercept insects on the wing. If you’ve got martins you have an air show the envy of the Blue Angels available for your viewing pleasure right out your backdoor. They also can make understatement of the term “hot pursuit.” Fierce defenders of their homes, martins, unless overwhelmed (I’ll get to that situation later), will chase away intruders with abandon. One day while picking squash out back I heard a commotion and looked up just in time to see a Mississippi kite, also a master at dodging and weaving, swoop UNDER my muscadine arbor with screaming martins on its tail. I shook my head to clear my vision. Did I really see that? WOW! To appreciate the wonder of that scene you have to know that there is only about 5 feet of clearance between the ground and the horizontal of the main vines, and at the time, the new growth was thick with foliage, some drooping almost to the ground. The back of my house is only about 8 feet from the edge of the vines, so that kite, with its 3-foot wingspan, dove between the house and the vines, under the vines and out the other side through the new growth with the martins right behind it and me standing there with my mouth open only 15 feet away. Funny how displays like that never happen when a video cam is handy.

I mentioned “chatty” and “chortling” to describe the voice of these friendly spring yard birds. It’s liquid and pleasing and, in mild spring weather, worth raising your bedroom window to enjoy.

When I first put up a martin house, I was not optimistic of attracting residents since there is only a small amount of relatively open space in my yard. Martins prefer plenty of flying room between their homes, and buildings and large trees from which predators like CROWS can launch silent attacks. But I was honored with a pair the first year. Later that season, I noticed a flurry of martins in a heavily forested part of my neighborhood about a

mile away and followed them to a colony of three martin houses amidst tall pine trees. I have more open space in my yard than that, I thought, so I went out and bought another house just knowing I could do as well or better.

I soon learned that not only could I attract a nice colony of purple martins, I was creating a predation problem for them. Seems that the neighborhood crows had a sixth sense about just when the martins would be laying. They would swoop in as silent as an owl, and if the nest was unattended, they would be in an out with a martin egg undetected. I have to admire the crows for being so shrewd. They would grasp the rail on the “porch” of the martin house and poke their head in the hole just far enough to reach an egg or chick. Even if adult martins were in the area and tried to harass the crow off the house, they couldn’t deter it once it had hold of the rail. A few marauding crows met their



Pops (right) cruises in with a morsel for the chicks.

demise from a well-placed .177 cal. air rifle pellet, but trying to deal with the problem that way was fruitless. The West Nile Virus epidemic helped by dramatically reducing the crow population in the area, but numbers are beginning to rebound and they’ll be back up to their old tricks soon enough.

Visiting with martin and bluebird fancier Kenny Kleinpeter at the National Hunting and Fishing Day celebration last fall I learned that I could modify my martin houses to all but eliminate the crow problem. He showed me photos of some of his houses that he modified by converting one compartment into two, thus allowing the martins to use the back

or side chamber for their nest, well beyond the reach of any crow, hawk or owl. To do this he covers the entry hole opening to one compartment, then drills a 2" diameter hole in the back or side wall so that the martins enter from the outside through one hole then pass through the other to an inner compart-



Near fledging, two chicks impatiently survey the outside world as adults stand sentinel.

ment to build their nest. He reported that the martins readily adapt to this arrangement and the results are a significant increase in fledglings produced each year. I'm in the process of making this conversion to my two houses and am looking forward to a better result for both me and my martin tenants. Photos illustrating these modifications can be viewed on the Internet at:

[http://purplemartin.org/update/9\(3\)trio.html](http://purplemartin.org/update/9(3)trio.html).

A martin house is a good investment for folks who take time to enjoy their yards and gardens, and an active colony of these fine birds will provide endless hours of entertainment for young and old alike. I'll warn you though that if you buy one of those prefab metal houses, assembly rivals assembling a bicycle, so plan to spend an hour with screwdriver in hand dealing with tiny screws and nuts before its ready to mount. And if there are crows in your neighborhood, don't forget to take advantage of the pre-assembly condition to crow-proof the structure. You'll have more and happier martins if you do.

To learn more, type "purple martin" in one of the popular search engines on the Internet. You'll be impressed with not only the information that is available but with just how many human fans the purple martin has.

# Orphaned Bear Cub Rescued

Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) personnel rescued an orphaned male black bear cub in St. Mary Parish last November and transported the cub to the Appalachian Bear Rescue (ABR) Center in Tennessee for rehabilitation prior to return to the wild.



Orphaned bear cub in transport box being taken to the Appalachian Bear Rescue, a bear rehab center in the Smokey Mountains of Tennessee. Photo by Chris Davis.

Arlen Carter, of Franklin, observed the cub in his hunting area while in a deer stand overlooking a food plot at 8:15 a.m.

"I watched the cub and waited for his mother to arrive," Carter said. "After 30 minutes, I came to the conclusion that the cub was alone and called LDWF authorities."

Carter said that he has hunted this same area for the last four years and has seen quite a few bears, some coming within yards of his deer stand.

"Situations like this are extremely rare and hunters should not assume bear cubs seen without a female nearby are orphans," said LDWF Wildlife Biologist Maria Davidson. "This cub was very small, undernourished and near starvation, which prompted the decision to capture him. Had he been in good health, he would have been left in the area."

Wildlife Management Area (WMA) Technician Tim Marcentel from LDWF's New Iberia office, along with student worker Brent Castille and WMA Technician Guy Patout, retrieved the cub. According to Davidson, the cub had been

trying to subsist on sugar cane stubble left in a harvested field. The cub weighed 15 pounds when caught, well outside the 30-to-50-pound range a 10-to-11-month-old bear should reach. All cubs are born in January or February each year.

Following the capture, the young bear was then transported to Baton Rouge, given emergency care and nourishment and then transferred to Appalachian Bear Rescue, a nonprofit organization located in Tennessee just outside the Smokey Mountain National Park that specializes in bear rehabilitation.

According to ABR's Web site at: <http://www.AppalacianBearRescue.org>, the cub will be placed on commercial formula along with natural wild foods gathered by local volunteers. It will be housed with other cubs for comfort and companionship with minimum human contact. Prior to release into the wild, the cub will live in a one-acre bear enclosure with hardwood trees, natural dens and man-made streams and water sources. In the enclosure, the cub will not see humans or receive human contact unless medical attention is required. Cubs will forage for randomly placed food within the enclosure.

Each cub must grow to at least 60 pounds in weight and exhibit normal foraging behavior, while interacting and vocalizing with other cubs and demonstrating climbing skills, before being released into the wild. Normal wild bear behavior can also be verified if a cub spends its days above ground in a tree and on the ground at night looking for food.

ABR has released 78 bears back into the wild without any being reported as a nuisance by the public. Their goal is to make sure bears are wary of humans.

Davidson hopes this cub will be ready to return to Louisiana by the spring of 2007 for release in north Louisiana where bear densities are lower.

Story courtesy of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife & Fisheries



# Bare Cypress & Bald Eagles in the Lower Atchafalaya Basin

*By Jay V. Huner, Ph. D.*

Winter's chill winds first turn cypress tree needles a golden reddish brown and then blow them to the water or ground around the massive knees at their bases. The changing colors coincide with the arrival of Southern Bald Eagles that, unlike their



*Bald Eagle glides to perch. Photo by Mike Musumeche.*

northern cousins, nest in the winter rather than the summer.

There is no better place to view the magnificent Bald Eagles than the Stephenville- Morgan City area along Louisiana Highway 70. LA 70 follows the Eastern Protection Levee of the Atchafalaya Basin Floodway between Belle River and Lake Palourde. The levee prevents Atchafalaya River flood waters from inundating the communities outside the floodway. Lake Palourde, a large, shallow lake fronts LA 70 for about a mile from Lake End Park on the southwest to Brownell Memorial Park & Carillon Tower on the southeast. Stephenville, a low-lying community comprised of recreational dwellings and permanent homes, is about a mile to the north past Lake Palourde.

Over 150 active Bald Eagle nests have been documented in the cypress-tupelo gum swamp in this region that includes several other important water bodies like Lake Verret and Grassy Lake. While the eagles are most active over the lakes, it is not uncommon to see them flying or gliding gracefully over Morgan City and Stephenville on just about any day from mid-October to mid-March. Even the casual observer can quick-

ly distinguish these striking birds from the wintering Turkey Vultures and Red-shouldered and Red-tailed Hawks common to the region.

The resurgence of Bald Eagles in the lower Basin is a wonderful biological success story for a species once classified as being endangered throughout the lower 48 states. The principal diet of the eagles is fish caught in the nutrient rich, shallow waters in the area, either directly or sometimes stolen from Ospreys. They'll also take small mammals and feast on road-killed nutria which are plentiful in the area. At one time, contaminants in the environment, primarily the residue of persistent pesticides like DDT, threatened our Bald Eagles, and our Brown Pelicans, with extinction. They bioaccumulated in the food chain and when the birds ate the fish the dose of pesticide ingested disrupted the birds' metabolic processes including that necessary to produce egg shells of normal strength and thickness. The shells broke before the chicks were ready to emerge causing extensive reproductive failure in the population. With the development of more targeted, less persistent pesticides and more stringent regulations for their use, Bald Eagles began a steady comeback. Louisiana now hosts the third largest population (over 250 active nests have been located in the state) of breeding Bald Eagles in the country, behind Alaska and Florida, and the Lower Basin is the population epicenter. This success has warranted upgrading the status of the Bald Eagle from "endangered" to "threatened" by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

A winter visitor to the Stephenville-Morgan City area will surely encounter several Bald Eagles, both adults and brownish, immature juveniles, but visitors will also find other conspicuous birds to enjoy. Large schools of shad, silvery freshwater herrings, abound in Lake Palourde. These fish attract large flocks of iridescent black, goose-sized Double-Crested Cormorants and American White Pelicans. Hundreds of these birds can often be viewed herding the schools of shad

into dense groups where they can easily be eaten. Sometimes, the fish are actually driven to the shore where a free-for-all develops as Great Blue Herons, Great Egrets, and Snowy Egrets throng to the site to secure a meal while the frantic fish flop in the shallow water, and even onto the shore itself.

Laughing and Ring-billed Gulls and Caspian and Forster's Terns are almost always present along the shores of Lake Palourde in good numbers during the winter. At times, hundreds, even thousands, of graceful Tree Swallows with snow-white breasts and metallic, bluish-green backs and wings fill the air above the water as they feed on mosquitoes and midges hovering above the water surface.

The avid birder will find woodpeckers, vireos, phoebes, titmice, chickadees, robins, kinglets, wrens, gnatcatchers, warblers, and sparrows in wooded areas throughout the area. An especially good area to "bird" is the grounds of the Brownell Memorial Park with excellent walking trails through the cypress-tupelo swamp on its grounds.



