

MUSEUM QUARTERLY

LSU

Museum of Natural Science



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Little Blue Heron (*Egretta caerulea*) | Cameron Parish, LA 2015
Photo by LSUMNS graduate student Oscar Johnson

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Letter from the Director...



The Curlew Sandpiper

The spring bird migration is beginning to wrap up, and I want to thank all of you who supported the recent Museum Birdathon (see page 5 for an account of their exciting day). Your donations will send Museum grad students to the field so that we can continue our long tradition of collections-based research. On their recent outing, the Birdathon team tallied 202 species, including an impressive 27 shorebird species!

Being a birder as long as I have, I really have no excuse for not knowing shorebirds better. Louisiana rice fields are absolutely some of the best places in the world to see massive congregations of migrating shorebirds. But books have been written on how to identify shorebirds, because many of the commonly encountered species are distinguishable only by subtle differences in size, shape, and plumage, the latter also varying dramatically by season and age within a species. In the field, these subtle differences are usually being gauged from very long distances. Shorebirds don't like people, and so as we gather on the roadside to point our optics at distant flocks of shorebirds, what I often view through the lens are wavy hazes of bird-like objects. Other birders don't seem to have this problem. Viewing the exact same flock, my compatriots will shout out "oh cool, some of those Western Sandpipers are acquiring their breeding plumage" or "there's a Semipalmated Sandpiper behind the group of Western Sandpipers" or "is that a Baird's Sandpiper in with the White-rumps?" I'll go look in their scope at the hazy blur and agree that it's definitely a Baird's.

One allure of shorebirding is the possibility of finding a needle in the haystack, of encountering a vagrant species that is far afield from its traditional migratory path. But to identify a rarity one needs to be well acquainted with the routine species. With a great bird collection at my disposal I recently began spending some spare time trying to decipher shorebirds. I don't necessarily want a level of knowledge that would allow me to pick out a lone Little Stint from a flock of three thousand other 'peep' (a term applied to the most difficult-to-identify small sandpipers in the genus *Calidris*), but I would like to at least be able to identify the common shorebirds. Meandering through the LSU shorebird collection recently I came across the tray of Curlew Sandpipers. The Curlew Sandpiper (*Calidris ferruginea*) is a Louisiana birdwatcher's fantasy, an Old World species that breeds in the tundra of Siberia, but shows up occasionally as a vagrant in





Bird Bonanzas
TOUR OF THE YEAR 1976
PERU
 June 4 – July 2, 1976

Will this be the most fantastic birding tour ever? Tour leader Ted Parker thinks it will. Ted feels that 700 species are possible on this tour, including a great number of spectacular and exotic species, some only recently discovered and known by only a couple specimens.

This will not be the ordinary nature tour to Peru, but a unique adventure designed for avid birders who want to see as much as possible when they take a birding trip. We will visit every conceivable habitat from Amazonian rainforest to tundra high in the Andes, from arid desert to open ocean. The group will be limited to a small number of participants, so that each person will have the opportunity to see all the birds.

It is a known fact, even conceded by many of our rival agencies, that BIRD BONANZAS' Tour of the Year has been the finest ornithological tour each year. If you've missed the others, you have no idea how spectacular a birding tour can be. Would you like to know more about it?

For additional details write:
BIRD BONANZAS, INC.
 12550 Biscayne Boulevard, Suite 501
 North Miami, Florida 33181

Page 1: The first record of Curlew Sandpiper in Peru, a specimen collected by Gary Graves and prepared by John O'Neill in 1976.

Top Left: Advertisement (Auk, vol. 92, 1975) for the Tour of the Year, led by Ted Parker

Bottom Right: A breeding plumage Curlew Sandpiper in Uzbekistan. Photo by Francesco Veronesi, used under Creative Commons license.

North America.

We have just a few Curlew Sandpiper specimens in the Museum, mostly from their wintering grounds in Kenya, but I was surprised to find a specimen of an adult male in gray non-breeding plumage collected by Museum alum Gary Graves during a 1976 trip to Peru. Turns out this specimen, collected from a shallow coastal pond near the mouth of the Pisco River in southern Peru, was the first record of that species for Peru. As far as I can tell, it is still the only record of this species from Peru.

1976 was an epic year for the Museum in Peru. The legendary Long-whiskered Owlet was discovered, along with four other species, on the Cordillera del Condor expedition. But before the expedition **John O'Neill** and **Gary Graves** languished for weeks in Lima waiting for permits and truck repairs. As Gary recalls, "Things were tough --- martial law. Tanks in the streets. Guys with machine guns at the major intersections." **Ted Parker** was also in Peru leading the 1976 "Tour of the Year" for Bird Bonanzas, Inc. But Ted "got sick (digestive problems) and had to lay low for a few days in Lima," according to Gary. "I filled in as bird guide for the tour ... which was in its final days." At the end of the tour, Peruvian ornithologist Manuel Plenge suggested they visit some ponds near the Pisco River. Gary now refers to this day as "Sandpiper Day." Gary spotted the sandpiper, identified it, collected it, and then gave it to John O'Neill to skin. "I shudder to think what the specimen would have looked like had I skinned it! My skinning skills were mediocre at best in mid-1976."

