

Yellow Rails and Rice Festival, Thornwell, Louisiana

Nov. 1-4, 2018

Organizers: Steve Cardiff, Donna Dittmann (LSU) – Kevin & Shirley Berken (rice farmers)

Narrative & most photos by **Peter Scott** (peter.scott@indstate.edu)

Thanks also to Oscar Johnson, Celeste Morien, Van Remsen, Jack Rogers for photos (credited).

This festival marked its 10th year in 2018. It was developed by my friends Steve Cardiff and Donna Dittmann of the Louisiana State University Museum of Natural Science in collaboration with rice farmers Kevin and Shirley Berken. I've been wanting to experience it and decided this was the year, and high time (after at least 25 years) to get back to Louisiana, LSU, and Baton Rouge.

The festival basic package (\$200) features 3 days – potentially, depending on weather -- of watching for rails (Sora, Virginia, Yellow, King) while a farmer in a huge combine vehicle harvests rice. This occurs in fields near Thornwell, a small community in Jefferson Davis Parish, between Jennings and Lake Charles, 10 miles south of Interstate 10 and 40 miles north of the Gulf of Mexico. It's due south of Welsh, and west of Lake Arthur. The rice grains need to be dry when harvested, so plans are cancelled if it's raining or damp; on clear days the harvest starts in late morning after dew has evaporated. Thus each day's birding at the festival begins with a short field trip to Lacassine Refuge, Crowley Wastewater Treatment Facility, or "Mount Trashmore"; and when the farmer's phone call indicates that the harvest is on, you drive to Thornwell and spend the rest of the day there. In addition to the main 3 days around Thornwell, longer trips (to Cameron Parish or Pineywoods) were available Wed., Sat., and Sunday.

I flew to Baton Rouge Tuesday, rented a car and visited a friend, exploring forested country north of town near St. Francisville. On Wednesday evening I drove on I-10 to Jennings in 2 hours, waiting out a thunderstorm at one point. I spotted Steve and Donna at the Hampton Inn, the hotel base for the festival, grabbed a meal at Popeye's, and enjoyed the evening reception in the hotel's Evangeline Room, where one could study specimens of all local rail species with LSUMNS graduate student Oscar Johnson, buy T-shirts or artwork, and look at posters of bird research, rice farming, and coastal conservation. Before going to bed I shopped at Walmart for a pair of muck boots.



Festival posters for last 4 years



Oscar Johnson and rail specimens

Thurs. Nov. 1: Jennings, Lacassine Nat. Wildlife Refuge, Myers Landing

It rained overnight and the forecast was for intermittent rain, so we knew at breakfast in the hotel lobby that “rice and rails” would not happen today. An introductory meeting was planned for 9:30 to 10:45. Before that, I drove to the nearest unit of Lacassine NWR for 45 minutes of birding. Here I had many Cardinals, Orange-crowned Warbler, White-eyed Vireo, Marsh Wren, and distant flocks of Ring-necked Ducks. Back in Jennings at Mike’s Seafood Restaurant, Steve Cardiff welcomed the 105 paying birders and a staff of about 20 volunteers, then turned the microphone over to rice farmer Kevin Berken. Kevin explained the logistics of harvesting-plus-birding and described the rice-farming business, and how he had gotten involved with Steve and Donna in organizing the festival. He encouraged us to tell our congressmen to support the current Farm Bill. He took questions for 20 minutes and spoke well, clearly proud of his role in making the festival possible. Harvesting would resume tomorrow, based on the forecast for the next 2 days. We grabbed lunches to go, and (picking from field trip options) I joined Steve and Donna’s caravan (riding with Donna Kuhn of Westerville, Ohio) to Lacassine NWR-Pool Unit, entering on Illinois Plant Road.



Steve Cardiff welcomes festival guests

Lacassine Refuge is large (maybe 10 x 10 miles), flat, and consists of lakes, coastal prairie, marshes, flooded fields, and some tree-lines and thickets. The overall look was of a green or tan low wet prairie extending for miles, interrupted by lakes and a network of dirt roads. After passing many interesting birds but knowing that the leaders had better spots in mind, we stopped by a large field full of shorebirds, ibis, and herons. There were 2000 Long-billed Dowitchers, 35 Black-necked Stilts, 45 Stilt Sandpipers, 25 Dunlin, and 23 Lesser Yellowlegs. We had 5,000 dark ibis (most likely White-faced) at the refuge, 45 White Ibis, and 23 Roseate Spoonbills. Snowy and Great Egrets (35-45 of each) were the most common of 7 heron species. Gull-billed Terns (resident) were frequently in view, and a flock of Franklin’s Gulls arose suddenly from the prairie and departed southwest. Northern Harriers, Bald Eagles, Red-tailed Hawks, Crested Caracara and a Merlin were our raptors. Tree and Barn Swallows were common.



