



*Field Guides Tour Report*

**Louisiana: Yellow Rails & Crawfish Tails I 2017**

Oct 26, 2017 to Oct 30, 2017

Dan Lane & Cory Gregory

*For our tour description, itinerary, past triplists, dates, fees, and more, please [VISIT OUR TOUR PAGE](#).*



*The Yellow Rail was without a doubt the main target for this trip. The Rails and Rice Festival is the perfect setting for seeing this secretive species and we had an outstanding showing of 40+ rails! Photo by guide Cory Gregory.*

Tasty Cajun food, a spectacular rail show, and good company made for another successful Louisiana tour. For being a quick, three-day tour, it really packs a punch! Not only did we see about 150 species, it was a high-quality bunch of birds in a variety of habitats. A cold front made for some chilly mornings and breezy afternoons and although we dodged some heavy rain showers one day, we were never adversely affected!

Our first day took us north to Kisatchie National Forest where we started our birding in the pine forests. Right off the bat we found some Red-cockaded Woodpeckers! The squeaky calls of the Brown-headed Nuthatches serenaded us as we watched a pair of Barred Owls, a Pileated Woodpecker flew right overhead, and a feeding flock of kinglets, chickadees, and a few warblers kept us busy. Next, it was on to try for the very sneaky Bachman's Sparrow. It didn't take long before we found a couple and, with some perseverance, managed to actually see it (no small feat at this time of year!).

The next morning we headed west straight away, and stopped briefly to watch our only Red-headed Woodpeckers of the trip. The new birds really started to pour in at the Sabine NWR walkway, where we saw our first Neotropic Cormorants, Swamp Sparrows, Marsh Wrens, and a distant Swainson's Hawk overhead. In the Holly Beach area we had a proper taste of the coastline by stopping at the many gull and tern flocks. We picked up highlights like Gull-billed Tern, Long-billed Curlew, American Avocets, and a variety of hawks overhead including some late Broad-winged. Farther along in Holly Beach, we found a cowbird flock with a single Bronzed, spotted a White-tailed Kite overhead, and enjoyed close looks at a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher. We had lunch amongst the birds at East Jetty Park where a beachside swarm of thousands of Black Skimmers made quite an impression! We enjoyed great looks at a few more targets like multiple Nelson's Sparrows at close range, an inquisitive Clapper Rail, and some Cave Swallows overhead. We continued that afternoon with a sneaky Sedge Wren, a flock of 50 Wood Storks flying overhead, and a variety of herons including Roseate Spoonbills. A major highlight was seeing the continuing White-tailed Hawks AND a rare Couch's Kingbird! Neither are species we expect to see and both were complete bonuses! We said goodbye to the daylight in rice country as we watched a beautiful sunset with Greater White-fronted and Snow geese streaming overhead.

Our last day of birding was one to remember. We started by birding roadside hedges where we found some quality species like Prairie and Nashville warblers, Inca Doves, and even a Say's Phoebe. However, it was the show at the Rails and Rice Festival in Thornwell that really had us excited! We got to ride the rice combine as it harvested rice, and right off the bat we started seeing Yellow Rails flushing from in front of the combine! Amazingly, one of the fields was hosting ~12 of these secretive rails and we ended up with a grand total of 40+! We also saw a collection of King Rails, Soras, Virginia Rails, and wrens such as Marsh and Sedge. All in all, it was a spectacular day to be in rice country.

Dan and I want to thank all of you for making it an enjoyable and very successful tour! Major thanks also to Sharon who made sure everything ran smoothly from the get-go. We hope to see you on another Field Guides tour sometime in the future. Until then, good birding!

-- Cory

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**KEYS FOR THIS LIST**

One of the following keys may be shown in brackets for individual species as appropriate: \* = heard only, I = introduced, E = endemic, N = nesting, a =