*Bald Eagle soaring over Grassy Lake in the Atchafalaya Basin. Photo by Mike Musumeche.*

Winter birding in the Morgan City-Stephenville area can be an especially rewarding experience to people at all levels of "birding" expertise. There is a good variety of large birds, especially Bald Eagles, pelicans, cormorants, herons, and egrets that can be enjoyed with or without binoculars and spotting scopes. But, birding here is not just a winter opportunity. There are three other "seasons" in the year when interesting,

*Continued on page 9*

## **New Individual Fishing Quota Program for Red Snapper Begins**

NOAA Fisheries Service has announced a new Individual Fishing Quota (IFQ) program for the commercial red snapper fishery in the Gulf of Mexico. This program was approved by the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council and began January 1, 2007. It is the first IFQ program implemented in the Gulf of Mexico designed to eliminate problems associated with derby-style fishing in the red snapper fishery. IFQ programs are a type of Dedicated Access Privilege Program (DAPP), which allocate harvesting privileges to individual fishermen or corporations. Fishermen are allowed to take a specific share of the total allowable catch of a species each fishing year and can fish until their individual quota is met. The Bush Administration outlined doubling the number of DAPPs in the United States by 2010 as an Ocean Action Plan priority. IFQ programs create market-based incentives to reduce fishing capacity to a level that is more appropriate to the amount of fish available to the fishery. The rapid growth and overcapitalization of the red snapper fishery in the Gulf of Mexico have intensified the "race for fish." This is a situation where participants compete with each other to harvest as many fish as possible before the season is closed each month. The competition creates negative social and economic conditions by reducing or eliminating considerations about weather conditions affecting safety at sea, flooding the market with fish certain times of year, and making it difficult to comply with and enforce fishery regulations. IFQ programs provide participants more flexibility in deciding when, where and how to fish. This flexibility can improve the quality of fish sold at the market, enhance safety at sea and increase the profitability of fishing operations. This IFQ program will replace the previous license limitation program, which was designed to cap the number of participants in the commercial red snapper fishery and prolong the duration of the fishery throughout the year. The license limitation program was not successful in decreasing fleet harvesting costs, overcapacity and derby fishing conditions.

Approximately 750 commercial fishermen and 200 seafood dealers will be eligible to enter the new program. The Gulf of Mexico red snapper IFQ program also may help reduce bycatch of undersized red snapper and other reef fish species by encouraging fishery participants to be more selective in targeting fish. IFQ programs have been used worldwide since the late 1970s in countries such as Canada, New Zealand, and Iceland. They were first implemented in the United States in 1990 when the Mid-Atlantic surf clam and ocean quahog IFQ program was adopted. Other domestic fisheries with IFQ programs are South Atlantic wreckfish (1992), Alaskan halibut and sablefish (1995), and Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands crab (2005). Regional fishery management councils are currently considering similar programs for fisheries such as the Pacific groundfish, South Atlantic snapper-grouper and Gulf of Mexico grouper.

## **LWFC Sets 2007 Turkey Season**

The Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission (LWFC) has approved the turkey season dates and regulations for the 2007 turkey season. The statewide opening date is March 24. The season in Area A will extend to April 22, Area B to April 15 and Area C to April 8. A private land youth and physically challenged hunter weekend is set for March 17 and 18. The daily bag limit is one gobbler, and the season limit is two gobblers. Youths under 16 and wheelchair-confined hunters of any age hunting on private lands can hunt during the youth season. Each youth must be accompanied by an adult 18 years of age or older. Youths under 16 years old may hunt and must possess a hunter safety certificate or proof of completing a hunter safety course unless the adult supervisor already has one of these requirements. Disabled hunters must have a Physically Challenged Hunter Permit with wheelchair classification to participate.

## **Bald Eagle Poacher Sought in Jefferson Parish**

Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) Enforcement Division officers and U.S. Fish and

Wildlife Service (USFWS) Office of Law Enforcement special agents are seeking information regarding the killing of a federally protected southern bald eagle. Agents believe the eagle was killed on or about Dec. 6 in the West Bank area of Jefferson Parish. A concerned citizen contacted the LDWF dispatch office at 4:20 p.m. on Dec. 6 and reported finding a dead eagle behind the Mississippi River levee in the town of Waggaman in Jefferson Parish. LDWF Sgt. Eddie Skena responded to the area and discovered the illegally killed eagle. The eagle was delivered to the USFWS and will be forensically tested for cause of death. The southern bald eagle is listed on the Endangered Species list, and fines up to \$100,000 may be imposed for shooting or injuring the bird. Anyone providing information leading to the arrest and conviction of the guilty party is eligible for significant cash rewards. Anyone with information may call Special Agent Stephen Clark at the USFWS office in LaCombe at 985-882-3756, the LDWF Operation Game Thief Hotline at 800-442-2511 or Cpt. Brian Clark at the LDWF Region 8 Enforcement Office at 504-282-4375.

## **LWFC Sets Spring Squirrel Season**

The Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission approved the first ever spring squirrel season for Louisiana at its January meeting. The season dates will run from May 5 to 27 in 2007 and from May 3 to 25 in 2008 on private lands. Wildlife Management Area (WMA) hunts will be open from May 5 to 13 in 2007 and from May 3 to 11 in 2008 on the following WMAs: Bodcau, Boeuf, Clear Creek, Little River, Maurepas Swamp (East Tract), Russell Sage and Sherburne. Squirrel hunting will be closed in the Kisatchie National Forest, on National Wildlife Refuges, Wildlife Management Areas not listed above and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers property.

## **St. Amant Man Jailed for Overbagging Deer on Maurepas WMA**

LDWF enforcement officers cited a St. Amant man on Nov. 26 for allegedly killing four deer on the Maurepas Swamp Wildlife Management Area. James M.



Duhe, 47, of St. Amant was cited after agents set up surveillance and apprehended Duhe near Highway 641, in St. James Parish. Duhe and three other men were observed dragging two button bucks, a doe and a 10-point buck through the swamp to the edge of the highway. After further investigation and interviews by the agents with the four men, Duhe ultimately confessed to killing all four deer. The legal daily limit for deer on a WMA is one antlered and one antlerless deer (when legal) per day. Duhe was placed under arrest and booked into the St. James Parish jail. Agents seized the rifle used by Duhe as evidence. The four deer were also seized and later donated to charity. If convicted, Duhe faces fines up to \$750 or jail time between 15 and 30 days for possession of illegally taken deer. For taking over the daily limit of deer, he faces fines up to \$500, or jail time up to 90 days, or both plus court costs. Failure to comply with rules and regulation on a WMA carries fines up to \$350, or jail not more than 60 days, or both plus court costs. Duhe also faces civil restitution penalties of \$524.54 per deer. Enforcement Officers participating in the case were Sgt. Aron Hastings and Agent Robert Turner.

### **Man Cited for Taking Turkey in Closed Season**

A Ouachita Parish man was cited by LDWF enforcement officers on Jan. 5 for allegedly taking a wild turkey during a closed season, hunting turkey with a rifle and hunting turkey without a turkey license. Joel R. Guess Jr., 46, of West Monroe, was questioned after agents received an anonymous tip that he killed a turkey in November while hunting deer in Caldwell Parish. The investigation led the agents to a taxidermist shop in Ouachita Parish where they located a turkey gobbler with an 11-inch beard that appeared to have been shot with a rifle. Agents located Guess at his residence where he allegedly admitted to shooting the wild turkey with a rifle after mistaking it for a hog. The turkey and a 7mm magnum rifle were seized as evidence. Guess will also be assessed civil restitution payable to LDWF in the amount of \$802.50 for the value of the wild turkey. The penalty for taking

turkeys during a closed season is a fine between \$900 and \$950, or jail for not more than 120 days, or both plus court costs. The penalty for hunting turkeys with a rifle is a fine between \$250 and \$500, or jail for not more than 90 days, or both plus court costs. The penalty for hunting turkeys without a turkey license is a fine of \$50 or jail for not more than 15 days. Agents participating in the case were Sgt. Duane Taylor, Senior Agent Scott Jeansonne and Agent John Volentine.

### **LDWF Officers Write 78 Litter Citations in Region 7**

With the help of a \$15,000 grant from Keep Louisiana Beautiful (KLB), LDWF Region 7 enforcement officers wrote 78 gross littering citations from July 31 to Dec. 31, 2006. "Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and its enforcement agents are some of our best partners," said KLB Executive Director Leigh Harris. "They are serious about holding litter violators accountable for their actions." KLB chose Region 7, which includes East Feliciana, West Feliciana, East Baton Rouge, Ascension, Livingston, St. Helena, Tangipahoa, St. Tammany and Washington parishes, because they wrote the most littering citations in 2005. The KLB grant money was spent to cover the cost of overtime hours accrued by LDWF agents. With the money, LDWF was able to add overtime patrols with a focus on gross litter violations in an effort to combat, prevent and deter gross littering. Each first conviction gross littering citation carries a possible fine between \$500 and \$1,000 and eight hours of community service in a litter abatement work program. Keep Louisiana Beautiful is a volunteer-based service organization dedicated to litter reduction through education, enforcement and cleanups. The honorary chairman of the organization is Raymond Blanco, and partners in KLB's efforts include the Louisiana Governor's Office of Environmental Education, Department of Environmental Quality, Department of Transportation and Development, Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism, Department of

Corrections, Department of Economic Development, Department of Natural Resources, and State Police. Additional information on the statewide anti litter campaign and upcoming KLB events can be found at:

<http://www.KeepLouisianaBeautiful.org>.

### **LDWF Reminds Shrimpers of Fall Inshore Season Closure**

Shrimpers are reminded that the fall inshore shrimp season in all Louisiana shrimp management zones has closed, except in the open waters of Breton and Chandeleur Sounds as described by the double-rig line (LA R.S.56:495.1.(A)2), which shall remain open to shrimping until 6 a.m. March 31, 2007. Zone 1 includes state waters from the Mississippi-Louisiana state line to the eastern shore of South Pass of the Mississippi River. Zone 2 includes state waters from the eastern shore of South Pass of the Mississippi River to the western shore of Vermilion Bay and Southwest Pass at Marsh Island and Zone 3 extends from the western boundary of Zone 2 to the Louisiana-Texas state line. Catastrophic losses to the shrimp fleet following hurricanes Katrina and Rita have significantly decreased the number of participating vessels and fishing trips taken in the Louisiana shrimp fishery. Despite these reductions in fishing effort, LDWF Marine Fisheries Division biologists have indicated that 2006 shrimp landings are well above the average of recent years and may potentially rival the previous annual record of 93.8 million pounds reported in 2000. According to preliminary LDWF trip ticket data, Louisiana shrimp landings through August of this year total approximately 57.4 million pounds (heads-off weight/all species combined). In comparison, this preliminary total represents an increase of 15.8 million pounds over the corresponding pre-hurricanes period of last year. Biologists have indicated that high shrimp production in January was attributed to larger populations of white shrimp over-wintering in shallow offshore waters. Brown shrimp landings in May and June were influenced by a series of factors. Several periods of strong southerly winds and high tides in March and

April created favorable mechanisms for the transport of post-larval shrimp into the estuaries. A mild winter, low river stages and rainfall levels resulted in higher than normal water temperatures and salinities; environmental factors favorable for brown shrimp development and growth. These same conditions were also conducive to the rapid growth of over-wintering white shrimp re-entering inshore waters in early spring. The size and value of white shrimp landings in May and June were exceptionally high which suggests the success of management actions designed to protect these shrimp from harvest as they over-winter during late winter and early spring in portions of state outside waters. Likewise, white shrimp landings in August reached near record levels and were also influenced by the existence of favorable environmental conditions conducive to high survival and rapid growth.