Mudflat at Lacassine National Wildlife Refuge

Some wintering geese were already present: Snow (65), Ross's (5), and Greater White-fronted (75). Blue-winged Teal, Shoveler, and Ring-necked Duck each numbered >1000, followed by Pintail, Green-winged Teal, and Gadwall (100-250 each); Mottled Duck, Mallard, and American Wigeon (10-16 each); Redhead, Hooded Merganser and Ruddy Duck (1 each). Mottled Duck is a Gulf Coast specialty many were excited to see. Neotropic Cormorants and Anhingas also reminded us of our location. A juvenile Purple Gallinule walked along the edge of a canal in which Common Gallinules and American Coots were swimming.

Blackbirds were represented by Red-wings (5000), Brown-headed Cowbirds, and Boat- and Great-tailed Grackles, the grackles separated by eye color, head shape, and habitat. Several of each were identified, and we noted a distant mass of roughly 50,000 long-tailed grackles. Steve and Donna led us to a stakeout for Vermillion Flycatcher, where the male cooperated. In adjacent thickets were many Yellow-rumped (Myrtle) Warblers, plus a few Ruby-crowned Kinglets and Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, and one each of Palm Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, and Common Yellowthroat.

After 4 ½ hours and 77 bird species, we departed for Myers Landing on Lake Arthur – a lake-like widening of the Mermentau River – for dinner and music. The landing has a rustic trailer park, grocery store, boat launch, and open-air, screened-in restaurant and dance



Jambalaya chefs

floor, surrounded by big live oaks with lower limbs draped in spectacular Spanish moss. Two men, caterers, made jambalaya in a black pot by their pick-up, boiling the meat and other ingredients, then shoveling in rice, and bringing trays to tables at intervals. *Les Freres Michot* played Cajun tunes on fiddle, accordion and guitar as the sun set, with vocals by the fiddler. Soon many of our group departed for a

nocturnal field trip to coastal marsh to search for Black Rail by dragging rope over marsh vegetation. (They got 2, a triumph.) The rest of us returned to Jennings after a while. I rode with Harold Shuck of Cincinnati, whose wife Angela (along with Donna Kuhn) went for Black Rails; we saw a Great Horned Owl on a pole.



Donna Dittmann at scope



Les Freres Michot at Lake Arthur

Friday Nov. 2: Crowley Sewage Ponds, Falcon Rice Mill, THORNWELL RICE FIELDS

Steve packed me into a car with Oscar Johnson and Lauren Solomon, who were leading a trip to the Crowley Sewage Ponds, then to Falcon Rice Mill. This gave me a chance to get acquainted with a current LSU Museum Ornithology grad student. Oscar is in his fourth year in Robb Brumfield's lab, and studies genetics and ecology of river island bird communities on the upper Amazon near Pucallpa. He has co-authored a description of a new antbird species (*Cordillera Azul Antbird*, *Myrmoderus eowilsoni*) and led a trip to Equatorial Guinea in Africa as well as several in Peru.

Crowley Sewage Ponds had a nice assortment of birds we could admire at close range. Least Sandpipers and Black-necked Stilts were especially common, and a group of Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks loafed on a bank. A single Wilson's Phalarope was the "best" shorebird; several Dunlin, Stilt Sandpipers, Avocets, and one Western Sandpiper were present, plus Killdeer and Spotted Sandpiper. There were 10 regular duck species, of which Northern Shoveler and Ruddy Duck were most common. American Pipits, Tree and Barn Swallows flew about. White Ibis were common. Helping lead the field trip were two birding friends of mine from 30 years ago, Dave Patton and Mac Myers.