## BIRDS

### Anatidae (Ducks, Geese, and Waterfowl)

- GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE** (*Anser albifrons*) – This was our most numerous goose on tour and we had flocks of hundreds and thousands in rice country at places like Marceaux Road and Niblett Road.
- SNOW GOOSE** (*Chen caerulescens*) – This was another familiar species of goose that we saw in great numbers in the flooded rice fields. We got to study the size and bill structure compared to the next species.
- ROSS'S GOOSE** (*Chen rossii*) – A smaller version of the previous species, this goose was seen side-by-side with Snow Goose for a nice comparison. It has a rounder head, shorter neck, and a tiny, triangular bill.
- GADWALL** (*Anas strepera*) – A few flocks of these dabblers were seen in flight during our birding in Holly Beach. The white in the secondaries was noticeable even at a distance.
- MALLARD** (*Anas platyrhynchos*) – Not as abundant here as one might imagine! We had a couple of mostly-clean birds at the Hidden Ponds RV Park.
- BLUE-WINGED TEAL** (*Anas discors*) – A few were seen on our final day of birding out in rice country but they didn't stick around long.
- NORTHERN SHOVELER** (*Anas clypeata*) – One of the wetlands had a few of these heavy-billed dabblers as we approached Rutherford Beach Road in Cameron Parish.
- NORTHERN PINTAIL** (*Anas acuta*) – A few flocks of these long-necked dabbling ducks were seen overhead in rice country.
- GREEN-WINGED TEAL (AMERICAN)** (*Anas crecca carolinensis*) – Our only encounter with this tiny dabbler was offshore at Holly Beach where a distant flock was migrating past.

### Podicipedidae (Grebes)

- PIED-BILLED GREBE** (*Podilymbus podiceps*) – This familiar grebe was seen only once or twice on tour including one from the Pintail Loop at Cameron Prairie NWR.

### Ciconiidae (Storks)

- WOOD STORK** (*Mycteria americana*) – A nice surprise! We had a flock of 50 (!) flying high overhead at Rutherford Beach Road.

### Phalacrocoracidae (Cormorants and Shags)

- NEOTROPIC CORMORANT** (*Phalacrocorax brasilianus*) – We had excellent scope views of this fairly-common fish-eater right off the bat at Sabine NWR. Compared to the following species, Neotropics are smaller with relatively longer tails.
- DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT** (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) – Spotted at least twice on tour, the first sighting was from the Hidden Ponds RV Park but we saw another at Holly Beach as well.

### Anhingidae (Anhingas)

- ANHINGA** (*Anhinga anhinga*) – There was an Anhinga with its wings spread at the Hidden Ponds RV Park and then another one along the Pintail Loop.

### Pelecanidae (Pelicans)

- AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN** (*Pelecanus erythrorhynchos*) – We spotted these gliding experts several times on tour including at Holly Beach and again overhead in Thornwell during our rice adventure.
- BROWN PELICAN** (*Pelecanus occidentalis*) – A common sight along the coasts of Holly Beach and East Jetty Beach. This species of pelican is much more tied to saltwater than the previous species.

### Ardeidae (Herons, Egrets, and Bitterns)

- GREAT BLUE HERON** (*Ardea herodias*) – A common and widespread heron.
- GREAT EGRET** (*Ardea alba*) – This familiar white egret was spied every day of tour and was a common sight in wet areas.
- SNOWY EGRET** (*Egretta thula*) – Less common than the previous species, this slender egret was first spotted at Sabine NWR where we could see the "golden slippers".
- LITTLE BLUE HERON** (*Egretta caerulea*) – Just a couple of youngsters were seen at the Cameron Prairie NWR. Young birds of this species are white, not blue!
- TRICOLORED HERON** (*Egretta tricolor*) – Formerly known as Louisiana Heron! We saw our first at Sabine NWR but would go on to see more near Rutherford Beach Road.
- REDDISH EGRET** (*Egretta rufescens*) – Our only sighting was of a dark bird taking a stroll down Holly Beach.
- CATTLE EGRET** (*Bubulcus ibis*) – Who can forget these brave (or foolish?) little egrets as they grabbed prey from in front of the rice combine! Overall, this was one of the most abundant egrets on tour.
- GREEN HERON** (*Butorides virescens*) – We got lucky when one flushed from a roadside ditch! That would go on to be our only sighting.

### Threskiornithidae (Ibises and Spoonbills)

- WHITE IBIS** (*Eudocimus albus*) – We witnessed large numbers of this striking ibis as they commuted back and forth over the rice fields. Remember, the young birds that were pointed out are not completely white.
- WHITE-FACED IBIS** (*Plegadis chihi*) – The majority of the dark Plegadis ibis we saw in flight were this species. Sadly, we didn't observe any quite close enough to see details of the facial pattern.
- ROSEATE SPOONBILL** (*Platalea ajaja*) – Rutherford Beach Road was one of the only spots we happened on this beautiful wader. Any day with Roseate Spoonbills is a good day!