So why did this bird end up in Peru? Where in the Arctic tundra did it breed? Just as humans are able to track their ancestry using DNA analyses from companies like 23&Me, we'll be able to address the ancestry of this sandpiper using DNA. The specimen was collected before we began collecting tissue samples, so we don't have a frozen tissue of it in the Collection of Genetic Resources. However, we now have the ability to gather genome-scale DNA data by extracting DNA from the toepad of an old specimen. Assuming we're able to get DNA profiles from breeding individuals in Siberia, we'll someday be able to figure out from where in the Arctic tundra this individual called home. We may even be able to determine why it ended up in Peru.

The last confirmed records of this species for Louisiana are in 2005, 2002, 1991, and 1990, so we're definitely due for one. And this fun fact: The size of the Curlew Sandpiper population oscillates with the boom and bust of lemming populations. In poor lemming years, predatory Snowy Owls and skuas will munch on Curlew Sandpipers (and other Arctic-breeding shorebirds).

To see images of a few of Louisiana's Curlew Sandpipers check out these eBird records (all from Louisiana birder Paul Conover):

2005 record: <http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist/S6089713>

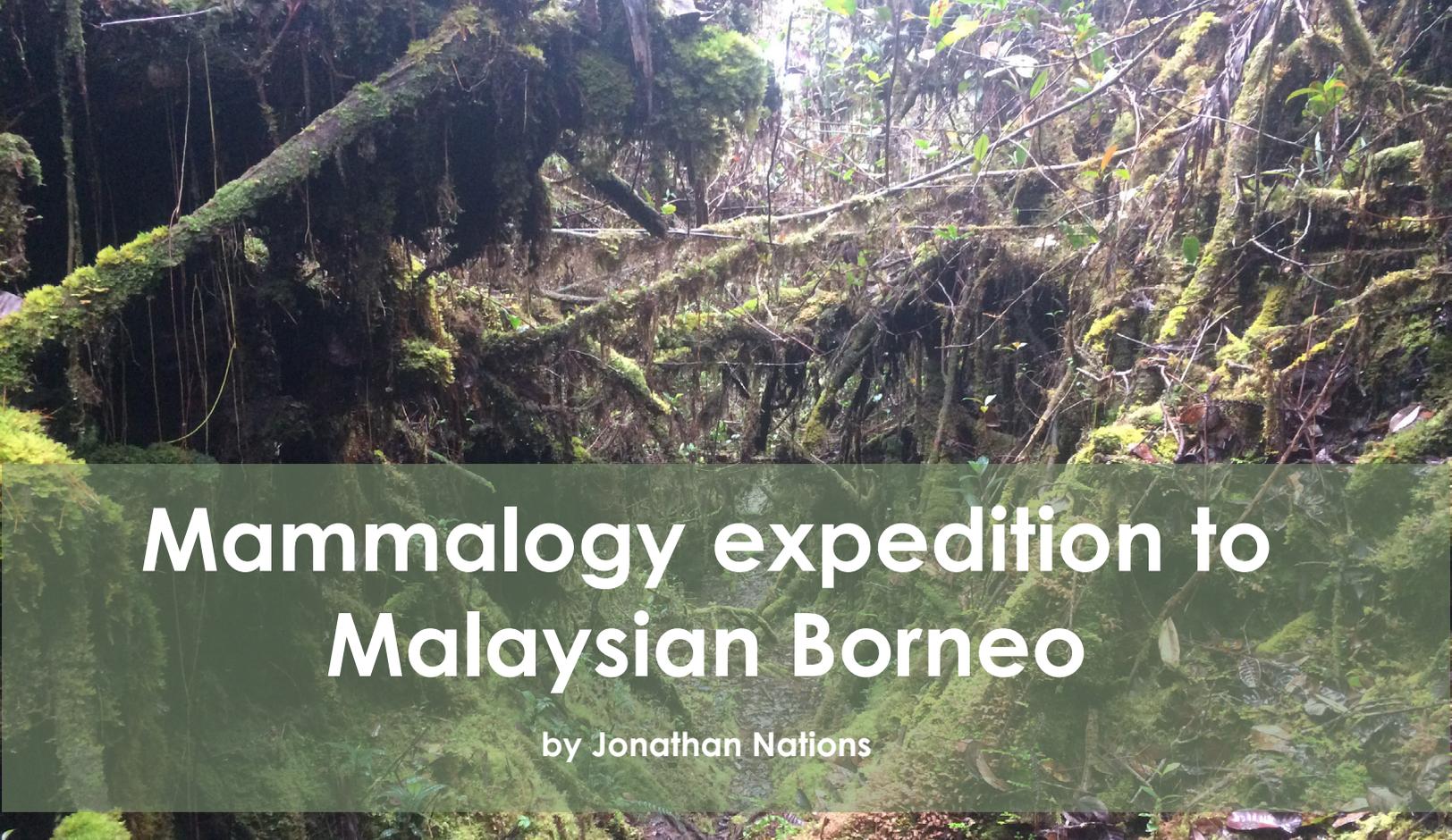
2002 record: <http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist/S6089701>

1991 record: <http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist/S6089696>

Here's the link to a pdf of Gary's publication describing the Peru specimen record:

<https://sora.unm.edu/sites/default/files/journals/condor/v080n04/p0455-p0455.pdf>