We proceeded to Falcon Rice Mill in Crowley for a tour, to learn more about the crop supporting our rails. It had an old-fashioned exterior, like a country store. Inside, we donned hairnets to avoid contaminating rice; the main hazard is shotgun pellets, but a magnet removes them. A miller named Dana explained the rice-grading process in a wonderful Cajun accent and was in no hurry to conclude – but Oscar had been warned by Dave Patton that he would need to interrupt to keep us on schedule. We exited the mill through a large interior space where workers (black and white, male and female) were packaging rice and joking.



Rice mill in Crowley

At Thornwell we met on Warehouse Road, then drove 2 miles to the rice fields, in view of the town's blue water tower. Here we (about 80 birders) remained from 12:45 to 6 pm. Kevin Berken was harvesting in his big combine, about one field per hour. The parking area was on a dirt spur road. From here, we either walked to the field being harvested or rode on a trailer on hay bales. Right by the parking area were large bare flooded fields full of shorebirds, ibis, egrets, and gulls, which would normally have been a sufficient birding magnet. Species included Western Sandpipers, Long-billed Dowitchers, Greater Yellowlegs; Laughing, Franklin's and



Rice grains in the field

Ring-billed Gulls; White and dark ibis, Roseate Spoonbills; Snowy, Great and Cattle Egrets. Oscar noted a distant Great Egret holding a dead Yellow Rail in its bill – we could see the white band on the drooping wing. Eventually the egret swallowed the rail whole. Whether it had captured or scavenged the bird was a mystery. Turning in the opposite direction, Oscar spotted a Peregrine Falcon in flight (about 20 yards above ground), pursued by a Bald Eagle which forced the falcon to drop its prey, which the eagle caught; and a second Bald Eagle took up the chase of the Peregrine for several seconds. It surprised us that the swift, powerful Peregrine could be bullied, even by a Bald Eagle.

At the harvest field we had several options. We each had a number (issued in the sequence that one registered for the festival) that allowed us a ride in the combine for 15-25 minutes – 4 seats available, one in the quiet cab, 3 on an outer bench. A few volunteers managed the movement of birders onto and off the combine; you climbed a ladder. We were each given a face-mask for dust and chaff, and ear-plugs. Option 2 was to ride with Steve Cardiff or another driver in an ATV that circled the field parallel to the combine. Steve knew what to anticipate and was adept at getting passengers close to rails. Option 3: walk the field trying to keep pace with the combine, or move around to promising corners. Option 4: stand on the road and wait for the combine to approach at one end of each back-and-forth trip. Option 5: hold mist-net poles on the field edge, if the netting crew needed a hand. Option 6: stay at the banding station (under a tent) and watch banders process rails (with luck a Yellow), wrens (Marsh, Sedge), and sparrows (Savannah, LeConte's, Nelson's). When moving around, one needed to watch for fire ant mounds.

One soon observed that the fields varied in rail productivity and wetness, and that rail species differed in abundance. All fields had some rails – the number flushed in an hour ranged from about 15 to 60, it seemed to me. Over 3 festival days in the rice fields, Sora was more than twice as common as Virginia Rail, and Yellow was one-third as common as Virginia (**Table 1**). King Rail was rarest, although it breeds in these fields and is perhaps more common then, whereas the other 3 species are only present fall to spring.



Combine and birder

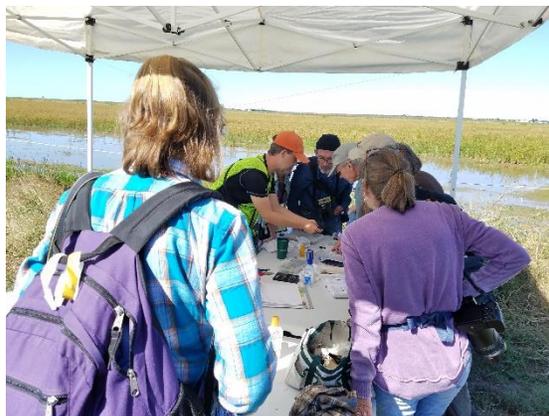


Peter in the rice fields (Jack Rogers)

Yellow Rails are partial to drier rice fields, Virginias to wetter ones, and Soras are the most generalized in habitat preference -- that's how Donna and Steve summed it up. Kevin B. and Dustin Williams tooted the combine horn when a Yellow Rail flushed. They appeared to see all of them and made no mistakes, although Kevin admitted that before being educated by Steve and Donna, he had assumed the small rails were babies. Now they are pros.