### Cathartidae (New World Vultures)

- BLACK VULTURE** (*Coragyps atratus*) – Although fairly common, only a few were spotted as drive-bys.
- TURKEY VULTURE** (*Cathartes aura*) – An abundant species, these familiar birds were seen every day of tour.

### Pandionidae (Osprey)

**OSPREY** (*Pandion haliaetus*) – We spotted one or two of these on our second day as we birded the Cameron Parish area.

*Accipitridae (Hawks, Eagles, and Kites)*

**WHITE-TAILED KITE** (*Elanus leucurus*) – Success! We spotted this sleek bird-of-prey in flight at Holly Beach and, before we knew it, it moved on.

**NORTHERN HARRIER** (*Circus cyaneus*) – There was no shortage of these marsh-loving raptors wafting over rice country!

**SHARP-SHINNED HAWK** (*Accipiter striatus*) – A lone bird, and our only for the trip, was seen in flight along Holly Beach. This is the smallest of our accipiters.

**COOPER'S HAWK** (*Accipiter cooperii*) – Bigger than the previous species, this accipiter was spotted a few times overhead. First at Marceaux Road and then another high bird in Thornwell pointed out by Steve.

**BALD EAGLE** (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) – We actually tallied this familiar eagle each of our three days of birding. One of the sightings was of a youngster being "escorted" by two caracaras in Thornwell.

**WHITE-TAILED HAWK** (*Geranoaetus albicaudatus*) – Wow, what a bonus! A duo of these open-country raptors, typically found in coastal Texas, were seen on Fruge Road on our second day of birding.

**BROAD-WINGED HAWK** (*Buteo platypterus*) – Getting pretty uncommon this late in the season, a few of these migrants were seen overhead along Holly Beach. Once they realized they were heading over the water, they turned back towards land!

**SWAINSON'S HAWK** (*Buteo swainsoni*) – Our only sighting of the trip was of one very distantly at Sabine NWR.

**RED-TAILED HAWK** (*Buteo jamaicensis*) – Our most widespread raptor of the tour, this buteo was spotted each of our three days. In Holly Beach, we caught glimpses of a couple of very pale birds that were probably the "Krider's" flavor.

*Rallidae (Rails, Gallinules, and Coots)*

**YELLOW RAIL** (*Coturnicops noveboracensis*) – Wahoo! We couldn't have asked for a better show than the one we got near Thornwell with the help of Steve and Donna. The first field we witnessed being harvested was loaded with this secretive species and we ended up flushing 40+ between the 3 fields. A truly memorable experience.

**KING RAIL** (*Rallus elegans*) – Of the fields we watched being harvested, the wettest of the three was a complete jackpot for this huge rail. We tallied more than 10!

**CLAPPER RAIL** (*Rallus crepitans*) – We all jolted to attention when Marion whispered "The rail is out!" while we were looking at sparrows at East Jetty Beach in Cameron Parish. Behind us, this secretive species had waltzed up onto the walkway! It scampered back and forth a few times before retreating into the thick veg.

**VIRGINIA RAIL** (*Rallus limicola*) – Although it wasn't necessarily the center of attention during our Yellow Rail rice adventure, we did get to see this small and dark rail flushing from the combine several times. At one point, some of us saw one climb up onto the main dike but it quickly retreated.

**SORA** (*Porzana carolina*) – This was another fairly common rail that we saw a plethora of during the Thornwell rice harvest. Although somewhat similar in size and shape to the Yellow Rail, the secondaries of this species lack the white trailing edge.

**COMMON GALLINULE** (*Gallinula galeata*) – The Pintail Loop at Cameron Prairie NWR was a good spot for this species, we saw several sporting that distinctive white line down their sides.

**AMERICAN COOT** (*Fulica americana*) – Like the previous species, we saw this familiar bird at Cameron Prairie NWR.

*Gruidae (Cranes)*

**SANDHILL CRANE** (*Antigone canadensis*) – Recent arrivals from their breeding grounds, a few small flocks were seen in flight at the White-tailed Hawk location on Fruge Road.

*Recurvirostridae (Stilts and Avocets)*

**BLACK-NECKED STILT** (*Himantopus mexicanus*) – A distinctive and lanky shorebird, many of these black-and-white waders were seen in flooded rice fields such as ones along Marceaux Road.