### **Maurepas Man Cited for Taking Grebe**

LDWF enforcement officers cited a Maurepas resident on Nov. 18 for allegedly killing grebes. John C. Marston, Jr., 42, was cited after officers found him in possession of two grebes he killed on the Manchac Wildlife Management Area in St. John Parish. Grebe does not have a hunting season and it is a federal violation to hunt or take them. The waterfowl were discovered during a compliance check after Marston was observed hunting ducks. Marston was issued a federal citation for taking grebe during a non-hunting season for the waterfowl. The case will go before a federal magistrate in the Eastern District in New Orleans. If convicted Marston faces fines up to \$5,000, or jail not more than six months or, both plus court costs. LDWF agents involved in this case were Sgt. Davis Madere and Agent Edward Ridgel

### **Notice of Intent on Paddlefish Adopted**

In action taken at the January meeting, the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission adopted a notice of intent that would allow the incidental take and possession of paddlefish, also called spoonbill catfish. The notice of intent

states that properly licensed recreational fishermen using legal recreational fishing gear would be able to take paddlefish under the following conditions:

- The taking or possession of paddlefish would be closed in all saltwater areas of the state and in border waters shared with Texas.
- All possessed paddlefish must be dead and intact, and the transportation of live paddlefish would be prohibited.
- No person shall possess paddlefish eggs that are not fully attached to the fish on state waters.
- The daily take and possession limit would be two per person.
- All paddlefish greater than 30 inches measured by the lower jaw fork length standard would be returned to the water immediately. Lower jaw fork length is the distance from the tip of the lower jaw to the mid-line of the caudal fin.
- Commercial take and possession of paddlefish would be prohibited.

Public comment may be submitted to Gary Tilyou, Administrator, Inland Fisheries Division, Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, P.O. Box 98000, Baton Rouge, LA 70898-9000, prior to March 6, 2007.

### **Pierre Part Man Netted for Shad Gillnet Violations**

LDWF enforcement officers cited four Pierre Part men in December for allegedly violating rules governing the use of shad gillnets. Eno Domingue, 43, Eric Hue Sr. 50, Lance Metrejean, 29, and Derrick Daigle, 21, all of Pierre Part were returning to a landing in two separate vessels when agents stopped them and found 45 pounds of garfish, 4 pounds of freshwater drum, 4 pounds of mullet and 54 pounds of catfish with shad gillnets and shad. Agents seized the fish and donated them to charity. Agents also placed both vessels and two 1,200-foot gill nets under a departmental seizure order pending trial. Agents received complaints of fisherman keeping fish other than shad and skipjack taken with shad gillnets. By law, fishermen using shad gillnets may only keep skipjack and shad when using such nets in Verret, Palourde and Lac Des Allemands lakes. If convicted, the men could pay

fines up to \$950, plus court costs or be sentenced up to 120 days in jail. Agents participating in the case were Sgt. Winston Michel and Agent Tyler Marroy.

### **Proposal Would Allow the Use of Certain Bait Skimmer Nets**

At its January meeting the LWFC mission adopted a notice of intent to amend the Special Bait Dealer Permit rule to allow for the use of certain skimmer nets. The proposal would allow permitted bait dealers to use two skimmer nets having an individual net frame size not more than 12 1/2 feet measured horizontally or 12 feet measured vertically or 17 1/3 feet measured diagonally. Current regulations limit special bait dealer permittees to the use of a single trawl not to exceed 25 feet measured along the cork line and 33 feet along the lead line. Acting in response to increased public demand for live bait, which has often exceeded available bait dealer supplies, the amended rule would allow the use of skimmer nets in the permitted bait fishery. Several studies have cited the efficiency of skimmer nets in harvesting shrimp resulting in a number of advantages over traditional otter trawls including increased survival of both target and non-target catch. The commission also intends to allow permitted bait dealers to harvest live croaker in addition to live shrimp, require applicants to post cash bonds rather than optional surety bonds, prohibit transfer of any shrimp or croaker taken under the permit from one vessel to another and revise record keeping requirements. Last amended in 1997, the Special Bait Dealer Permit Rule is intended solely for the benefit of the recreational fishing public which desires to use live shrimp and live croaker as bait during closed shrimp season between the spring and fall inshore shrimp seasons. Its purpose is to allow the uninterrupted operation of those commercial establishments which sell live bait to the fishing public. The special bait dealer permit is not intended for the direct use of recreational fishermen, charter boats, commercial fishermen who sell dead bait, or for any other entity which may wish to catch bait for their own use during closed shrimp season. Interested persons may submit writ-

ten comments relative to the proposed rule to Martin Bourgeois, Marine Fisheries Biologist, Marine Fisheries Division, P.O. Box 98000, Baton Rouge, LA 70898-9000 prior to Monday, March 5, 2007.

### **Nationwide Survey Shows Most Americans Support Hunting and Fishing**

A recent nationwide survey of Americans 18 years old and older shows that a strong majority of Americans support hunting and fishing. Conducted by Responsive Management of Harrisonburg, Virginia, the survey found that support for hunting and fishing has remained strong over the past decade with approximately every 3 out of 4 Americans approving of legal hunting and more than 9 out of 10 approving of recreational fishing. "We have been seeing public support for hunting increase in several states over the past decade where we had data but this is the first nationwide study where we could verify that public support has increased over the past decade," said Mark Damian Duda, executive director of Responsive Management. "In 1995, 73 percent of Americans approved of hunting while in 2006, 78 percent approved of hunting. Support for fishing nationwide, as well as in numerous states where we have conducted studies, remains very high," Duda said. Although approval of fishing has decreased slightly, dropping only 1.7 percentage points from 95 percent in 1995 to 93.3 percent in 2006, most Americans approve of recreational fishing. The results of this survey reflect the opinions of randomly selected U.S. adult residents based on a scientific telephone survey of 813 Americans conducted from August 31 to September 9, 2006. The sampling error is 3.44 percentage points. The poll was conducted as part of two larger projects—a book being written on sportsmen's issues by Duda, Marty Jones, and Andrea Criscione of Responsive Management that was commissioned by the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation and a study on the future of hunting and the shooting sports under a grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. As Americans become more knowledgeable about the role of hunting in wildlife management as

well as how much money hunting and fishing contributes to fish and wildlife conservation efforts, coupled with a visible increase in deer in urban areas and the need to actively manage their populations, Responsive Management's research shows that the public continues to approve of hunting. Responsive Management is a Virginia-based public opinion polling and survey research firm specializing in natural resources, fisheries, wildlife, outdoor recreation, and environmental issues and has been assessing public attitudes on these issues for 18 years. Surveys are conducted with scientific rigor according to the standards of the Council of American Survey Research Organizations. For more information, please visit the firm's Web site at:

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

### **Invasive Species Found in Louisiana**

An exotic invasive species of freshwater snail has been discovered in Louisiana. Several specimens, commonly referred to as the channeled apple snail, were collected from a canal in Gretna by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, at the request of the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries. These mollusks are known for their voracious appetite for aquatic vegetation. This group of snails has been a serious pest to rice farmers in parts of southeast Asia. Away from agricultural areas, these snails can severely impact native vegetation altering aquatic habitats. These species can be separated from native snails by their size, up to 4 inches, and their peculiar pink egg masses. The pink egg masses are attached to vegetation, boat docks or other structures above the surface of the water. Under ideal conditions these snails reach maturity in three months and can lay clutches of eggs, averaging 200 to 300, every few weeks. LDWF is asking anyone who finds snails that fit this description to please contact their nearest LDWF regional office.

### **Illegal Night Hunter Sentenced to Jail**

Burt Rico, 47, of Moreauville pled no contest to hunting deer illegally at night with a .22 caliber rifle on Nov. 14, 2006

and was sentenced to 60 days in the Avoyelles Parish Jail. Judge Mark Jeansonne of the 12th Judicial District Court in Marksville, La. also fined Rico \$1,051. LDWF enforcement officers discovered Rico hunting with the aid of a deer feeder equipped with lights on Dec. 15, 2005. Agents cited him for hunting without a basic and big game hunting license, failure to wear hunter orange and hunting deer with illegal methods and during illegal hours with an artificial light. On the following day, investigating agents learned that Rico was a convicted felon. He was then arrested and booked into the Avoyelles Parish Jail. District Attorney Charles Riddle III personally handled the case and stated, "We will not tolerate night hunting and the associated crimes with this activity. Hopefully, this punishment will send a message that a hunting license is required and hunting will be allowed only during legal hunting hours along with the requirement of obeying rules that the vast majority of our hunters follow. The few that violate these laws will be dealt with accordingly," Riddle said. Agents participating in the investigation include Cpt. Peter Oliver, Sgt. Gabe Guidry and Senior Agent Jay Callegari.

### **King Elected LWFC Chairman**

At its January meeting, the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission elected its vice-chairman, Earl P. King of Amelia to serve as chairman for 2007. Patrick Morrow of Opelousas was elected vice-chairman. King succeeds outgoing chairman, Terry Denmon. When asked about his motivation for serving on the commission, King said, "My respect for our wildlife and fisheries resources began at an early age. My grandfather stressed managing and nurturing our natural resources, and was an early conservationist. Growing up in south Louisiana, I enjoyed hunting and fishing on our many lakes and bayous. Not only did this provide food for our table, but also recreation that I want future generations to be able to enjoy." King believes that, as a commissioner, he has a duty, an obligation, and a moral and ethical responsibility to make informed decisions based on the



best interests of the people and the state of Louisiana. He explained that his broad agenda is to balance the commercial, sports and recreational interests with conservation of Louisiana's wildlife and fisheries resources, noting that he has an appreciation for the economic "engines" these interests provide for the coastal parishes and across the state.