Mammalogy expedition to Malaysian Borneo

by Jonathan Nations

Borneo is a large, rugged island nested in the Malay Archipelago of Southeast Asia. Its size (the world's third largest island), complex topography, and ample precipitation make it a global hotspot for biodiversity. Indeed, this land mass has fascinated biologists since Alfred Russel Wallace's accounts of his notorious orangutan expeditions of the 1850's. Some of the most charismatic mammals on the planet make their home there, including gibbons, cloud leopards, pygmy elephants, proboscis monkeys, giant flying foxes, and the relatively small, hairy Sumatran rhino. While all these species are fascinating, the lesser-known small mammals of Borneo are equally—or perhaps more—fascinating to mammalogists at the **LSU Museum of Natural Science**. Did you know that Borneo is the global hotspot of squirrel diversity, with over 40 species on the island? Or that there is a giant arboreal rat, tipping the scales at 500g, that can only be found in the Bornean cloud forests? These and other small mammals were on the mind of **Dr. Jake Esselstyn** and I as we rushed to plan a trip to Mount Mulu National Park in Sarawak, Malaysia in the spring of 2017.

I say rushed trip as the planning stage was brief to say the least. Our 1 year collecting permit was issued by the Sarawak Forestry department on March 15th,

2016. However, we did not know of this permit until it arrived unexpectedly in the mail in mid-January with, you guessed it, a March 15th, 2017 expiration. But with the help of our Malaysian collaborator Dr. Faisal Kahn, and **Dr. Fred Sheldon's** lab at LSUMNS, Jake and I planned this trip. We packed our bags, hopped some planes, and a few days later found ourselves packing rice sacks with food and gear for porters to carry up Mt. Mulu.

After a couple days of gathering porters and one day of climbing, we arrived at Camp 3, a large and quite livable three-sided structure situated on a hillside at 1350 meters. This was right at the point where the tall, open lowland forest began to give way to the cool, montane mossy forest. These mossy forests are only found in higher elevations, making them not only pleasant places to work (temperature range of 55°-70° F), but also home to high numbers of endemic mammals. We quickly got our gear together and began placing traps and digging pitfall lines.

The rain was unbelievable. The downpours reached an intensity that I have yet to see in our rain-soaked state of Louisiana, and shook the earth relentlessly for up to 8 hours; the noise was often so loud that



Left: Pitfall trap line running through the mossy forest of Mt. Mulu
Center: Camp 3 on Mt. Mulu
Right: Jon digging holes for a pitfall line with a broken shovel (shouldn't have bought the cheap one!)

sleep became difficult. We sat around at night eating rice, checking for leaches, and watching the rain, barely able to talk over the hammering sound. The water, however, rapidly pours off the clay soils of the mountain, and mornings were always the same regardless of the night's storm; cool, foggy, and filled with the enchanting “whoop-whoop” of distant gibbons.

The incredibly steep terrain of the mountain made venturing off trail challenging, so Jake went up the trail to set traps, and I went down. The specimens started accumulating: Montane Treeshrews (*Tupaia montana*), the Mountain Ground Squirrels (*Dremomys everetti*) and three species of spiny rats (*Maxomys surifer*, *M. whiteheadi*, and *M. ochraceiventer*) were commonly collected. Other more poorly known species appeared too. Something was clearly raiding our kitchen at night, and it turned out to be the handsome, orange-colored Sabah Giant Rat, the only one of the trip! Jake had to return to Louisiana after only a week of field work, but I stayed for another 18 days, and, along with our two guides, continued trapping. As the only place to set traps was along the trail, eventually our traps became quite spread out, and I hiked up the mountain for two hours to check them all. It was a nice way to get my exercise each morning and afternoon, and was hardly a nuisance as the forests of Mt. Mulu are beautiful. Until the early 20th century, this particular trail was a favorite stomping ground of the Sumatran Rhino. They enjoy ridgelines with occasional mud pits to wallow in. That describes this trail perfectly, and I occasionally found myself wallowing like a rhino after slipping on wet

roots!

We wound up catching other exciting specimens like the tiny Bornean Smooth-tailed Treeshrew (*Dendrogale murina*), the first specimen ever collected from Mt. Mulu, and what we think are two species of shrews. However, as the shrews of Borneo are almost completely unstudied, it will take some time to figure out what exactly they are. All in all, it was a successful trip, and an exciting adventure for me as it was my first experience with tropical fieldwork. Back in Louisiana, some mornings I wake up thinking I hear the whooping of gibbons echoing through the hills. Borneo has now sunk its teeth in me, and I can't wait to get back.



Right: Trail on Mt. Mulu, Borneo, during a rain storm.
Title Photo: Mossy forest, 1800 meters, Mt. Mulu



Big Day Account

by Andre Moncrieff

A group of four adrenaline-pumped LSUMNS grad students with binoculars at 11:55 p.m. on April 23rd could only mean one thing: Birdathon! This year's team members were **Glenn Seeholzer**, **Oscar Johnson**, **Jessie Salter**, and **Andre Moncrieff**. As in the previous two years, we began our big day—the attempt to see as many bird species as possible in Louisiana in 24 hours—with a stakeout American Robin nest in Baton Rouge. At the stroke of midnight, we observed a robin tail sticking out to one side of the nest. Glenn, our senior team member, had just given the rundown of big day expectations—including the need to run frequently. With Glenn's words in mind, we all raced back to the van and then on to our next stop.