On Friday I saw my first Yellow Rail in the beak of the Great Egret, dead. In early afternoon, I rode with Steve in the ATV and saw one flush close and another distant. In late afternoon, my turn came to ride on the combine. We flushed 5 Yellows in front of the machine, giving me 7 live Yellows on the day. I saw plenty of Soras and Virginias as well.

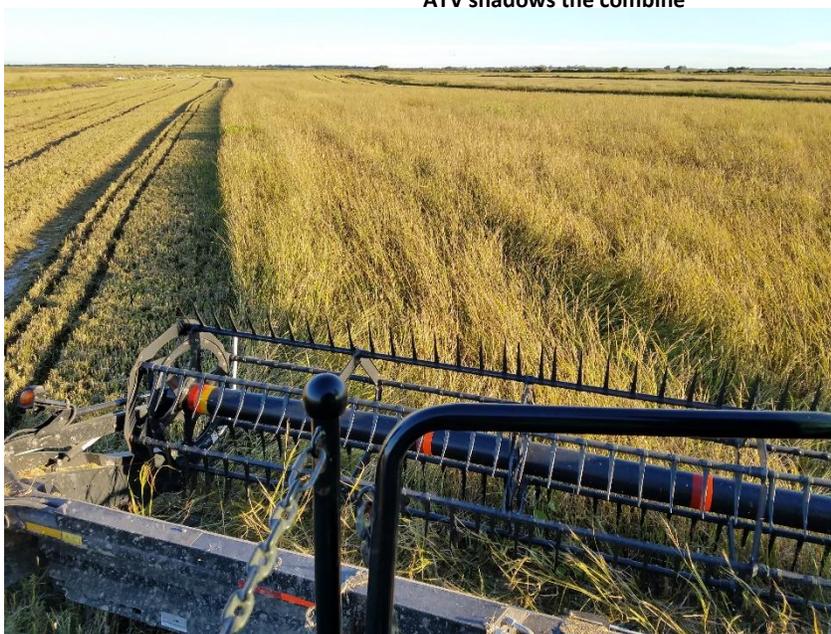
Other bird highlights for me were a couple of Merlins, Roseate Spoonbills, and a single Cave Swallow which Donna Dittmann spotted. This species, whose breeding biology I studied in Yucatan in the early 1980's, was beginning to colonize Louisiana in my graduate student years. Most swallows in the rice fields were Tree and Barn, with a few Northern Rough-winged and Caves. Late in the day two leaders from Field Guides Tours, Chris Benesh and Dan Lane, appeared with their group. I knew Chris and was glad to meet Dan, an LSU Museum alum and co-author and -illustrator of the Peru bird guide by Tom Schulenberg et al. - I caught a ride back to Jennings with Mac Myers, who continued to his home in Eunice. He has been displaced from New Orleans and Slidell by two hurricanes, and selected an inland location for his present home, an hour's drive from coastal birding. - For dinner in Jennings I picked Darrell's Po-Boys, a friendly bar-restaurant where I joined three New Yorkers attending the festival, Edith, Mimi, and Karen. The boiled shrimp was good.



Banding tent and table



ATV shadows the combine



View from combine, starting a new row



Roseate Spoonbill, White Ibis - Thornwell (Oscar Johnson)



Bald Eagle pursues Peregrine (Oscar Johnson)

Sat. Nov. 3—Myers Landing (LeConte's Sparrow), Thornwell Rice Fields, Welsh Museum

After the hotel breakfast (served an hour before dawn) I rode in Steve and Donna's truck to Myers Landing, where the quarry was LeConte's Sparrow in a large grassy field. Steve organized about 20 birders for a slow walk designed to flush sparrows into some shrubbery with the sun behind us. Before long we had two LeConte's in the shrubbery. They did not "tee up" for easy looks, but froze on interior perches so that eventually we all had good looks. We flushed 15 Wilson's Snipe and 7 Sedge Wrens in the same field. Several flocks of Franklin's Gulls, totaling 340 birds, flew over. In the pines and fence rows we found Pine Warbler, Red-breasted Nuthatch, White-winged and Inca Dove, Mockingbird and other species.