### **Sulfur Man Cited for Hunting Turkeys on Thanksgiving Day**

LDWF enforcement officers cited Adam K. Foster, 26, of Sulfur, for allegedly killing two wild turkeys on Thanksgiving Day in Beauregard Parish. Agents received a tip that Foster had been deer hunting on the morning of Nov. 23 and shot two turkeys from his deer stand. Agents conducted an investigation and questioned Foster at his residence in Sulfur on Wednesday, Nov. 29. Foster admitted he had killed two turkeys on Thanksgiving Day and that one of the turkeys had already been consumed. The remaining turkey was seized as evidence along with the shotgun that was used to commit the violation. Agents cited Foster for two counts of hunting turkeys during a closed season. He was also issued a civil restitution penalty for the replacement costs of the two illegally taken turkeys. Louisiana does not have a fall turkey season. During the spring season in portions of the months of March and April, hunters may harvest gobblers only. The limit is one per day and two per season. The penalty for taking turkeys during a closed season is a fine up to \$950, up to 120 days in jail, or both plus court costs, and forfeiture of anything seized for each count. The civil restitution value is \$802.50 for each turkey. Agents involved in the investigation were Sgts. David Liles and Keith Aucoin.

### **CRCL's Davis to Direct Tulane Law School's New Water Policy Institute**

Tulane University School of Law has announced that it is creating a new institute to focus on the laws and policies of water resource management and that Mark Davis, who has headed the Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana for the past fourteen years, has been named

its Director. Mr. Davis will also be joining the Law School's faculty as a Senior Research Fellow. "The Institute on Water Resources Law and Policy is an important addition to the Law School that will allow us to better serve both our students and the community," said Law School Dean Lawrence Ponoroff. According to Mr. Davis, the challenges Louisiana and New Orleans are facing in the wake of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, as well as decades of coastal collapse, have made clear the need to better understand and improve the laws and policies that govern water resource and coastal management. "Years of work to save our coast and protect its communities have made clear that we need to do more than have good science and engineering on our side. We need to have laws, policies, and decision making processes that allow the best science and engineering to be put to work for us. The Tulane Center on Water Resources Law and Policy will advance that goal." In his fourteen years as Executive Director of the Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana, the leading public interest voice for the conservation, restoration and stewardship of Louisiana's coast, Mr. Davis has worked to shape state and federal laws and policies central to the survival of coastal Louisiana and its ecology, communities, and economy. Mr. Davis currently is a member of the Governor's Advisory Commission on Coastal Conservation and Restoration and is a member of the Mineral Management Service Advisory Committee on Outer Continental Shelf Activity.

### **Becoming an Outdoors Woman Weekend Scheduled**

Women will fill the woods in Pollock at Camp Grant Walker in the rolling hills of central Louisiana on March 16-18, 2007 for the 19th Becoming an Outdoors-Woman (BOW) workshop sponsored by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF). Women 18 and older from throughout Louisiana and neighboring states can enroll in four classes from a selection of more than 30 topics. These subjects include bucks and does, shotgun, rifle, fly-fishing, canoeing, camping, archery,

horseback riding, boating, birding, map and compass skills, outdoor photography, camp cooking and more. Expert instructors donate their time and skills in classes taught in and around the nearby streams, lakes, wooded ridges, and forest trails. Women can register beginning Jan. 16, 2007 for the educational hands-on outdoor three-day workshop. All applications must be accompanied with a \$140 check or money order. The fee includes instruction for four selected classes, program materials, use of demonstration equipment, lodging, meals and a T-shirt. Interested women are urged to register as soon as possible. Two Liz Barthel Memorial Scholarships are available for this workshop to any new participant that is of low income and has children under the age of 18. The scholarship pays \$125 of the \$140 registration fee. The scholarship recipient will be responsible for a \$15 fee. To apply for the scholarship go to LDWF's Web site at:

<http://www.wlf.louisiana.gov>. Natural resource scientist Christine Thomas of the University of Wisconsin founded the Becoming an Outdoors-Woman program. She completed a survey in 1991 entitled "Barriers to Women Participating in Hunting and Fishing." The survey documented that the most obvious problem was lack of instruction and encouragement. To receive a registration form contact Bill Breed in Monroe at 318-343-1241 or Dana Norsworthy in Monroe at 318-345-3912. Forms can be faxed, mailed or can be accessed from the LDWF website at:

<http://www.wlf.louisiana.gov> and clicking on the "Education/research" drop down menu. The first 125 completed registration forms received with payment will be accepted. Registration will be taken until the workshop is full. All forms received after the workshop is full will be placed on a waiting list in case of cancellations. Join the fun and be one of those 125 women in the woods. Register for the Becoming an Outdoors-Woman workshop and become skilled in something that you always dreamed about doing. Becoming an Outdoors-Woman is sponsored by LDWF and is a registered trademark. It is not to be confused with the Women in the

Outdoors program that is sponsored by the National Wild Turkey Federation.

### **Three Men Arrested for Alleged Deer Violations**

LDWF enforcement officers arrested three Louisiana residents for alleged deer violations that took place in and around the area of the Estelle 2 pump station in Marrero on Dec. 15. Agents responded to a call that gunshots were heard after legal shooting hours in a wooded area near the pump station. They set up surveillance on the scene and saw three men cleaning white-tailed deer at the pump station. The men were stopped and identified as Jeremy Kinley, 25, of Harvey, Jason M. Daigle, 21, of Covington, and Brian M. Baudoin, 47, also of Harvey. Baudoin is employed as the pump operator for the Estelle 2 pump station and was on duty at the time. Further investigation determined that Baudoin had opened the locked gates around the pump station, giving Kinley and Daigle access to the wooded area surrounding the pump. Kinley and Daigle both gave statements that Baudoin had allowed them to shoot the deer from the pump station property after legal shooting hours and then left his station and transported them onto private property to retrieve the deer. The two high-powered rifles used in the violation were seized as evidence. Three whitetail deer were also seized and later donated. Baudoin, Kinley and Daigle were each arrested for hunting deer during illegal hours, possession of illegally taken deer, possession of over the legal limit of deer and criminal trespassing. The above violations vary from Class 3 to Class 6 and can carry a penalty range between a \$250 to \$950 fine, or jail time up to 90 days, or both plus court costs for each offense. Civil penalties will also be assessed for the value of the three-whitetail deer at \$524.54 per deer. Agents participating in the case were Lt. Stephen McManus, Sgt. James Gregoire and Senior Agents Kris Bourgeois and Jason Gernados.

### **LDWF Stocks Red River with Largemouth Bass**

LDWF Inland Fisheries Division personnel stocked a total of approximately

58,000 phase II Florida largemouth bass into the five pools of the Red River on Dec. 13. The Red River Waterway Commission (RRWC) donated \$50,000 to the Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Foundation, who then purchased the bass. This will mark the sixth consecutive year that the RRWC has donated money to purchase bass for the Red River. The 5-to-7-inch bass are considered phase II fingerlings. These bass are released to help introduce their superior genetic traits to the Red River that will in turn produce larger bass for local anglers. About 11,600 bass per pool were stocked out of the Clarks, Coushatta, Grand Ecore, Fort Buhlow, and Broulette landings on the Red River.

### **Rapides Parish Men Cited for Overbagging Ducks**

LDWF officers cited six men on Nov. 11, the opening day of the 2006-07 West Zone duck season, for allegedly violating the Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act by taking more than the daily limit of ducks on Douglas Farms in Rapides Parish. Michael Fisher Jr., 60, and Ricky L. McMickens, 45, both of Alexandria, along with Neal L. McMickens, 42, Francis Melder, 59, Joseph M. Vincent, 46, and Thomas R. Vincent, 48, all of Pineville, were cited for taking over the legal limit of ducks and failure to maintain field possession of migratory game birds. Fisher and Melder were also cited for hunting ducks without a federal waterfowl stamp. Sgt. Travis Burnett and Senior Agent Spencer Cole checked the hunters and found them to be in possession of 11 wood ducks, three teal and one gadwall. Further investigation by the agents revealed more wood ducks concealed where the men had been hunting and in a decoy bag hidden in the bushes near their parked ATVs. A total of 48 ducks were seized from the hunters. Violations of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act are punishable by fines up to \$5,000, imprisonment for up to six months or both. The case will be prosecuted by the U.S. Attorney's Office.

### **Toledo Bend Lake Association Launches New Web Site**

The Toledo Bend Lake Association has

just launched a website to let people living in or moving to the lake area become familiar with the many facets of this organization. The new web site can be found at: <http://www.Toledo-Bend.com/TBLA>. The website informs both the public and TBLA members about the many community and social activities of the TBLA. It showcases many TBLA activities which greatly benefit the area and explains how anyone can become involved. For example, the TBLA annually raises approximately \$80,000 from its Bass Unlimited Banquet and invests all of the proceeds into the fisheries, lake improvements and other contributions which help make Toledo Bend such a delightful place to live. The Bass Replica Program provides any fisherman who catches a bass between 10 and 11.99 lbs with a realistic fiberglass replica of their catch if they release the fish to breed again. (The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fishers has the same program for larger bass.) Additionally, TBLA's very popular bass and crappie restocking programs are all detailed on the website - including how bass can be stocked right in the cove where you live! The Lake Association's community events as well as those of other organizations are also highlighted with a spotlight on the Annual Bass Unlimited Banquet which helps finance many of TBLA's activities. TBLA Board Member Jerry Lehman worked with a number of members of the organization to gather information and photos to present a comprehensive overview of the organization to the public. Lehman then worked with Frank Dutton to develop the new site which is also hosted by Frank Dutton/Toledo-Bend.com. Whether you are from East Texas or West Louisiana, you should be aware of this organization and you may even want to become a part of it. Come visit the Toledo Bend Lake Association website at:

<http://www.Toledo-Bend.com/TBLA>

### **Three Men Cited for Migratory Bird Violations in Baton Rouge**

LDWF enforcement officers cited three men last October for allegedly violating the Federal Migratory Treaty Act by taking mourning doves illegally on Tom

Drive in Baton Rouge. Kane C. Altazin, 37, and Justin Courrege, 21, both of Baton Rouge and Erick N. Hussein, 26, of Greenwell Springs, were cited for hunting migratory birds over bait and taking mourning doves by illegal methods. Altazin and Courrege were also cited for placing bait for the purpose of taking migratory birds. Acting on a tip, agents conducted surveillance on several different days and were eventually able to film the illegal activity. A search of the Tom Drive business, where the three worked, revealed 44 doves held in a freezer and two freshly dressed doves, a bag of bait, two air rifles and dove decoys. Violations of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act are punishable by fines up to \$5,000, imprisonment for up to six months or both. The case will be prosecuted by the U.S. Attorney's Office. Agents participating in the case were Senior Agent Todd Lewis, Sgt. Paul Stuckey, Lt. Dennis Bueche and U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service Special Agent Phillip Siragusa.