During the first hour we visited several wetlands in Baton Rouge, where we found American White Pelican, Canada Goose, Black-bellied Whistling Duck, and a Red Fox on a grassy bank next to University Lake. At this point we had already encountered a flying squirrel, so we decided to simultaneously keep a mammal list—mostly to challenge our fellow mammalogists who have yet to embrace the logic of our big days. One of our last additions around Baton Rouge was a calling flyover Black-crowned Night-Heron along River Road south of LSU campus; getting this bird early in the day was a re-

lief, since we had missed it last year.

With Glenn at the wheel, the rest of us dozed and munched on Wheat Thins as we headed west on I-10 to our Barn Owl stop in the rice country. We did not even make it to the stakeout barn before Oscar yelled “Barn Owl!” as his head whipped around. We made an immediate U-turn and saw the owl make another pass across the road. Then, after resuming our route, we observed another Barn Owl dive into some roadside grass and emerge with an unidentified rodent, which unfortunately we could not count on our growing mammal list. Before leaving the rice country we heard several quality big day birds including Virginia Rail, Sora, and a flyover Yellow-crowned Night-Heron.

After our successful rice country stops and gassing up, Oscar took the wheel for the 1-hour drive up to Kisatchie National Forest. We arrived well before dawn, allowing us to locate an Eastern Screech-Owl and then position ourselves for the dawn chorus. We stood listening to Chuck-wills-widows until about 5:50 a.m., when the songbird world starting coming to life. First we heard a Bachman's Sparrow, then a couple minutes later a Pine Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat, and the “pik-a-tuk” of a Summer Tanager, and then many



Top: Scarlet Tanager, Peveto Woods. Photo by Oscar Johnson.
Middle: Bronzed Cowbird Holly Beach. Photo by Oscar Johnson.
Bottom: Summer Tanager, Peveto Woods. Photo by Oscar Johnson.
Title Photo: Glenn Seeholzer, Jessie Salter, Andre Moncrieff, and Oscar Johnson at Lighthouse Woods. Photo by Jessie Salter.

Warbler, and two Sharp-shinned Hawks.

Before heading south back to the rice country we stopped at Kincaid Reservoir, which unfortunately had a closed gate well before the dock area. The ensuing 800-meter sprint both ways was worth it, however, because we quickly picked up Common Loon, Hooded Merganser, and several quality landbirds such as a lingering Ruby-crowned Kinglet and Yellow-rumped Warbler.

Our drive back to the rice country—now during daylight—included successful stops for Swainson’s Warbler, Cave Swallow, and Painted Bunting. We also spotted Broad-winged Hawk, Mississippi Kites, and Scissor-tailed Flycatchers from the car as we headed south on highway 165. Thanks to scouting efforts, we racked up most of the day’s shorebirds in a single field: White-rumped, Pectoral, Stilt, Least, Semipalmated, and Western Sandpipers, Long-billed Dowitchers, and American Golden- and Semipalmated Plovers. At one point the shorebirds took flight, and our immediate scans of the sky for raptors were rewarded with a distant Cooper’s Hawk cruising over the field.

Just before reaching the coastal cheniers and beaches, we made a quick stop at Cameron Prairie National Wildlife Refuge. This is a particularly enjoyable stop because we tend to quickly add a number of waterbirds to our day list. As hoped for, the Purple and Common Gallinules, Least Bitterns, Marsh Wrens, and King Rails were ready to help us out. We also added an impressive three species of geese: Snow, Ross’s, and Greater White-fronted.

Up to this point in the day we had very few “misses”, and we had seen a good number of what we considered bonus birds. Upon arriving at the coast, however, our pace began to slow. There were actually quite a few migrants such as Summer Tanagers, Orchard Orioles, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, Eastern Kingbirds, Blue Grosbeaks, Indigo Buntings, and Red-eyed Vireos. Warblers, on the other hand, remained very challenging to find. Scoters, Magnificent Frigatebird, American Oystercatcher, and several other hoped for waterbirds/shorebirds eluded us. We also dipped on raptors including Northern Harrier, Osprey, and Peregrine Falcon.

Our final stop of the day—as in previous years—was



Top: Waterbirds at Lighthouse Woods. Photo by Oscar Johnson.
Right: Roseate Spoonbill at Lighthouse Woods. Photo by Oscar Johnson.



Lighthouse Woods on the border with Texas. Although we realized our chances of topping the 2010 big day record of 221 were slim, we had a great run of birds at this locality. New birds included Bobolink, Dickcissel, Seaside Sparrow, Sedge Wren, Whimbrel, Nelson's Sparrow (bird #200!), Northern Waterthrush, and Great Horned Owl. We also enjoyed many Roseate Spoonbill flyovers, a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher feeding out in the marsh, and the frequent cackles of Clapper Rails as the sun began to set. Having found essentially all the possible "night birds" and encountering 202 bird species and a blistering 12 (wild) mammal species, we decided to call it a day at about 8 p.m. and crash in our hotel.

We sincerely thank you for supporting our ornithology research as graduate students at the LSU Museum of Natural Science. You can keep tabs of our latest research projects, fieldwork, awards, and other updates at our museum of natural science webpage (www.lsu.edu/mns).

To donate to the Big Day fundraiser this year, please fill out the form linked here: www.lsufoundation.org/givetoscience. Under Designations, select Other, and type "Ornithology Student Support fund" in the Gift Comments. Thank you for supporting our research and for helping to sustain the legacy of ornithological excellence at the LSU Museum of Natural Science.