**AMERICAN AVOCET** (*Recurvirostra americana*) – Sporting their black-and-white winter plumages, many of these graceful shorebirds were seen from Holly Beach as they joined the various gull flocks.

*Charadriidae (Plovers and Lapwings)*

**BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER** (*Pluvialis squatarola*) – Remember those black "armpits"? This large plover was seen along the coast at Holly Beach and East Jetty Beach. However, they were already in their nonbreeding plumages and so we never saw the black bellies for which they're named.

**SEMIPALMATED PLOVER** (*Charadrius semipalmatus*) – This was another plover that we spotted at Holly Beach and East Jetty Beach. Much smaller than the previous species, it's like a darker version of the Piping Plover.

**PIPING PLOVER** (*Charadrius melodus*) – East Jetty Beach in Cameron Parish delivered yet again. This very pale species was seen running, stopping, running, stopping on the open sand beaches.

**KILLDEER** (*Charadrius vociferus*) – Our most familiar plover in the states, this rowdy species was seen at a variety of locations throughout the tour.

*Scolopacidae (Sandpipers and Allies)*

**LONG-BILLED CURLEW** (*Numenius americanus*) – This giant of the shorebird world is the largest shorebird we have in North America. We spotted one, complete with its giant bill, at Holly Beach on Day 2.

**MARbled GODWIT** (*Limosa fedoa*) – This is another large shorebird and we spotted this buffy species feeding on the open sand at East Jetty Beach. Unlike the previous species, the bills of godwits are slightly upturned instead of curved downward.

**RUDDY TURNSTONE** (*Arenaria interpres*) – A few lucky folks got to see a couple of these scampering around on the day we birded Cameron Parish.

**SANDERLING** (*Calidris alba*) – These little shorebirds were constantly on the move on the sands of Holly Beach. In fact, they've evolved for all that running by losing their hind toes!

**DUNLIN** (*Calidris alpina*) – Slightly larger than the peeps, this relatively long-billed shorebird was seen feeding on the beaches at Holly Beach and East Jetty Beach.

**LEAST SANDPIPER** (*Calidris minutilla*) – The smallest shorebird species on the planet, this tiny peep was seen briefly along Rutherford Beach Road.

**WESTERN SANDPIPER** (*Calidris mauri*) – One of these long-billed peeps was seen from Holly Beach. Other than that, there were precious few on tour.

**LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER** (*Limnodromus scolopaceus*) – The higher-pitched, twittering calls of this shorebird species separate it from the similar Short-billed variety. We had a few of these fly overhead during our time along Marceaux Road.

**WILSON'S SNIBE** (*Gallinago delicata*) – Seemingly always in flight, singles flew by us at various points on tour.

**GREATER YELLOWLEGS** (*Tringa melanoleuca*) – A sturdy *Tringa* species, this shorebird was seen (and heard) along Marceaux Road in rice country.

**WILLET** (*Tringa semipalmata*) – Cameron Parish provided us with our only views. We had one at Holly Beach and another pair at East Jetty Beach. Current knowledge indicates that only the "Western" subspecies (*T. s. inornata*), such as the ones we saw, winters in the US.

**LESSER YELLOWLEGS** (*Tringa flavipes*) – A couple of these flew over while we were birding the slough on Niblett Road.

#### Laridae (Gulls, Terns, and Skimmers)

**LAUGHING GULL** (*Leucophaeus atricilla*) – An abundant, coastal species. We had good looks at various locations such as Holly Beach but our first one was sitting on a power line at Sabine NWR!

**FRANKLIN'S GULL** (*Leucophaeus pipixcan*) – A few of these migrants were mixed in with the Laughings at Holly Beach. They stood a little shorter than the Laughings, had more black on the head, and had more noticeable eye-crescents.

**RING-BILLED GULL** (*Larus delawarensis*) – We had this familiar gull species along the coast as well. Holly Beach and East Jetty Beach were both hosting them.

**HERRING GULL (AMERICAN)** (*Larus argentatus smithsonianus*) – A few were seen in the mixed gull flocks along the coast on our 2nd day of birding.

**LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL** (*Larus fuscus*) – An adult was standing behind the gull flock at East Jetty Beach. This species has gone through dramatic increases in the last decade or so.