### **Lincoln Parish Man Sentenced in Deer Case**

A Lincoln Parish man was sentenced Dec. 13th in 3rd Judicial District Court in Ruston after pleading guilty to taking two antlerless deer in one day and failure to wear hunters orange. Third Judicial District Court Judge Wayne Smith sentenced Ryan M. Combs, 21, of Choudrant to pay a \$50 fine for the hunters orange violation and \$250 plus court costs in the amount of \$120 for taking over the daily limit of deer. Combs was also ordered to pay a \$524 civil restitution to the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries for one of the deer taken. Combs was cited by LDWF Enforcement Division agents with the two does on Oct. 21 during the special muzzleloader season. Agents seized both deer and donated them to charity. Agents participating in the case were Lt. Mike Rockett, Sgt. Thomas Risser and Senior Agents Scott Jeansonne and Stan House.

### **Chauvin Hunter Cited for Illegal Deer Hunting**

Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Enforcement Division

agents cited a Chauvin man on Nov. 6 for allegedly illegally hunting deer in Terrebonne Parish. Richard Luneau, 24, was cited after agents found him butchering two deer near his residence on Bayou Drive in Terrebonne Parish. An anonymous person told the agents that Luneau had taken the two deer with a rifle during the archery only season that was ongoing in Terrebonne Parish. When the agents arrived, they found Luneau in the process of cleaning the two deer, one doe and one button buck, that he allegedly admitted to killing with a .270 caliber rifle. Luneau was issued citations for taking deer by illegal methods and taking over the limit of deer. It is currently a violation of state law to take more than one antlerless deer per day. If convicted, Luneau faces fines between \$250-\$500, or jail time up to 90 days, or both plus court costs per violation. He also faces civil restitution penalties of \$524.54 per deer. Both of the allegedly illegally taken deer were seized by the agents and later donated to charity. Agents involved in this case were Sgt. Richard Purvis and Agent Dean Aucion.

### **Washington Parish Men Jailed for Night Hunting Violations**

LDWF enforcement officers arrested two Washington Parish residents on the night of Saturday, Jan. 6 for alleged night hunting violations that took place north of Franklinton. David M. Mulina, 25, and Shane M. Husser, 51, both of Franklinton were arrested for taking deer during illegal hours with an artificial light, taking deer from a public road, hunting from a moving vehicle, discharging a firearm from a public road, and for no basic resident or resident big game hunting licenses. Shortly after 11 p.m., agents watched Mulina and Husser spotlight and shoot a deer in a rye grass field from their vehicle on Mt. Pisgah Road. Two rifles and a spotlight were seized along with the deer, which was found dead in the field and later donated to charity. If convicted, each faces penalties including fines between \$900 to \$950, or jail for not more than 120 days, or both, plus court costs and forfeiture of anything seized for taking deer during illegal hours. Hunting

from a moving vehicle carries a fine between \$250 and \$500, or jail for not more than 90 days, or both plus court costs. Taking deer from a public road is punishable by a fine between \$100 and \$350, or jail for not more than 60 days, or both plus court costs. Hunting without a basic and big game hunting licenses each carry fines of \$50 or jail time for the first offense. The penalty for discharging a firearm from a public road is a fine up to \$50, or up to 30 days in jail, or both, plus court costs. Mulina and Husser were also assessed civil restitution in the amount of \$524.54 payable to the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries for the value of the deer. Agents participating in the case were Sgt. Darryl Galloway and Senior Agent Robert Larsen.

### **St. Charles Parish Resident Cited For Night Hunting**

Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Enforcement Division agents cited a St. Charles Parish resident on Dec. 3 for alleged hunting violations. Christopher J. Morales, 25, of Montz, was cited for hunting wild quadrupeds during illegal hours and for hunting from a moving vehicle. Agents were on patrol near the east bank hurricane protection levee when they heard several gunshots. Agents approached and observed Morales using the headlights of his vehicle to illuminate a small food plot. The agents then watched Morales shoot several nutria from his vehicle. Morales was stopped and found in possession of a loaded .17 caliber rifle and 11 freshly killed nutria. The rifle was seized and held as evidence. The nutria were seized and donated to local charity. Hunting wild quadrupeds during illegal hours and hunting from a moving vehicle each carries a fine up to \$500, or imprisonment up to 90 days, or both plus court costs. Agents participating in the case were Sgts. Eddie Skena and James Gregoire.





know. A walking trail around it and a chance for the residents to do a little bird watching in their own neighborhood could have been unique and set this subdivision apart from the rest.

### **Awards Program**

I want to remind you of the approaching deadline for submitting nominations for LWF's Governor's Conservation Achievement Awards Program, now in its fourth decade of honoring the outstanding conservationists of the state. Our goal is to recognize those who have made outstanding contributions toward the conservation of our state's natural resources. If you know of someone that you believe should be recognized for their conservation work please do not hesitate to nominate them and remember that self nominations are completely acceptable. Awards will be presented at a special Saturday evening recognition banquet to be held in conjunction with the Louisiana Wildlife Federation's annual convention, March 3, 2007, at the Holiday Inn in Gonzales, Louisiana. You can view more details on the LWF website at: <http://www.lawildlifefed.org/>.

### **Convention**

The East Ascension Sportsman's League is our host club for the annual meeting in Gonzales and the excitement and anticipation grows as we continue to plan for this event. Our annual meeting is an important process for guiding LWF policies and initiatives for this and future years.

### **Resolutions Committee Meeting**

I called a meeting of an ad hoc committee a few weeks ago to brainstorm concepts for potential resolutions appropriate for submitting to the delegates at our upcoming convention. The meeting was hosted by the Avoyelles Wildlife Federation in Mansura where we assembled a list of ideas for development into resolutions. This is something that we have not done before, that is, discuss possible resolutions well in advance of our annual meeting. Many times we find ourselves scrambling near the deadline to get our ideas into resolution form. I believe this advance planning will make for a highly productive annual meeting.

### **MRGO-Coastal Restoration**

The Preliminary Draft Comprehensive

Master Plan for Coastal Protection developed under the auspices of the Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Task Force calls for the total closure of the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet. It is a shame that it took a major hurricane and flooding that cost the lives of over a thousand people in the New Orleans area to make the point, once more, that MRGO must be closed. Along with many others, LWF has advocated closing the MRGO and rehabilitating the wetlands damaged by it for as long as I can remember. I recall listening to the stories of old timers from St. Bernard parish about how they used to catch crawfish by the sack in the cypress swamps of the parish. When I visit St. Bernard these days I see nothing similar to the landscape that used to be. The MRGO has turned St. Bernard into a vast marsh and open bays that provide little protection from storm surges for residents of St. Bernard parish as well as the city of New Orleans.

LWF's Coastal Restoration & Protection Committee has reviewed the preliminary draft Master Plan for Coastal Protection and submitted comments to improve on the ideas of the plan. LWF plans to play a part in assuring that the plan is scientifically and environmentally sound and takes into consideration the big picture of what needs to be done with no allowance for useless pet projects of those that may have influenced the plan. Adequate levees to protect our communities and infrastructure should be a priority. Leveeing marshes and inducing development should not. The plan should promote a sustainable coast and the lines that are drawn may not please everyone.

Best of all, the "do nothing" 109th Congress actually did a lot for coastal Louisiana. Legislation passed in the final hours before adjournment allocating what will amount to billions of dollars in royalty payments from oil and gas production in the Gulf of Mexico offshore of LA to our state for use in implementing the coastal protection and restoration plan. Hats off to the members of the Louisiana Congressional Delegation who worked tirelessly to get this legislation passed, and to their colleagues from the other states who believed that this was the right thing to do.

I was amazed to learn from this debate that in 1949, President Harry Truman offered Louisiana 37.5 percent of the oil and gas revenue adjacent to Louisiana's coast. Then-Gov. Earl Long rejected the offer, holding out for 50 percent on the recommendation of political boss Judge Leander Perez of Plaquemines

Parish. Imagine how different this state would be if we had accepted that deal.

### **Catahoula Landfill**

Another concern that LWF has its eyes on is the proposed location of a construction and demolition debris landfill (Two Rivers Recycling, LLC) along the Red River in the extreme southern part of Catahoula Parish. Our affiliates in the area are very concerned about this proposal and its possible impacts. The permit applicants propose to accept construction and demolition debris from post hurricane clean up in the New Orleans area. The debris is to be barged 200 miles upriver to a flood prone site that is in the proximity of wildlife refuges and wildlife management areas, bald eagle nests and black bear haunts. This situation begs for the need for Louisiana to develop a better plan to manage waste resulting from hurricanes and other natural disasters.

### **National Fish & Wildlife Foundation Grant**

LWF will be a partner in a grant received by the National Wildlife Federation from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to recruit and deploy volunteers to help repair and restore habitats damaged by hurricanes on state and federal wildlife lands damaged by Katrina and Rita. Last March when LWF hosted the NWF annual meeting in New Orleans the convention delegates spent some time on environmental restoration projects in City Park and the Bayou Sauvage National Wildlife Refuge and the Barataria Preserve Unit of the Jean Lafitte National Historic Park. Everyone involved enjoyed it immensely and were glad to play a small part in helping out. The success of this event led NWF to investigate ways to do similar events on a broader scale. You will hear more as we develop the details of this project.

### **Boat Raffle Fundraiser**

Our annual Boat Raffle is under way. If you see a Ranger 178 SVS Bass Boat with a 150 Mercury Opti-Max outboard being displayed in your neighborhood by members of one of LWF's local affiliates or our statewide affiliate, the Association of Louisiana Bass Clubs, stop by and take a few chances. I encourage LWF affiliates to participate in the raffle. It's easy and only costs you a little time and effort in selling the tickets. If you sched-

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# The Quiet Pollution

By R. Glenn Thomas, Ph. D.

Water pollution often brings to mind oil spills or industrial waste discharges. However, in many south Louisiana waters, there are types of pollution that don't necessarily kill fish directly but quietly harm fishing. These



Road construction is a significant source of non-point pollution that is challenging to control, particularly under Louisiana's typical torrential rainfalls. Photo by Rick Bryan

are sediment and nutrient pollution.

Sedimentation is the deposit of sands, silts and clays that cover the bottom and fill in waterbodies. Nutrient enrichment (eutrophication) involves the addition of unhealthy levels of nitrogen and phosphorus. While much of the man-made portion of these problems can be controlled, solutions aren't always easy.

Sediments and nutrients are mostly nonpoint sources of pollution. Nonpoint pollution is "sources of pollution which enter surface or groundwaters through widely diffused small increments," as described in the Clean Water Act. Sources include urban and industrial stormwater runoff, agricultural runoff (sediment, fertilizers, chemicals and manure), forestry activities, construction projects and water control projects such as dams, levees, channels and weirs. Point sources of nutrient pollution include sewage discharges.