Ornithology!



12th Annual Eagle Expo

by Donna L. Dittmann & Steven W. Cardiff

The 12th Annual Eagle Expo was held 16 – 18 February 2017 in Morgan City, Louisiana. Organized by the Cajun Coast Visitors and Convention Bureau and co-sponsored by LSUMNS, LUMCON, BTNEP, and numerous other entities, this annual event features field trips, socials, and an educational breakfast seminar series on Saturday morning. Over 100 participants were registered, mostly from Louisiana, but also representing Mississippi, Texas, Indiana, and Oregon.

Morgan City and Eagle Expo are situated in the heart of the state's premier Bald Eagle breeding distribution; here the density of nesting pairs is the highest in Louisiana. It is hard to venture into this area from late fall into spring and not see numbers of Bald Eagles. Eagle Expo provides a great opportunity for participants to explore some of the area's waterways to see and photograph Bald Eagles. Also offered each year is a photography workshop by C. C. Lockwood.

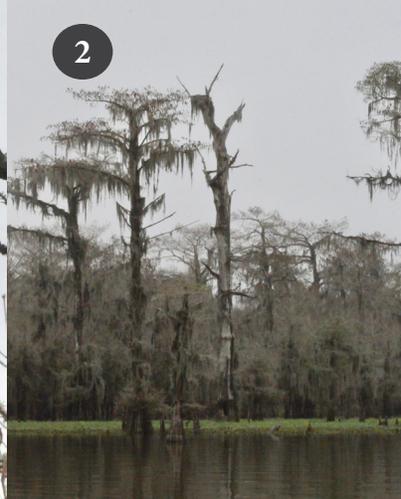
LSUMNS collection managers **Donna Dittmann** and **Steve Cardiff** again assisted with boat tours. The weather on Friday was threatening and resulted in cancellation of the Turtle Bayou trips because the boats are not covered to protect participants from rain. On Saturday, the weather started out foggy for the morning tours. Steve led the morning Turtle Bayou (Terrebonne Parish) tour while Donna assisted a tour with Captain John Burke that left from Joe C. Russo Boat Launch in Morgan City and traveled north along the Atchafalaya River past Middle Island to Flat Lake (lower St. Mar-

tin and St. Mary parishes). The Flat Lake tour tallied 25 eagles and 3 nests. Several islands along the main channel were being used as roosting sites for gulls and terns, which included two rare Lesser Black-backed Gulls. Donna and Steve were back on the water with LUMCON captains Jordan Westmoreland and Ross for the afternoon Turtle Bayou tours. Turtle Bayou typically generates the highest eagle counts, and 65 individuals and four active nests were accounted for during the



Above: It was a foggy departure on Saturday morning as the boat moved into the Atchafalaya River with Capt. John Burke: destination Flat Lake.

Title Photo: This 4th-year/near adult Bald Eagle flies along the Atchafalaya River. It was part of a group of five sub-adults loafing on the shoreline. Photo by Donna Dittmann.



combined morning and afternoon tours. Graduate students **Anna Hiller** and **Genevieve Mount** helped guide the Saturday afternoon trip with Captain Billy Gaston on the “Cajun Man” tour out of Bayou Black Marina (Terrebonne Parish). In addition to seeing Bald Eagles close-up, boat tours afford participants spectacular views of majestic, Spanish moss-draped cypress trees, high densities of a variety of other bird species, and sightings of other swamp wildlife such as alligators and nutria as tour boats meander through natural bayous and man-made canals. You can view our eBird lists for these trips at:

- <http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist/S34568013>
- <http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist/S34461349>
- <http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist/S35306942>
- <http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist/S34480100>
- <http://ebird.org/ebird/view/checklist/S34480100>

In addition to helping lead tours, Steve assisted the Cajun Coast Visitors & Convention Bureau by recruiting and coordinating with other field trip leaders.

If interested in attending this event next year, contact the Cajun Coast Visitors and Convention Bureau at 985-380-8224, visit online at www.cajuncoast.com/eagleexpo or email info@cajuncoast.com. The Louisiana Ornithological Society is considering a Morgan City-based Eagle Expo-like event for its upcoming 2018 Winter Meeting – so visit losbird.org if interested in this opportunity.

FIG. 1: A two-year old Bald Eagle (based on its plumage) launches out of a tree as the tour boat approached.

FIG. 2: A Bald Eagle nest rests in the top of a dead bald cypress along the shoreline of Flat Lake in lower St. Martin Parish.

FIG. 3: Another large bird of prey regularly seen along the Turtle Bayou boat tour route is the Great Horned Owl – usually challenging to pick out among the branches, but this individual sitting at the edge of the bayou made it easy.

FIG. 4: Two eaglets can barely be seen in this nest in a willow tree. Able to sit up in the nest but still with downy plumage, these chicks are probably around one month old.

FIG. 5: Eagle Expo participants aboard a LUMCON vessel during the Saturday afternoon Turtle Bayou tour.