**GULL-BILLED TERN** (*Gelochelidon nilotica*) – Already in their non-breeding plumage, this short-billed tern was seen well through the scope at Holly Beach. Margaret picked this as one of her favorites of the trip.

**CASPIAN TERN** (*Hydroprogne caspia*) – Compared to the Royal Terns, this large species has a shorter and redder bill. We saw them well along Holly Beach and overhead from the West Ferry Crossing.

**FORSTER'S TERN** (*Sterna forsteri*) – There was at least one mixed in with the gull and tern flock at Holly Beach. The isolated black cheek patch of the nonbreeding plumage was readily seen.

**ROYAL TERN** (*Thalasseus maximus*) – Sporting that "balding" pattern of black feathering on the head, this long-billed tern was seen mixed in with other gulls and terns at Holly Beach and East Jetty Beach.

**BLACK SKIMMER** (*Rynchops niger*) – Wow, we watched as a veritable swarm lifted up again and again at East Jetty Beach in Cameron Parish. Jean and Dennis picked this spectacle as one of their highlights of the trip (and for good reason!)

#### Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)

**ROCK PIGEON** (*Columba livia*) – Seen daily in urban areas. [II]

**EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE** (*Streptopelia decaocto*) – This introduced species has taken the US by storm. We saw them daily. [II]

**INCA DOVE** (*Columbina inca*) – Tiny, scaly-looking, and somewhat scarce on our trip. We caught up to a pair in a yard near Niblett Road.

**WHITE-WINGED DOVE** (*Zenaida asiatica*) – A few of these somewhat-stocky doves were seen in flight during a pit stop on Day 2.

**MOURNING DOVE** (*Zenaida macroura*) – This familiar dove was seen daily in a variety of habitats.

#### Strigidae (Owls)

**GREAT HORNED OWL** (*Bubo virginianus*) – We had the good fortune of seeing not one but two of these fly by while we were birding the slough on Niblett Road!

**BARRED OWL** (*Strix varia*) – A gorgeous pair was seen in the pine forests of Kisatchie National Forest on our first day of birding. They may be widespread but man, what a beauty!

#### Alcedinidae (Kingfishers)

**BELTED KINGFISHER** (*Megaceryle alcyon*) – We managed to tally this fishing specialist on each of our birding days.

#### Picidae (Woodpeckers)

**RED-HEADED WOODPECKER** (*Melanerpes erythrocephalus*) – A pit stop in Sulphur put us at the right place at the right time to see these reliable (and handsome!) woodpeckers.

**RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER** (*Melanerpes carolinus*) – A common and widespread species in this neck of the woods. We had good looks on Niblett Road as well as several other locations.

**YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER** (*Sphyrapicus varius*) – We tracked down one of these wintering woodpeckers on our first day in Kisatchie National Forest. We would go on to see one more later in the trip as well.

**DOWNY WOODPECKER** (*Picoides pubescens*) – This was another woodpecker we snagged on Niblett Road on our 3rd day of birding. Cute little guys!

**RED-COCKADED WOODPECKER** (*Picoides borealis*) – We weren't out of the vehicles for very long at Kisatchie National Forest before a couple of these uncommon woodpeckers were seen nearby. We enjoyed scope views and even got to hear their scratchy calls ricocheting through the pines. Jim picked this as one of his top moments of the trip.

**NORTHERN FLICKER (YELLOW-SHAFTED)** (*Colaptes auratus auratus*) – Just a couple of these turned up on tour including one at the Red-headed Woodpecker spot.

**PILEATED WOODPECKER** (*Dryocopus pileatus*) – Swooping in on big flaps and glides, a couple of these forest giants were seen in Kisatchie National Forest on our first day.

#### Falconidae (Falcons and Caracaras)

**CRESTED CARACARA** (*Caracara cheriway*) – This fascinating species ended up being a major target for folks and we thankfully ended up with nice looks at couple of them. Both Niblett Road and the Thornwell rice fields also yielded sightings.

**AMERICAN KESTREL** (*Falco sparverius*) – A common species of falcon that we tallied every day.

**MERLIN** (*Falco columbarius*) – Flying with purpose... that's what this species likes to do compared to the previous one. We ended up seeing several of these at places like East Jetty Beach, the Pintail Loop at Cameron Prairie NWR, and Niblett Road.