Sediment tends to slowly fill basin-type lakes that collect lots of drainage, such as Lake Fausse Point and Lake Verret. (Major rivers like the Atchafalaya carry huge sediment loads, but that's another story.) Everyone knows that muddy water makes fishing tough, but not everyone stops to think about what happens as the water clears.

The sediment drops out of the water

and slowly fills the lake. As large areas of a lake become shallower than four to five feet, their capacity to hold fish drops dramatically. Not only do muddy bottoms make for poor fish nesting, but the shallow water heats up tremendously in the summer, and oxygen levels can be depleted. Large areas of shallow water also are ideal for growth of choking mats of aquatic vegetation.

Local and area drainage is the main source of sediment for these types of lakes, and we have considerable control over this source of sedimentation. Everyone demands good drainage for their homes, roads and crop fields, but we don't always take the extra steps to get the sediment out of the runoff.

Sediment fences, sediment traps and vegetated buffer strips all help solve the problem. Every time you see a developer use good sediment barriers around a construc-



Gully washed along inadequately protected road bank. Photo by Rick Bryan.

tion site, you know that a bit of the problem way down the bayou has been addressed. Fencing livestock away from ditch banks also has positive impacts because erosion from trampled banks can be severe.

Eutrophication can be a problem in any lake, but it is almost always a concern in

lakes receiving lots of drainage.

Along with sediment comes nutrients from agriculture, pastures, yards, and municipal and camp sewage. The resulting deep green algae blooms in the water are an indication of an ecosystem that is "on the edge."

The normal oxygen cycle in a lake has



Makeshift "dams" to slow road project runoff help reduce erosion, but are rarely adequate. Not only does the sediment pollute receiving waters, the soil lost must be replaced at great expense. Photo by Rick Bryan.

highest dissolved oxygen (D.O.) late in the day and lowest levels just before dawn. In eutrophic systems this cycle tends to swing wildly from extremely high D.O. at dusk to very low D.O. at dawn. These waters tend to gradually become dominated by fish species that can handle those conditions - the so-called rough fish: carp, gar, bullhead catfish.

Fish kills occur in areas where the dawn low D.O. drops below about 1.5 milligrams per liter (mg/L). When a lake gets to these conditions, public use drops and the Sportsman's Paradise becomes a little less like paradise.

As with the local sources of sedimentation, we can make good decisions about controlling nutrient pollution. State-of-the-art fertilizer application and advanced sewage treatment with wetland or dryland nutrient uptake components are solutions that should be popular with people who are serious about quality fishing.

Glenn Thomas is Associate Fisheries Agent with the LSU AgCenter and Louisiana SeaGrant. This article appeared in the November issue of the "Lagniappe" newsletter.

# Awards Deadline Nears

The deadline for submitting nominations for the 43rd Governor's State Conservation Achievement Awards Program is February 6, 2007. Sponsored annually by the Louisiana Wildlife Federation, the program is designed to further the proper utilization and conservation of the natural resources of the State of Louisiana - air, soils, waters, minerals forests, fisheries and wildlife — by recognizing those persons and organizations who make outstanding contributions to the natural resource welfare of the community, the parish and the state.

According to federation president Terry L. Melancon, the awards are the most prestigious recognition of accomplishment in the field of conservation that are presented each year in Louisiana. The awards themselves, handsome statuettes of wild animals, are unique to the program and highly coveted by all who receive them. Melancon encouraged the public to make nominations, but stressed that the February 6th deadline is quickly approaching.

The awards will be presented the evening of March 3rd at a special banquet held in conjunction with the 68th annual convention of the Louisiana Wildlife Federation at the Holiday Inn in Gonzales. The official nomination form with program rules and other specific details is available on the Internet at: <http://www.lawildlifefed.org>, or contact the federation office at 225/344-6707.

The Louisiana Wildlife Federation is a statewide conservation education and advocacy organization with over 10,000 members and 25 affiliated groups throughout Louisiana. Established in 1940, it is affiliated with the National Wildlife Federation and represents a broad constituency of conservationists including hunters, fishers, campers, birders, boaters and other outdoor-oriented citizens.



## Letter to the Editor

### Halt Highway Construction in Kisatchie National Forest

Dear Editor:

I am a new member of the Louisiana Wildlife Federation, and I am proud and honored to be part of our great organization protecting and promoting Louisiana's natural heritage.

One of my favorite causes in our state is our Kisatchie National Forest, which is Louisiana's only national forest. The Kisatchie is one of the favorite destinations of people from throughout Louisiana to hunt, fish, hike, camp, and enjoy numerous other recreational activities.

However, the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development is trying to expand U. S. Highway 167 into a major four-lane highway through parts of our national forest including the Catahoula National Wildlife Preserve within the Kisatchie in Grant and Winn Parishes. This highway plan, if implemented, would result in permanent loss of wildlife habitat, timber, and recreational opportunities.

I have written Governor Blanco, suggesting that the state merely bypass the Kisatchie with the highway improvement project. There simply are some areas of our state that should not be developed, and our Kisatchie National Forest is one of them.

I urge all members of our Louisiana Wildlife Federation, as well as all citizens of Louisiana who love our Kisatchie National Forest, to please use your voices to help stop this ill-conceived highway expansion plan from permanently harming our state's only national forest.

Sincerely,  
**Joseph C. Arnold**  
Dry Prong, LA

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*President: Continued from page 21*

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ule the boat for display, the tickets sell themselves. Contact the LWF office for more information on how to participate in this important fundraiser.

Until next time get out and enjoy the outdoors; don't take it for granted because someday your favorite patch of woods may become a subdivision.

Yours in conservation,  
Terry L. Melancon, President

## Sponsor Members

First-time \$100 or greater LWF Contributing members are entitled to receive a sponsor plaque for their home or office. We extend our grateful appreciation to the following Sponsor Members of the Louisiana Wildlife Federation. Their support and that of all our loyal members is directly responsible for the Federation's growth and success.



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# Chef Folse's "After the Hunt" is Looking for Your Photos/Recipes

by Randy Lanctot

Native son and world famous Louisiana chef and gourmet food industry guru, Chef John Folse is building another epic collection of recipes and food lore. This time, you are it. It's all about wild game and fish

be recognized with a framed copy of their page in the book. Information on how to participate is at: <http://www.jfolse.com>.

Since I've had a decent season so far with a quantity of ducks and some venison in the freezer, I'm compelled to reprise a few deer recipes and throw in one on ducks for

ian" because of my enthusiasm for consuming wild game, I kindly corrected the offender - "You mean, predator." And not ashamed of it, I might add.

I like it all, from the scouting to the anticipating, the heightened awareness of wild Nature while waiting, the calling when that is involved in the hunt, the moment of decision, the scrutiny of the kill, the manual retrieve or drag when necessary, the gutting and examination of stomach and gizzard contents, the cutting and putting up for future feasting. It's a lot of time...and work. It is hunting. And to me, the hunt is not complete without the celebration of preparing the meat for the table. It's more spiritual than preparing something store-bought. Predator....Yes.

To get to these simple recipes, you have to go back to what I was saying about keeping most of the meat (and bones) from the kill. For deer, that means you probably have to butcher the animal yourself. I won't go into how I prefer to do that, but it does take a few hours on a few evenings after the harvest, keeping the meat cool in an ice chest until the job is complete.

So let's start with deer. Yum! Here's what to do if you saved the neck, the best roast on the deer. Filet the meat from the neck bone. If you killed a nice buck, you'll have enough for two big neck roasts. It takes a sharp knife and a little effort to work in and around the blades of the vertebrae to get most of the meat. The result should be a flat piece of meat an inch to two-plus inches thick, depending on the size of the deer. You may want to remove the cartilage, but I usually do not since it has no effect on the quality of the roast and some folks, like me, like to eat it. And, it's a treat for the dog after the cookin' is done.

Get a few strips of bacon, some medium Jalapeno peppers or, better yet, Trappery's yellow Torrido Chili Peppers if you can find them, and toes of garlic. Thinly slice each of these so that you have a pile of small strips of each. Make numerous slits in the meat with a sharp knife blade and then stuff one or more of each of these seasonings into each



Hmmm hmm, good! Hearty venison vegetable soup.

recipes and the people who provide for the table through their sporting endeavors. Folse is dedicating a full chapter to recipes and photos submitted by Louisiana hunters and fishers, and he needs your help. Along with your best recipes, Folse is seeking photos that tell the story of the hunt — from the hounds, retrievers and bird dogs to the skinning shed and camp kitchen, to jovial gatherings at the table, the side boards, the bunk room, the liling/tilting porch - the best representations of life afield, to illustrate his book.

Those who submit photos or recipes that are used in the book will receive an autographed copy and an invitation to the preview party at White Oak Plantation. Those providing the top 3 submissions will

good measure. Maybe it was growing up poor (don't tell Ma I said that) 'cause when it comes to game and fish, I use the "whole hog" so to speak. There are a few parts I discard, like heads and feet and the wing at the "wrist," and most of the "innards" save the heart, and gizzard on birds, and scales and skin, of course, except on fowl where the skin is left to keep the meat moist while cooking. I don't breast ducks and don't make sausage from my deer, unless I'm fortunate to bag more than two during the season. The meat is just too good to mask, all ground up with pork, fat and seasoning. (I will accept deer sausage, however, if gifted to me). And the best parts of any duck are the legs and the sweet meat in the hollow of the back. When recently described as a "barbar-

slit. I usually stuff one of each in each slit if there's room. You can use the back of a kitchen match or a Popsicle stick to aid in the stuffing. Stuff liberally. The peppers really add a nice, but not too hot, flavor to this roast. Cut a few lengths of cotton cord that will be long enough to tie up the roast once rolled. Season liberally with your preferred seasoned salt: I like McCormick's "Season All." Roll the meat up along its axis remembering to season the outside of the roast as you roll. Tie the roast closed at 3 or more places with strong cotton cord.

Brown the meat in a little bacon fat or cooking oil in a cast iron pan or Dutch oven. After browning, wrap the roast in extra-heavy aluminum foil and seal the ends well. Put the roast in a Dutch oven, cover and bake at 300-350 for up to 3 hours (maybe a little more), depending on the size of the roast and age of the deer. A small roast from a young deer may be ready in 90 minutes. For a big roast, I'd check it at about 2 hours just to see how it is doing. It's a pain, but worth the precaution so you don't overcook. Overcooking game is the #1 misstep of novice game cooks and is a crime that even some of us seasoned cooks are occasionally guilty of. ("How about another sip of that Pinot? Do you remember when I put that roast on?") Sound familiar?