All photos by Donna Dittmann



2017 LOS Winter Meeting

by Donna L. Dittmann & Steven W. Cardiff

LSUMNS hosted the Louisiana Ornithological Society Winter Meeting, which took place 27-29 January 2017. This is only the 2nd time since the 1980s that LSUMNS has hosted a LOS Meeting. LOS Winter Meetings rotate annually, usually among six cities throughout the state. LSUMNS Collections Manager **Donna L. Dittmann** organized this meeting with assistance from LOS Treasurer Judith O’Neale and LOS Secretary Joelle Finley. Avian Events Support Team and Baton Rouge Audubon Society were event co-sponsors. LOS Meetings span three days with presentations on Friday and Saturday evenings and field trips during the day on Saturday and Sunday.

Friday evening was spent at LSUMNS. Participants were treated to a dessert reception in the public exhibits hall (catered by Donna L. Dittmann, also current LOS News Editor). Thanks to **Valerie Derouen** and **Vivien Chua**, who helped get all of the desserts set out in time for the early-arrivers. After everyone was sated, LSUMNS Collections Manager **Steven Cardiff** (also current LOS President) introduced the Curator of Birds, **Dr. J. V. Remsen**, who provided a brief history of the Museum’s World-class bird research collection. Mu-

seum graduate students **Matt Brady**, Vivien Chua, **Oscar Johnson**, **Andre Moncrieff**, and Museum Research Associate **Dan Lane** then guided LOS members on “behind-the-scenes” tours of the collection. The social and tours received rave reviews from the membership. Dr. George H. Lowery’s daughter Carol Lynn Lowery Loker and husband Andy Loker were in attendance in “the house that Lowery built.”

Saturday field trips ventured northward to False River-Morganza Spillway, or stayed local visiting birding spots in Baton Rouge. There was a hummingbird banding demonstration by Nancy L. Newfield, Steve Locke, and Kevin Morgan. Many participants chose the “self-guided” option, which included “LOS-recommended” stops at Bluebonnet Swamp Nature Center to visit the Louisiana Bird Observatory bird-banding operation hosted by Erik Johnson and Dan Mooney. Donna and Steve opened their yard near St. Gabriel for participants to search for their wintering hummingbirds (22 individuals of 5 species) and other species. The 125 species tallied for Saturday’s combined birding effort was not bad for mid-winter in Baton Rouge. Highlights included six species of hummingbirds, Brown Pelican at



False River, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Purple Finch, Summer Tanager, and Baltimore Oriole.

The Saturday evening banquet and meeting was held at The (LSU Faculty) Club. A wonderful gourmet meal preceded a fantastic presentation by Dr. J. V. Remsen entitled: “LSUMNS fieldwork in South America and the discovery of 42+ new bird species and 5 new genera.”

Lagniappe birding opportunities on Sunday included a search of Lake Martin for the infamous Ringed Kingfisher and a local Baton Rouge tour, which added another seven or so species to the weekend list (including Common Goldeneye and a stakeout Western Tanager publicized Saturday night), and some opted to visit Donna and Steve’s open yard. Saturday and Sunday field trip leaders included LSUMNS graduate students Matt Brady and Oscar Johnson, as well as Rob Dobbs, Marty Floyd, Marty Guidry, Jane Patterson, and Michael Seymour.

Top Left: Steve Cardiff introduces Dr. Remsen to the group.
Top Right & Inset: Desserts, desserts, and more desserts. Actually nine offerings ranged from decadent to gluten-free and vegan.
Below: Graduate student Andre Moncrieff compares the Pileated vs. the Ivory Billed Woodpecker during a tour.

Title Photos: Most popular species seen by LOS visitors at the Open Yard were a female Calliope Hummingbird (R) and a Red-breasted Nuthatch (L).

All photos by Donna Dittmann



Herpetology News



In the most recent issue of *Journal of Parasitology* (2017; 103(1), pp. 103–110), Amphibian and Reptile Curator **Chris Austin** named a new species of parasite after his former PhD advisor Dr. Mark Kirkpatrick from the University of Texas at Austin. The new species of the genus *Eimeria* was isolated from the feces of a lizard from Papua New Guinea. These coccidian parasites infect the guts of their hosts. Mark said “This is the highest distinction that I’ve ever received. Not deserved, but definitely appreciated. And the fact that it’s a parasite only makes it sweeter!”

Professor Kirkpatrick and the new parasite named after him. Note similarities in smooth exterior morphology.

News from Fossil Protists and Invertebrates

by Lorene Smith



Cirriped expert Ray Perreault has found more undescribed species of fossil barnacles in the invertebrate paleontology collections. He plans to describe them in future papers as part of his research on the barnacle fauna of North America in the Paleogene. Ray has been impressed by the museum’s extensive collections of micro- and macrofossil localities.

Ray Perreault looks for barnacles while sorting through washed sediment samples.

OUTREACH ROUNDUP

STEAM NIGHT @ Oak Grove Primary



Oak Grove Primary hosted a STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math) Night on March 23rd and the LSUMNS was invited to participate. We had a table filled with mammal, bird, fish,

amphibian and reptile specimens, as well as information on field trips and tours at the LSUMNS. Thanks to **Vivien Chua** and **Anna Cole** for helping out.

EBB & FLOW FESTIVAL



On April 1st, the LSUMNS partnered with the Louisiana Art and Science Museum downtown to participate in the Ebb & Flow Festival. We brought specimens that could be found around the Mississippi River to go

along with the river theme. Thanks to **Anna Hiller** for helping out.