**PEREGRINE FALCON** (*Falco peregrinus*) – Our best looks were surely of one perched on a telephone pole in the rice country of Marceaux Road.  
What a beaut!

Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers)

**EASTERN WOOD-PEWEE** (*Contopus virens*) – This is a migrant flycatcher that was supposed to be long gone by the time we started the tour.  
However, we bumped into a late one in Kisatchie National Forest which was the biggest surprise of Day 1.

**EASTERN PHOEBE** (*Sayornis phoebe*) – This is an abundant wintering species in this part of Louisiana and we ended up seeing this flycatcher daily.

**SAY'S PHOEBE** (*Sayornis saya*) – This is a rare winter visitor but this winter is shaping up to be a good one in Louisiana. Although a few others have already been reported in the state this fall, we managed to find our own on Niblett Road.

**VERMILION FLYCATCHER** (*Pyrocephalus rubinus*) – Ray's sharp eyes picked out this flycatcher from a distance as we birded a stretch of Marceaux Road. Thanks Ray!

**COUCH'S KINGBIRD** (*Tyrannus couchii*) – Wow, talk about out-of-left-field! Steve and Donna had found this rarity just the day before and so we took advantage of that knowledge and managed to quickly find it upon arrival. This species is typically only found in the southern tip of Texas and farther south.

**SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER** (*Tyrannus forficatus*) – Holly Beach delivered yet again! We found a couple of these impressive flycatchers as we were birding the coast.

Laniidae (Shrikes)

**LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE** (*Lanius ludovicianus*) – The scrubby habitats of Cameron Parish often had a shrike or two lurking about somewhere and we tallied them on our final two days of birding.

Vireonidae (Vireos, Shrike-Babblers, and Erpornis)

**WHITE-EYED VIREO** (*Vireo griseus*) – We were able to dig one out of the tangles on Niblett Drive on our last day of birding. They can be really sneaky sometimes!

**BLUE-HEADED VIREO** (*Vireo solitarius*) – It was odd to hear one of these singing little song snippets as we birded in the Kisatchie National Forest! This is a winter resident, it does not breed here.

Corvidae (Crows, Jays, and Magpies)

**BLUE JAY** (*Cyanocitta cristata*) – A common and familiar species that we tallied every day.

**AMERICAN CROW** (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*) – Most, if not all, of the crows we saw on our day up in Kisatchie National Forest were this species.

**FISH CROW** (*Corvus ossifragus*) – This species of crow is a touch smaller than American, sounds different, and has a subtly-different wing shape. We managed to find at least one every day, sometimes right outside the hotel.

Hirundinidae (Swallows)

**NORTHERN ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW** (*Stelgidopteryx serripennis*) – Somewhat dull-colored, these swallows were mixed in with the more numerous Barn and Tree swallows along Holly Beach.

**TREE SWALLOW** (*Tachycineta bicolor*) – This and the following species were the two most common and readily seen swallows of the trip. This is a winter resident in Louisiana.

**BARN SWALLOW** (*Hirundo rustica*) – Our most common swallow on tour, these were seen daily in a variety of open habitats.

**CAVE SWALLOW** (*Petrochelidon fulva*) – It was a real treat seeing this uncommon species on both of our days in the open country of southwest Louisiana. These breed in Texas and then wander north and along the coast in varying numbers.

Paridae (Tits, Chickadees, and Titmice)

**CAROLINA CHICKADEE** (*Poecile carolinensis*) – Our only chickadee in this part of the US, several of these were seen in Kisatchie National Forest on our first day.

**TUFTED TITMOUSE** (*Baeolophus bicolor*) – Like the previous species, we bumped into a few of these on our first day in Kisatchie National Forest. Their song "peter peter peter" is a mainstay sound in the south.

Sittidae (Nuthatches)

**BROWN-HEADED NUTHATCH** (*Sitta pusilla*) – A pine specialist of the Southeast US, these were seen well on our first day in Kisatchie National Forest. The squeaky double note of this species sounds like someone squeezing a rubber ducky!

Troglodytidae (Wrens)

**HOUSE WREN** (*Troglodytes aedon*) – This wintering species was heard calling a couple of times on tour but never actually popped into view. [\*]

**WINTER WREN** (*Troglodytes hiemalis*) – Tiny and secretive, this little wren was seen skulking in the undergrowth of Kisatchie National Forest on our first day. Thankfully, its distinctive calls gave it away. Jean picked this as one of her highlights.