This roast will make a lot of juice. After carefully opening the foil so the steam doesn't burn my fingers too badly, I ease the roast and juice into the pot and cover until ready to serve. Sometimes I'll slice up a big onion and a pound of mushrooms, add them and cook on "low" on top of the stove until the onions are tender. Slice off a chunk, put it on rice and spoon on the juice. Man, I am about to eat this keyboard!

I hope you didn't throw that neck bone out, or give it to the dogs, YET, 'cause we're gonna use it to make venison vegetable soup along with the shanks and flank meat I hope you kept when you killed that beautiful animal. Soup freezes well, so plan to use a decent sized stock pot, maybe 24 quarts. I usually start out boiling the bones in a smaller pot, but transfer the stock and meat to a larger pot before adding the vegetables as it can get pretty crowded in there once you get going.

Cut the meat off the shanks and put those bones along with the neck bone in the pot. Pour in enough water to cover the bones and get it boiling at a moderate rate until all the excess meat that remained on

the bones falls off. Be careful, the boiled bones will be hot, so when they are ready to come out, don't use your fingers. While the bones are boiling, filet as much of the meat as possible away from sinew, muscle sheath and other connective tissue that is too tough to put in the pot. Flank meat is a little easier to deal with, but the same process applies. Try to end up with strips and slabs of pure meat. This takes awhile, so put Johnny Cash on the CD player and have a favorite beverage or two while you're at it. Dice up the meat into half-inch cubes (or any size that is small). You should try to get 3-5 pounds of meat out of it. It's okay to use a better piece of your venison to do this if needed to get enough meat.

After you have the right quantity of meat, and the bones are boiled enough, remove the bones and add the meat. Boil the meat until it is a little chewy, but tender. That may take an hour. If it's late, sometimes I'll let the meat simmer overnight. Cool the pot to room temperature and then put it in the fridge, or outside if it's cool enough, until the fat cakes up on the surface. Use a slotted pancake flipper to lift the fat off before resuming. Return the pot to a boil and add a big can of whole tomatoes, a half-head of shredded cabbage, a large onion chopped fine, a medium bell pepper chopped fine, 4 sticks of celery sliced thin, some bay leaves and a quarter cup of Worcestershire. Keep boiling. At this point you will know whether or not you need to transfer to a larger pot. In fact, you may want to do that before adding these "seasoning" veggies.

Now you can get creative. What kind of veggies do you like? I usually will add sliced carrots, diced potatoes, a diced turnip or two, a bag of the best frozen sweetcorn (off the cob, of course), maybe some cut snap beans, limas and a diced rutabaga for good measure. You can do broccoli stems and cauliflower, Brussel's sprouts; the sky a, that is, the size of the pot, is the limit.

At this point, the soup is almost "on," so don't boil too much more or some of the veggies will tend to get mushy. Sometimes I add pasta when I add the last batch of vegetables. When I do, I usually use a pound of the little teardrop pasta. It fits well into the available remaining space in the soup without making a tangle like noodles or spaghetti will. You may be thinking, "What about seasoning like salt and pepper?" With this quantity of soup (about 3 gallons), it's hard

to figure how much salt and pepper to add. I use about two tablespoons of salt and one tablespoon of course-ground black pepper. That is a lot less than will suit some folks. But it's better to have less than too much. The individual diner can add what he or she desires when their bowl is served. A hearty soup like this is one of the most satisfying meals you can eat. It's fulfilling yet less filling. Reminds me of a beer commercial. I'll take two big bowls, thank-you.

Well, this is getting too long and I havened even gotten to the "steak fingers," barbequed tenderloin chop roasts, jerked ribs or smoked rump. Those will have to wait. But I'll do one more shorty for ducks.

I like duck gumbo, roast duck and even half-duck barbecue, but for me the easiest and most succulent way to make ducks is to smoke them. (Not like a cigar, smarty.) The best ducks to smoke are fat ones that are plucked whole, not skinned. The effort is worth it. Any species will do as long as it is fat and not too badly shot. The secret to making good smoked duck (or smoked anything, for that matter) other than avoiding overcooking is to rub them inside and out with salt, black pepper and crushed garlic. After that, your hands smell good enough to eat, too. Put the rubbed ducks in a covered container or in a big ziplock bag and put them in the fridge over a night or two. I use a cylindrical double smoker that is readily available where barbeque stuff is sold. Fill the fire pan with hot coals and 3 or 4 hickory chunks; a few mesquite chunks are good, too. Make sure the water pan is full. Space the ducks out on the rack (or racks if you are cooking enough ducks to need both levels) away from the edges. Cover and let it smoke.

Small ducks like teal will be ready in about 90 minutes while mallards or canvasbacks may take 2-3 hours. The same rule applies here as for cooking venison. It's better to check early to see if the meat is nearly done than to wait too long and find it has been overcooked. These ducks are delectable, especially the legs and wings and that sweet meat on the back. Breasts can be sliced thin and enjoyed with cheese, crackers and a nice red wine. Oh boy, now this "mouse" is looking good! Time for supper.

So, back to where we started. Send those recipes and photos into Chef Folse. Immortality awaits.

the "Louisiana Speaks" website at:

<http://www.louisianaspeaks.org>. The time we spend now will pay off for the future.

In this column last time I suggested that there was a way to succeed in living compatibly on the coast, with tolerable risk and in a way that sustains the great heritage of the region. That has more to do with attitude, fortified by willpower than anything else. This year, with all the planning going on, maybe we'll "get it."

All this rain is helping to heal the damage the storm surge, and the saltwater it brought, did to the farm and pastureland along the coast. The ducks sure don't mind it, either. Congress and the Corps of Engineers look like they are serious about closing the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet and beginning a process of restoring, as much as possible, the St. Bernard wetlands that the navigation channel has damaged. It will require constant "encouragement" to use a too gentle term, but closure of MRGO is very close to being imminent. The LWF has been and will continue to be involved in that effort as well as reviewing and commenting on the draft Master Plan for Coastal Protection (and Restoration).

The LWF will be holding its 68th Annual Convention March 2-4 at the Holiday Inn in Gonzales. An agenda and other information about the meeting is posted on the LWF's website at:

<http://www.lawildlifefed.org>. One session of the meeting will be devoted to discussing the need for preserving open space and wildlife habitat as communities encroach on rural landscapes. We have invited the Louisiana Nature Conservancy and the Trust for Public Land to make presentations on how communities can best address this challenge for the benefit of citizens and wildlife. There will also be presentations on the new volunteer programs designed to help restore coastal wetlands and recover from the damage caused to the habitat by the hurricanes. Numerous resolutions addressing a variety of important conservation issues will be debated, conservation work will be honored and there will be a lot of fun and food for members and guests throughout the course of the weekend. I hope you will be able to attend.

In closing I want to recognize and thank the following new LWF members and donors who encourage us by their confidence and enhance our work with their

financial support.

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pressure like reducing the number of days each week that can be hunted, or even the number of shotgun shells allowed per hunter, but all had significant drawbacks. As for the ducks, they've got it figured out. They just raft up way out in the bay during the day and come back to feed when the hunters are gone and it's safe. If ducks weren't "smart" we wouldn't have any, I thought.

In the morning we would get out early and have a "real" hunt, so I set about fixing supper. The evening's menu was grilled venison chops, fresh garden salad and a nice Cabernet to wash it all down. It must have been good 'cause J. W. talked about it, or something, all night in his sleep.

I had J. W.'s drill down a little better on Day 2, but still not perfect. Gus uttered a low, musical whine as we motored toward the intended hunting spot. It sounded like he was singing. A dog's hunting song, I thought. It was a good omen. I sensed success. I considered joining in harmony, but being a little curmudgeonly, J. W. probably would not have appreciated the joy of his pals, and I'd have found myself stranded on the nearest mudflat.

We were a tad too late in setting up to enjoy a cup of coffee before shooting time, but it didn't matter. The divers were in the air and I picked off a canvasback. At J. W.'s command, Gus exploded over the blind from his station between us to retrieve the bird. I was a little disappointed that it was a hen instead of a drake. I have to admit that I was having a little trouble identifying the birds before I shot. I guess it was because I wasn't used to having such a variety of species available (Of course it had nothing to do with age and eyesight.) J. W. continued to wonder about his shooting. A small group of greenwings zoomed from behind and swung wide, out in front. We stood with our guns mounted. Seconds later all 4 birds floated on the water. Gus was having a ball. "No survivors," J. W. enthused, regaining his confidence.

J. W. called the next shot. I saw the divers barreling in on his side to the right, but when I stood, I noticed a handful of ringnecks skirting the edge of the decoys at about 11 o'clock. Three rounds cycled through my old Wingmaster pump. "Lanctot, you're hot. All I see is feet," came the observation from the other side of the blind. Sure enough, a triple. I must be shooting with my eyes closed, I laughed to

myself. After having scratched again, J. W. resumed his brief lament. "I can't believe I missed those birds" he griped shaking his head. But there was no time to mope as he stood to drop a single bluewing, then a do gris moments later. "Nice!" I said. Obviously, his slump was over. We were getting close to our limits which we polished off in short order, me with a plump redhead and J. W. with 2 more greenwings. By 7:30 we were picking up and heading in.

As we passed the marshes on the north shore of the bay, clouds of ducks rose to the air at the sound of the motor. Typical ducking on the delta.

It took us awhile to pluck those dozen ducks, something J. W. only occasionally does. I appreciated his help in that regard. Not being fortunate to hunt and harvest often, I like to pluck all but the most shot-up or pin-feathered birds. That allows for more options in preparing them for the table. For supper, we were still on a venison diet as I deep fried strips cut from the hind quarter along with the last eggplants from the garden.

Our last hunt was on Saturday morning and, as expected, hunters were populating every clump of cover. The weather had backed up into poor hunting conditions with only a slight breeze and warm temperatures. There was not much shooting, and less killing going on. We stuck it out until about 10:30 and came in with 4 birds to show for our effort - still not bad by my standards.

J. W.'s campmate was bringing his son down to hunt the rest of the weekend, so I hurried to load my boat for the return to the landing with a nice mess of ducks for the coming holidays. I thanked J. W. and filled his can with the extra gas I'd brought, knowing that it wouldn't hurt my chances for a future invite.

Heading back up the outlet in broad daylight, I could run at full throttle and was back at the landing in 30 minutes. I was still pumped. Now that I knew my way, I was planning future day trips, not only to hunt but to explore this, one of the most exciting spots on our continent. I'd been away too long.



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*Ducking in the Delta: Continued from page 7*

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J. W. grouched about that. "Too many hunters," he snorted. Myself, I thought the hunting, though understandably slow considering the circumstances, was still pretty good. "Depends on what you're used to," I said.