BREC BIOBLITZ



On April 15th, we took part in the Biodiversity Fair at the 2017 BREC BioBlitz. The blitz was held at Frenchtown Road Conservation Area and had >100 attendees. We brought along specimens that you could find

around Baton Rouge, LA at this time of year. Thanks to **Anna Cole**, **Dajia Collins**, and **Cathy Newman** for helping out.

EARTH DAY



This year, Earth Day was held at the BREC's Baton Rouge Zoo on April 22. Similar to previous years, we had a table with specimens from our collections and used them to cover topics such as global biodiversity, Louisiana

biodiversity, and conservation. Thanks to **Link Morgan**, **Clare Brown**, **Rafael Marcondes**, **Jessie Salter**, **AJ Turner**, **Zach Rodriguez**, and **Roi Rogers** for helping out.

MARCH FOR SCIENCE



On April 22, thousands gathered around the United States to celebrate and stand up for science. A few from the LSUMNS marched down to State Capitol Park in Baton Rouge. The march included speakers, musical performances by local artists, teach-ins, informational booths, and educational activities. Retired adjunct Curator of Microfossils, **Barun K. Sen Gupta**, snapped this photo of his wife **Poree** and **Lorene Smith** (LSUMNS Collections Manager) alongside two fellow supporters of science.

SPECIAL SATURDAYS



Exploring Mars - January 14th

Guest speakers Nicki Button and Don Hood from the LSU Department of Geology and Geophysics taught participants about what it is like on the planet Mars. They covered the geology of the planet, habitability, climate history, and missions to Mars. Afterwards, participants got to build their own model Martian habitats complete with sleeping quarters, a way to eat and get water, and whatever else they wanted in their habitat. Thanks to **Cathy Newman, Clare Brown, and Link Morgan** for helping out.

Bird Coloration - February 4th

Rafael Marcondes from the LSUMNS spoke about his research on bird coloration and how some birds use color for display while others use it for camouflage. Participants later got to view museum specimens to observe their coloration up close. The activity consisted of crafting a bird that was either camouflaged or brightly colored and discussing the advantages and disadvantages of each type. Thanks to Dajia Collins, Anna Hiller, and Vivien Chua for helping out.

Herps at Risk in Louisiana - March 4th

Cathy Newman from the LSUMNS spoke about the differences between amphibians and reptiles and listed some of the “herps” that were at risk for extinction. Participants were able to view specimens up close and made Venn diagrams comparing the characteristics and habitat needs of amphibians and reptiles. Thanks to Genevieve Mount, Zach Rodriguez, Link Morgan, and Vivien Chua for helping out.

Native Habitat of Mike the Tiger - April 1st

Carol Wilson from the LSU Department of Geology and Geophysics spoke about Royal Bengal Tigers, their habitat in the Sundarbans, Bangladesh, and her research on the geology of that habitat. Participants made their own tiger masks, did a rising tide slider craft, sifted through different sized sediments, and got to touch the different sediment layers of a core from the Wax Lake delta. Thanks to Jessie Salter and Ryan Burner for helping out.

Risky Rodents - *May 13th*

Our last Special Saturdays of the spring semester will be presented by LSUMNS Curator of Mammalogy, Dr. Jake Esselstyn. He will talk about rodent diversity and some of their unique adaptations. Participants will get an up close view of some rodent specimens and then design their own rodents.

NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM



Mammals

Our Night at the Museum series continued with the Mammal Collection on February 2nd with 68 people in attendance. LSUMNS Curator of Mammals **Dr. Jake Esselstyn** spoke about conducting field research in other countries and discovering new species. Graduate students **Mark Swanson & Jon Nations** had tables about rodent diversity and specimen preparation, while undergraduate students **Kendall Gaudin & Jackson Wheat** had tables showing marsupial and afrotherian mammal diversity. Dr. Esselstyn and Mark Swanson later gave behind the scenes tours to guests.



Amphibians & Reptiles

Our last event of the semester featured the Amphibian & Reptile (A&R) Collection. It took place on April 6 and had 76 people in attendance - our largest crowd yet! LSUMNS Curator of A&R **Dr. Chris Austin** spoke about field work in Papua New Guinea collecting “herps,” green blooded lizards, and discovering new species. Graduate students **Genevieve Mount** and **Zach Rodriguez** had tables featuring Louisiana herps and amazing herps from around the world. There was also a table featuring the venomous snakes of Louisiana. Dr. Chris Austin later gave behind the scenes tours of the genetic resources and A&R collection. The Reveille did an article covering the night.

UPCOMING OUTREACH EVENTS

May 13 - LDWF Step Outside Day
Sherburne Wildlife Management Area (Krotz Springs, LA)

May 13 - Special Saturdays - Risky Rodents
10am-12pm; Museum of Natural Science (Foster Hall)

May 20 - Workshop: Master Naturalists of Greater Baton Rouge
8am-2pm; Museum of Natural Science (Foster Hall)

To register for a **Special Saturday** visit: <http://www.lsu.edu/mns/education/special-saturdays.php>

For more information on outreach events and museum tours, contact **Valerie Derouen** vderou1@lsu.edu.

More photos from all of our outreach events can be found on our Facebook page.

MNS NEWS & UPDATES

Remsen inducted as Honorary Member into Nuttall Ornithological Club

Congratulations to LSUMNS Curator of Birds, **Dr. Van Remsen**, who was inducted as an Honorary Member into the Nuttall Ornithological Club! The Nuttall Ornithological Club was the first organization in North America devoted to ornithology, and with this honor, Van is recognized as a worldwide leader in the field.