**SEDGE WREN** (*Cistothorus platensis*) – This straw-colored wren was briefly in view as we birded Rutherford Beach Road. Later in the tour, the rice combine flushed many of these as we harvested. A secretive species, it's at home in open, grassy habitats where it spends its time deep in the veg.

**MARSH WREN** (*Cistothorus palustris*) – Although we mostly just heard the calls of this secretive wren, we saw one at close range on our walk at Sabine NWR.

**CAROLINA WREN** (*Thryothorus ludovicianus*) – Incredibly vocal but surprisingly hard to see, we heard this abundant species several times in wooded habitats. [\*]

Poliophtilidae (Gnatcatchers)

**BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER** (*Poliophtila caerulea*) – Wow, talk about a flock... this little wheezy-sounding species came out in full force as we birded Niblett Road.

Regulidae (Kinglets)

**GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET** (*Regulus satrapa*) – The very high call notes ("see see see") gave this species away as we birded in the Kisatchie National Forest on our first day. Eventually a few of these came into view but stayed fairly high up.

**RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET** (*Regulus calendula*) – A main contingent of the scolding flocks, this hyperactive but dull-colored species was seen well several times including along Niblett Road.

Mimidae (Mockingbirds and Thrashers)

**NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD** (*Mimus polyglottos*) – A mainstay throughout the South, this familiar species was called out many times in the final two days of birding including at Holly Beach and the Hidden Ponds RV Park.

Sturnidae (Starlings)

**EUROPEAN STARLING** (*Sturnus vulgaris*) – Abundant and seen daily. [H]

Motacillidae (Wagtails and Pipits)

**AMERICAN PIPIT** (*Anthus rubescens*) – A calling bird flew over while we were birding Niblett Road.

Parulidae (New World Warblers)

**ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER** (*Oreothlypis celata*) – Our only sighting of this wintering species was in the hedge along Niblett Road on our final day.

**NASHVILLE WARBLER** (*Oreothlypis ruficapilla*) – It was getting late for this species to be around but we stumbled into one along the slough on Niblett Road. A quality sighting!

**COMMON YELLOWTHROAT** (*Geothlypis trichas*) – Heard more often than seen, this secretive denizen of grassy, wet areas briefly came into view along Niblett Road as well.

**PALM WARBLER** (*Setophaga palmarum*) – Pumping its tail as it foraged, one of these was sighted on our final day along Niblett Road.

**PINE WARBLER** (*Setophaga pinus*) – As the name suggests, this species often has a strong affinity for pines and that's exactly where we found them, in the pines of Kisatchie National Forest.

**YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER (MYRTLE)** (*Setophaga coronata coronata*) – An abundant wintering species, this familiar warbler was spotted every day of tour. The expected subspecies in Louisiana is the "Myrtle" variety which shows a white throat.

**PRAIRIE WARBLER** (*Setophaga discolor*) – Quite uncommon even at the best of times, this warbler was one of the rarest sightings of the trip given the very late date. We spotted this bird with the mixed flock of gnatcatchers and kinglets along Niblett Road.

Emberizidae (Buntings and New World Sparrows)

**BACHMAN'S SPARROW** (*Peucaea aestivalis*) – Success! This specialist of open pine woods becomes much trickier to see in the nonbreeding season but our persistence paid off in the Kisatchie National Forest. The western population of this species which is found in western Louisiana, Texas, Arkansas, and Oklahoma are a different subspecies (*P. a. illinoensis*) from the Eastern birds.

**LE CONTE'S SPARROW** (*Ammodramus leconteii*) – Thanks to the sharp eyes of Ray, this secretive sparrow was spotted in a grassy field along Marceaux Road on our final day. Well done!

**NELSON'S SPARROW** (*Ammodramus nelsoni*) – A beautifully-colored *Ammodramus* sparrow that winters along the coast of Louisiana, this secretive species was seen at close range at the East Jetty Beach on our second day of birding. Bob was a fan of these birds and he (understandably so) picked them as one of his highlight species.

**CHIPPING SPARROW** (*Spizella passerina*) – One or two of these dainty sparrows flew in while we were birding a mixed flock in Kisatchie National Forest. At this time of year, they lack the distinctive reddish cap.