Stalking LeConte's Sparrow

We returned to the Thornwell rice fields, where harvesting started at 11:00 am and continued till 4:30. The weather was pleasant: warm (70 to 75 F), with moderate winds (10-15 mph, from south) and mostly clear skies. A young man, Dustin Williams (22 years old), drove the combine today at a speed of about 2 mph, which allowed me to keep pace walking. He complimented my effort (calling me "boss") when I got on the combine, this time in the cab. There were fewer birders today (60 instead of 80) and I had a better sense of how to look for rails. Twelve Yellows were flushed by the combine, and I saw 8 of them.

Yellow Rails were easy to tell in flight from Soras when seen in close succession. Soras looked pot-bellied and twice the size of Yellows, which looked thin and flimsy and flew weakly. The white trailing edge of the inner half of the wing was conspicuous on Yellow, though juvenile Soras showed a thin white wing margin that caught the eye when back-lit by sunlight. Both



Uncut rice field next to stubble

have a chicken-like bill, but only the Sora's is big enough to notice in flight. Virginias looked darker, and often their longer bill could be seen. When the rails flushed from the standing rice (about to be cut), they flew low (1 to 4 feet above ground) toward the field's nearest margin, where there was either a tall weedy strip or more standing rice (2 feet tall). Often the rail landed in stubble and ran or managed to hide in the skimpy cover. My attempts to run one down failed.



Virginia Rail



Sora

The mist-netting crew needed a hand, so I held one of several poles and helped move nets to new positions as the mower proceeded. Pulling the pole out of the muck took some strength. While I was on duty we caught several Soras and Virginias, which were nice to see in the hand. Two Yellows were also netted and banded today.

On Friday the mower was shadowed by Snowy and Cattle Egrets in similar numbers, but today Cattle Egrets were most numerous and eager. A flock of 50 to 75 kept landing in front of the mower, some not flushing until the last moment. They captured insects, small invertebrates, and occasionally a frog. But it was hard work, not easy pickings. White Ibis (20-50) and brown White-faced Ibis (100-150) kept 50 yards or so distant but tracked the mower, favoring wet spots before and after disturbance. Roseate Spoonbills sometimes joined them – one was chased by an eagle. Meanwhile, Tree and Barn Swallows foraged continuously, and there was a steady stream of migrating Monarch butterflies.



Yellow Rail wing pattern (Celeste Morien)

Today's observations concluded three days in the rice fields. (On Wednesday there had been a "beat-the-crowds day" for early arriving birders.) The official count was 526 rails of 4 species, including 48 Yellows, 322 Soras, 150 Virginias, and 6 Kings (see Table 1). My impression (from Donna's Festival blogs, and eBird) is that these totals are par for the course over the festival's 10 years.

Table 1. Official Yellow Rails & Rice Festival counts from facilitators riding the rice harvesting combine in 2018 near Thornwell, Louisiana. Data from eBird lists by Steve Cardiff.

Day, date	Wed 10/31	Fri 11/2	Sat 11/3	All 3 days
Observation hours	4 h 13 min	6 h 37 min	5 h 30 min	~ 16 h
# of rice fields	3	4-5	4-5	11-13
Rail species:				
Sora	59	160	103	322
Virginia	25	50	75	150
Yellow	6	30	12	48
King	0	5	1	6
Total rails	90	245	191	526



Star of the show: Yellow Rail (Celeste Morien)

Steve, Donna, and I drove back to Jennings, changed clothes, then drove to **Welsh Museum** for the festival's final evening social. Welsh is a small farm town, proud of its history. The ladies of the Museum were on hand to discuss the exhibits and make sure plates of delicious *crudités* were kept full: boudin balls, bacon-wrapped gator, catfish bites, and crawfish etouffee, supplied by Cajun Tales Restaurant in Welsh. There were door prizes for everyone – I selected a book of rice recipes. Outside, someone spotted a pair of Barn Owls on a cell phone tower. They flew out silently, perhaps hunting, and returned to their perches, ghostly silhouettes.