Back at the camp there was more orientation. J. W. picked the ducks while I made a late breakfast of fried eggs and deer heart. J. W. was not enthusiastic about the heart, so I ate more than my share and rationed the rest of the tasty slices to Gus who scarfed them down without hesitation. I perceived a grin of satisfaction on his jowls.

It was too late to make an afternoon hunt, so we piddled around camp and continued our conversation about how hunting pressure was affecting hunting quality and the behavior of waterfowl. J. W. is a proponent of limiting hunting to morning-only rather than all-day as is the rule for here on the Atchafalaya WMA. He thinks that would give some relief to the ducks and make the morning hunting better. Based on his situation, that makes sense. He spends all but a few days of the season at the camp and can hunt every morning. He is "in place" to maximize his opportunities. Other hunters, however, who trailer a boat to the landing, make the run to the bay, set up, hunt and return home the same day are at a disadvantage if their hunting time is restricted. Running the channel in the early morning dark and fog to be set up before sunrise can be dangerous, and often the best hunting on the delta is in the afternoon when the weather and tides are most favorable. We talked about other possibilities for limiting

# Killing of Federally Protected Western Grebe at Kincaid Lake

*By Jay V. Huner, Ph. D.*

On Wednesday afternoon, 8 November 2006, a birder sighted a Western Grebe in Kincaid Lake, near Alexandria, Louisiana at the dam. Western

to aid the gunner in making an escape. The birders watched the grebe float away in the waves driven by high winds. They observed these "outlaws" using their boat to sneak up on and shoot at rafts of ducks to well out in the lake, another illegal activity.

conservationists in North America in providing funds through sales of Federal "Duck" Stamps and excise taxes on their hunting equipment for acquisition and management of wetland habitat. In fact, the Western Grebe killed by these outlaw hunters may well have owed its existence to such conservation efforts.

It is unfortunate that the birders who discovered the unlawful killing of the grebe and subsequent illegal hunting practices did not contact local law enforcement agencies such as the Rapides Parish Sheriff's Department and the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries. They were apparently so dismayed by what they witnessed that it did not occur to them to do so on the spot. So, one purpose of this report is to encourage members of the Louisiana Wildlife Federation to report unlawful hunting (and fishing) activities. Remember, the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries has an "Operation Game Thief Hotline" 1 - 800 - 442-2511. The hotline is manned around the clock. And for heaven's sake,



*Western Grebe swimming on Kincaid Lake before the shooting. Photo by John Pitre.*

Grebes are very rare in Louisiana and only a dozen have ever been reported in the state before this bird was found. All grebes are migratory birds protected by federal law. Birders from Alexandria, Baton Rouge, Boyce, Derrider, and Shreveport came to see the bird on Thursday and Friday following the report. Others were planning to come during the weekend and following week if the activities associated with the start of duck season on Saturday did not cause the bird to leave.

Unfortunately, two birders from the Lafayette area arrived early Saturday morning within a minute of the bird being shot by a "hunter" who was unable to distinguish a long necked, sharp-beaked grebe from a short necked, broad-billed duck! Upon seeing the birders, an accomplice in a small aluminum boat powered by a "go-devil" type engine quickly came to the dam

Eco-tourism is important to Louisiana's economy. The furor on the internet caused by the illegal activities of the two "slob hunters" surely generated a negative image of our state as a destination for birding. This is especially unfortunate because the American Birding Association will hold its annual convention in Lafayette in April this year. At least one of several field trips will feature central Louisiana to seek rare birds indigenous to our region including the endangered Red-cockaded Woodpecker and Bachman's Sparrow.

Every honest Louisiana hunter knows to identify his or her target before shooting at it and is well aware of serious state and federal penalties associated with the unlawful killing of protected migratory birds, and use of boats under power to hunt for waterfowl. Hunters are in the forefront of



*Western Grebe floating on Kincaid lake after being shot by "hunters" running up and shooting ducks on the lake. Photo by Mike Musumeche.*

let's discourage this kind of misbehavior and treat it with the contempt it deserves.

# New Book Profiles Gulf Finfish; Answers Universal Angler Question - “What’s This?”

By Randy Lanctot

One of the fascinating aspects of angling in the Gulf of Mexico, and a major enticement for anglers to fish there, is the variety of species that can be caught in one general area with one type of bait or lure. Although most anglers target one or two species or species groups like snapper, tuna, speckled trout and redfish, they never know when the bait hits the water, or when they feel that tap at the end of the line,

what will be revealed when the fish is brought to shore, pier or boat. The uncertainty adds to the excitement of fishing the Gulf. Once landed, though, it is important that anglers know what they have. With the ever-changing harvest regulations now being applied to so many Gulf fish species, not knowing what kind of fish you just put in the ice chest can get you in trouble with the law.

Fret not. Retired fisheries biologist Jerald Horst, web publisher Mike Lane and master fish illustrator Duane Raver have come to your aid with their new book, “Angler’s Guide to the Fishes of the Gulf of Mexico.” Published last fall by Pelican Publishing Company, the book profiles 207 species of saltwater fish found in the Gulf of Mexico.

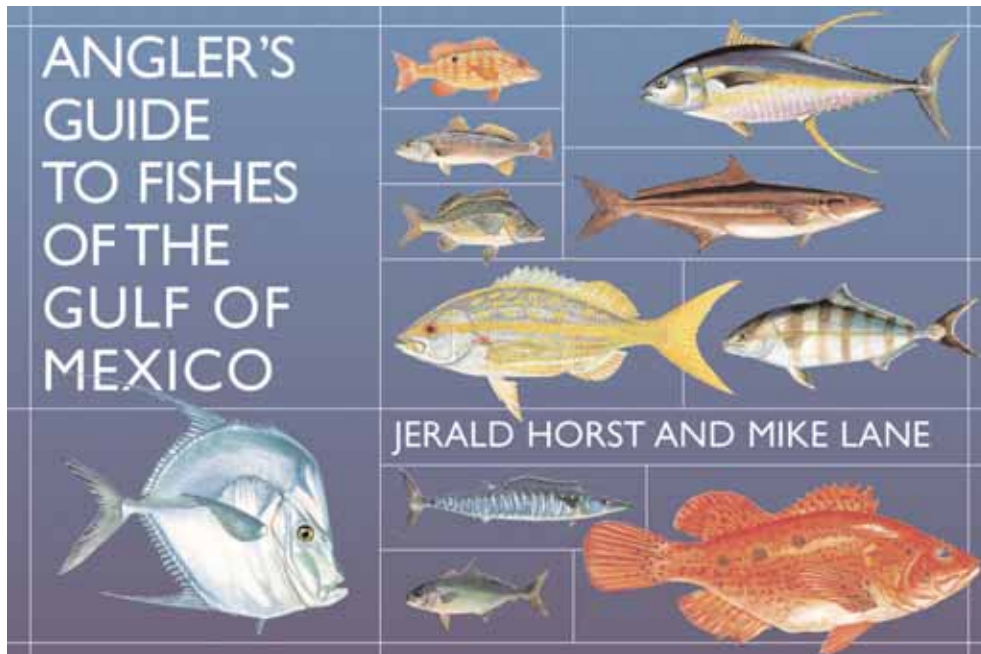
Because this is a “picture book” of fishes, with the illustration on one page and the descriptive information on the facing page, it is easy for anglers, divers and other fish fanciers to locate the profile of the species they observe in the field. For each species, the scientific as well as the common and popular local names are given along with a description of distinguishing features, information on distribution, food habits, growth and size, reproductive biology and behavior. The detail provided is not comprehensive but intended to

cover on one page the kind of information that would be most interesting and useful to an angler. Each profile even includes a few words on food value. For instance, for oil fish (no kidding, that is really the common name of one of these Gulf fish), Horst says that “when grilled, this very oily fish makes good table fare. However, some diners have complained about the flesh having purgative effects, causing diarrhea. Other people are unaffected. Diners should keep this caution in mind.” Now, Jerald, where can I get one of those oilfish?

I do have to take issue with at least one of Horst’s food value assessments. He extols the hardhead catfish as decent table fare while on the very next page gives the gafftop-sail cat only a fair rating, claiming a “fishy taste.” Must have been something in the branch water he was washing those cats down with! Although hardheads are tolerable fried and can make a nice court

bouillon, the gafftop is equivalent to a channel cat in quality. Anglers often reject them mostly because they are so slimy and mess up their ice chest. But when the trout aren’t biting, it’s definitely worth taking a few gafftops home for the fry pan.

“Angler’s Guide to Fishes of the Gulf of Mexico” is available from most book stores for \$35 or can be ordered by calling (504) 780-8551.





# TIBBY SEZ

*Ole Tibby*



I visited my rice farmer friend Mervis Saltzman over in the Gueydan area recently, the Duck Capitol of Louisiana. Some areas have been attracting ducks, in others the ducks have been sparse. The storm flood from Hurricane Rita left a lot of salt in the ground which has prevented the growth of rice and other waterfowl food plants. Mervis went hunting a few times but didn't want to shoot the few ducks - do gris and teal that came by his blind.

A hunting guide in the area closed his operation on account of the low number of ducks there. Some farmers have their places for sale, and cattle farmers are still having to buy hay from other areas due to the salty soil stunting the forage. These recent rains should help flush the salt out of the soil, but it will take many more good rains to get things back to normal.

According to the outdoor show reports, some duck hunters are having a good season in some parts of the state, but other areas that have been good traditionally are still recovering from the hurricanes and not attracting many ducks. That is a great disappointment to a lot of hunters, but it's not

only the hurricanes that have changed the presence of waterfowl in areas of the state, but warm winters and hunting pressure seem to have changed migration patters and duck behavior.

I have been getting reports from deer hunters that the season has been good in both Louisiana and Mississippi.

None of my children hunt ducks. Friends have told me "Tibby, you burned them out on hunting when they were growing up." I suppose that could be a reason for their current lack of interest, because we did go hunting plenty of times back then, also fishing and scouting (Boy Scouts). My granddaughter, Jaime who recently moved back to Baton Rouge after attending the University of Wisconsin and working with wildlife agencies in Tennessee and Kentucky is interested in duck hunting. She got to go on a hunt to Three Rivers WMA with LWF Executive Director Randy Lanctot a few weeks ago. She said it was real foggy and there were lots of geese they heard flying high. There were quite a few flights of ducks, but being a public area, they were competing with other hunters and calling the same birds. A few small groups of ducks came in shooting range, but Jaime said she did not shoot. Randy fell over in the mud as he shot 2 from one group after they passed by the front of their makeshift blind. Jaime said she really enjoyed the hunt. She is more interested in fishing and hunting than our other kids and grandkids.

I hope everyone had a Merry Christmas and I wish all of you a happy and prosperous New Year.

Tibby

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Association of Louisiana Bass Clubs  
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Jul 15, 2005

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