Del-Rio awarded International Student Scholarship

Congratulations to LSUMNS ornithology graduate student **Glaucia Del-Rio** who is one of four recipients of the 2017 LSU Alumni Association International Student Scholarship! This scholarship (established by International Programs) recognizes the “achievements of outstanding international students in the areas of academics, engagement, leadership, and diversity.” She will be featured in the e-newsletter, *The International Tiger*, later this spring.



Nations receives NSF EAPSI Fellowship

Congratulations to mammalogy grad student **Jon Nations** who received an NSF East Asia and Pacific Summer Institutes (EAPSI) Fellowship to study in Australia this Summer! Awardees get first-hand research experience in one of the 7 participating countries, an introduction to the science, science policy, and scientific infrastructure of that country, and an orientation to the society, culture, and language. In addition to room and board, participants receive a \$5000 summer stipend.



Ludt receives DDIG and Schultz Fund Grant

Congratulations to ichthyology grad student **Bill Ludt** whose NSF Doctoral Dissertation Improvement Grant (DDIG) proposal, “Phylogenomics and Evolutionary Rates associated with Salinity and Thermal Shifts in Centrarchiformes,” was funded for \$17,967. The goal of this research is to resolve the relationships among the order Centrarchiformes using UCEs, and look at diversification rate shifts associated with transitions between freshwater and marine habitats.

Bill also received a grant from the Schultz Fund through the National Museum of Natural History for \$3065. With this funding, he traveled to the Smithsonian last October to look at fishes within the family Cheilodactylidae to find morphological characters that support the relationships hypothesized through UCEs.



NEWS & UPDATES (...)

Terrill gets NSF Post-doc

Congratulations to ornithology PhD student **Ryan Terrill** who received a 2-year NSF Postdoctoral Fellowship working with former LSUMNS post-doc **Dr. John McCormack** at Occidental College! He will be starting it this fall.



Johnson, Salter get Chapman Grants

Congratulations to ornithology students **Oscar Johnson** and **Jessie Salter** who both received grants (\$1900 and \$1200 respectively) from the American Museum of Natural History's Frank M. Chapman Memorial Fund. These highly competitive grants support research in the field of ornithology especially if the student is investigating fundamental questions in evolutionary biology.



Oscar also received a \$2400 grant from the American Ornithological Society for his Amazonian river island birds project.

Seeholzer successfully defends PhD

Congratulations to LSUMNS ornithology graduate student **Glenn Seeholzer** who successfully defended his PhD on "Patterns of Diversification in a Neotropical Radiation of Birds." Glenn was advised by **Dr. Robb Brumfield** and has secured a post-doctoral fellowship with the American Museum of Natural History in New York.



Newman successfully defends PhD

Congratulations to LSUMNS herpetology graduate student **Cathy Newman** who also successfully defended her PhD on the "Evolutionary history of a salamander lineage across disjunct regions of the southeastern United States. Cathy was advised by **Dr. Chris Austin**.



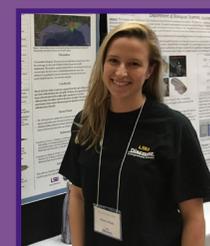
Swanson receives Travel Award and Best Student Abstract

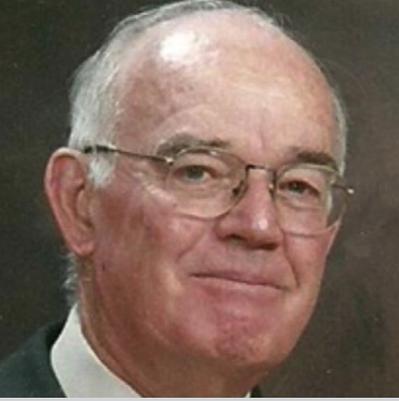
Congratulations to LSUMNS mammalogy graduate student Mark Swanson who received a \$400 travel award from the American Society of Mammalogists to attend their meeting this summer in Moscow, Idaho. He also won an award for "Best Student Abstract" for the research he will be presenting entitled "All together now: A phylogeny of all extant rodent families inferred from ultraconserved elements."



O'Neill receives Undergraduate Research Award

Congratulations to LSUMNS undergraduate researcher **Glynn O'Neill** for winning the Undergraduate Research Award at the College of Science 42nd Annual Dean Arthur R. Choppin Honors Convocation. She's worked in the lab of Fish Curator **Dr. Prosanta Chakrabarty** since she was a Freshman!





In Memoriam

John Morony, Jr.

We are sorry to report that former LSUMNS Collections Manager **John Morony, Jr.** passed away at his home in Del Rio, Texas, on Monday, July 18, 2016. Mr. Morony, 79, died peacefully following a long struggle with the effects of cancer. Mr. Morony received a Bachelor of Science degree from Texas A&M, and then completed a Master's degree from LSU under George Lowery in 1968. While at the LSUMNS, Mr. Morony participated in several field expeditions in South America, in the Amazon Basin, Mexico and elsewhere in the Neotropics, and as Collections Manager oversaw major improvements to the organization of the collection. He was perhaps best known for the highly useful "Morony, Bock, and Farrand" world bird list, which endured for years as the standard for collection organization.

John Morony Partial Bibliography

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