Social at Welsh Museum



The 10th Festival winds down - Steve Cardiff, Eamon Corbett, Marky Mutchler (all LSU)

Sun. Nov. 4– Cameron Parish coastal tour

Most participants, including the organizers, headed home today but about 20 of us joined a field trip to the coast led by three young birders (Jack Rogers, Matt Johnson, Marky Mutchler) and a veteran Cameron birder (Paul Conover). Two women, Kate and Angela, rode with me. At our rendezvous point, Chesson's Grocery near Creole, Jack spotted a Merlin perched tamely on a fence post. We proceeded to Willow Island, which is not obviously an island but has frontage on the Gulf. Before we could really get started, an ominous cloud over Cameron induced the leaders to take us to a large house with a screened-in, roofed-over porch, to which Paul had access. We lingered there nearly 2 hours; the storm threatened but never materialized, though it rained steadily for half an hour. Some warblers and a Ruby-throated Hummingbird were found in live oaks by the house, and terns, geese, and swallows flew over. I wandered to a baseball complex by a parking lot and found a Lark Sparrow and Loggerhead Shrike on a chain-link fence, perched among grackles.



Gulf of Mexico beach at Willow Island, Cameron Parish

When it began to clear we drove to Cameron Jetty, paid an entrance fee, and climbed observation platforms to scan the wide inlet used by fishing boats, and the beach to the east. Several hundred Black Skimmers rested and foraged; Brown and American White Pelicans were common, as were Laughing Gulls and Royal, Caspian, and Forster's Terns. A lone Reddish Egret stood bedraggled on the fishermen's jetty. A flock of Least Sandpipers and Semipalmated Plovers whirled around a flooded parking lot, foraging in pools at our feet. Paul put his scope on a Long-billed Curlew and a pair of American Oystercatchers. There was much interest in finding a Clapper Rail to complete the 6 rail possibilities of the region, so Jack played recordings. After we had given up, a late answer came from a cattail patch. In an instant Jack jumped over a fence and flushed the bird; it flew through our midst, glanced off someone's knee, and vanished into other cattails, where it continued to voice its annoyance.

We were ready for lunch and descended on a drive-in called "Anchors Up". Kate ordered a catfish basket and Coke for me, while I followed Paul to a group of live oaks. A nice assemblage of small birds approached his screech-owl tape – Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Yellow-throated Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, Tennessee Warbler, and Red-breasted Nuthatch (unusual this far south).

We drove west out of Cameron, crossed the waterway on a ferry, and where Highway 27 turned north took the coastal route (Hwy 82) past the town of Holly Beach on the "Cajun Riviera" – rebuilt since Hurricane Rita (Sept. 2005). A few miles further the leaders stopped to scope the Gulf beach from the road. There was a good diversity of shorebirds – Snowy and Black-bellied Plovers, Killdeer, Willet, Ruddy Turnstone, Sanderling – and plenty of gulls, terns, and skimmers. A male Boat-tailed Grackle called from a telephone pole over marshy vegetation.

Peveto Beach Woods was our final destination. This chenier woods of oak and hackberry is managed by Baton Rouge Audubon Society as a sanctuary. I had birded here 35 years earlier when the

woods were more extensive. Hurricanes and salt water intrusion have had an impact, especially on hackberries, but it is still a refuge for migrating land birds. Paul led us along some paths, stopping under live oaks. An Eastern Wood-Pewee was spotted. His owl tape attracted a Summer Tanager, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Bay-breasted and Black-throated Green Warblers. Some red-flowered Turk's cap (*Malvaviscus arboreus*) were still in bloom. Paul was impressed with the migrating Monarch butterflies, here and around Cameron, compared with recent years. At any moment it seemed one could see at least 20 flying slowly westward. A mid-sized raptor exploded over us. A brief look was all it took Paul to identify it as a Broad-winged Hawk.

The group broke up. Kate, Angela and I drove north to Interstate 10 west of Lake Charles and followed it eastward to Jennings. After dropping them there at dusk and getting a quick meal, I drove to Baton Rouge, enduring a long delay for an accident.

The table which begins on the next page gives the list of species seen on field trips I attended, the number of days (out of 4) on which the species was seen, and the count of individuals on the most productive day (or most productive location on a day when we hit several spots). Data are from eBird lists posted by Festival staff (Steve Cardiff, Donna Dittmann, Oscar Johnson, Jack Rogers), supplemented by my field notes. The high count totals are for the group, usually more than I saw myself. The bird list for all festival field trips would include more species.