**VESPER SPARROW** (*Pooecetes gramineus*) – Our only sighting of this wintering species was one perched right ON Niblett Road. We could see the white eyering through the scope and the white outer tail feathers as it flushed and landed in a roadside bush.

**SAVANNAH SPARROW** (*Passerculus sandwichensis*) – This wintering sparrow was the most abundant one on tour and we saw many in a variety of grassy habitats. It was the only species of sparrow we tallied each of our three days.

**SONG SPARROW** (*Melospiza melodia*) – These weren't very common, in hindsight. Our only sighting was on our 2nd day of birding in Cameron Parish.

**SWAMP SPARROW** (*Melospiza georgiana*) – We tracked down our first one on our walk at Sabine NWR but we later had many more views at Holly Beach, Niblett Road, and many in the rice fields in Thornwell.

Cardinalidae (Cardinals and Allies)

**NORTHERN CARDINAL** (*Cardinalis cardinalis*) – A fairly common resident, this species was seen best along Niblett Road.

Icteridae (Troupials and Allies)

**RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD** (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) – An abundant species in a variety of grassy and wet areas throughout our final two days of birding. Huge flocks of these were often seen flying overhead as well.

**EASTERN MEADOWLARK** (*Sturnella magna*) – This species is closely tied with grassy areas and we found them daily in places like Kisatchie National Forest, Holly Beach, Fruge Road, and Niblett Road.

**COMMON GRACKLE** (*Quiscalus quiscula*) – A familiar and common species, they were seen on our final two days of birding.

**BOAT-TAILED GRACKLE** (*Quiscalus major*) – This was the more abundant big grackle in rice country and we picked them out by their dark eyes and more rounded heads.

**GREAT-TAILED GRACKLE** (*Quiscalus mexicanus*) – The bright yellow eyes of this species really stood out in comparison to the similar Boat-tailed Grackles. We saw 10 of these in Holly Beach and a few more in Sulphur.

**BRONZED COWBIRD** (*Molothrus aeneus*) – A singleton was spotted with a cowbird flock as they foraged on the ground in Holly Beach. The red eye and thick neck really stood out in addition to lacking a brown head!

**BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD** (*Molothrus ater*) – We had ample opportunities to study this common and widespread species at places like Holly Beach and Niblett Road.

Passeridae (Old World Sparrows)

**HOUSE SPARROW** (*Passer domesticus*) – Seen daily in urban areas. [H]

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## MAMMALS

**SWAMP RABBIT** (*Sylvilagus aquaticus*) – A chunky cottontail that is an accomplished swimmer! We caught up to one along the walkway at Sabine NWR.

**EASTERN GRAY SQUIRREL** (*Sciurus carolinensis*) – The Kisatchie National Forest is a good place for this species and we found one there on our first day.

**FOX SQUIRREL** (*Sciurus niger*) – Only a couple of folks managed to get a glimpse of this species as we drove by it on our 2nd day of birding.

**PRAIRIE VOLE** (*Microtus ochrogaster*) – After some research, we figured out that some of the tiny, dark rodents seen running in the fields were this species. The most noticeable fieldmark was the very short tail.

**MARSH RICE RAT** (*Oryzomys palustris*) – There were some larger rats scurrying in the rice fields and we even saw an egret or two nab one of these! At first we thought they might be Hispid Cotton Rats but Marsh Rice Rat fits better with what we saw.

**BOTTLENOSE DOLPHIN** (*Tursiops truncatus*) – We caught up to these at Holly Beach and again at the ferry crossing.

**NORTHERN RACCOON** (*Procyon lotor*) – Some folks saw one of these on a roadside on our 2nd day.

**WHITE-TAILED DEER** (*Odocoileus virginianus*) – This was another roadside sighting on our 2nd day of birding.

#### Herps

**BLACK RAT SNAKE** (*Pantherophis obsoletus*) – A few of us stumbled onto one of these in the tall grasses surrounding the rice fields on our 3rd birding day.

**COMMON GARTER SNAKE** (*Thamnophis sirtalis*) – Seen in the harvested rice field after the combine had passed over it.

**RED-EARED SLIDER** (*Trachemys scripta elegans*) – This was the common species of turtle that we saw in various ditches and wet areas.

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## **ADDITIONAL COMMENTS**

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**Totals for the tour: 148 bird taxa and 8 mammal taxa**