Peter birding in Atchafalaya Basin, Nov. 6 (photo by Van Remsen)

Birds seen by P. Scott on Yellow Rails & Rice Festival field trips			
#	species	Days	High Count
1	Black-bellied Whistling-Duck	2	150
2	Fulvous Whistling Duck	1	10
3	Snow Goose	4	65
4	Ross's Goose	4	19
5	Greater White-fronted Goose	4	500
6	Wood Duck	1	4
7	Blue-winged Teal	2	2000
8	Northern Shoveler	2	1000
9	Gadwall	2	100
10	American Wigeon	1	13
11	Mallard	2	10
12	Mottled Duck	2	16
13	Northern Pintail	1	250
14	Green-winged Teal	2	250
15	Redhead	1	1
16	Ring-necked Duck	2	3100
17	Lesser Scaup	1	7
18	Hooded Merganser	1	1
19	Ruddy Duck	3	100
20	Pied-billed Grebe	1	4
21	Inca Dove	3	2
22	White-winged Dove	2	2
23	Mourning Dove	3	10
24	Ruby-throated Hummingbird	1	1
25	King Rail	2	5
26	Clapper Rail	1	3
27	Virginia Rail	2	75
28	Sora	3	160
29	Yellow Rail	2	30
30	Common Gallinule	2	70
31	American Coot	2	250
32	Purple Gallinule	1	2
33	Black-necked Stilt	3	35
34	American Avocet	3	15
35	Black-bellied Plover	3	3
36	Snowy Plover	1	6
37	Killdeer	4	50
38	Stilt Sandpiper	4	50
39	Ruddy Turnstone	1	9
40	Sanderling	1	12
41	Dunlin	4	25
42	Least Sandpiper	4	200

#	Species	Days	High Count
43	Western Sandpiper	3	10
44	Long-billed Dowitcher	2	2000
45	Wilson's Snipe	3	15
46	Wilson's Phalarope	1	1
47	Spotted Sandpiper	1	3
48	Greater Yellowlegs	2	3
49	Willet	1	25
50	Lesser Yellowlegs	2	50
51	Laughing Gull	3	600
52	Franklin's Gull	4	340
53	Ring-billed Gull	3	25
54	Herring Gull	1	3
55	Gull-billed Tern	4	23
56	Caspian Tern	3	15
57	Forster's Tern	1	85
58	Royal Tern	1	65
59	Black Skimmer	1	400
60	Anhinga	2	13
61	Double-crested Cormorant	1	25
62	Neotropic Cormorant	2	13
63	American White Pelican	2	85
64	Brown Pelican	1	125
65	American Bittern	2	1
66	Great Blue Heron	4	9
67	Great Egret	4	50
68	Snowy Egret	4	150
69	Reddish Egret	1	1
70	Little Blue Heron	2	9
71	Tricolored Heron	3	3
72	Cattle Egret	3	500
73	Black-crowned Night-Heron	3	2
74	White Ibis	4	200
75	Glossy Ibis	1	3
76	White-faced Ibis	3	75
.	Glossy/White-faced Ibis	3	5000
77	Roseate Spoonbill	4	60
78	Osprey	1	1
79	Northern Harrier	3	20
80	Cooper's Hawk	1	1
81	Sharp-shinned Hawk	1	1
82	Bald Eagle	3	6
83	Red-shouldered Hawk	2	1
84	Red-tailed Hawk	3	10
85	Broad-winged Hawk	1	1
86	Barn Owl	2	2

#	species	Days	High Count
87	Great Horned Owl	2	1
88	Belted Kingfisher	1	5
89	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	1	3
90	Red-bellied Woodpecker	1	3
91	Downy Woodpecker	1	1
92	Northern Flicker	2	2
93	Crested Caracara	4	6
94	American Kestrel	2	5
95	Merlin	4	2
96	Peregrine Falcon	1	1
97	Eastern Wood-Pewee	1	1
98	Eastern Phoebe	4	2
99	Vermillion Flycatcher	1	1
100	Loggerhead Shrike	3	3
101	White-eyed Vireo	2	1
102	Blue Jay	2	7
103	American Crow	2	4
104	No. Rough-winged Swallow	3	12
105	Tree Swallow	4	500
106	Barn Swallow	4	150
107	Cave Swallow	2	10
108	Carolina Chickadee	1	1
109	Tufted Titmouse	1	1
110	Red-breasted Nuthatch	1	2
111	Brown Creeper	1	1
112	House Wren	2	4
113	Sedge Wren	4	10
114	Marsh Wren	3	15
115	Carolina Wren	1	4
116	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	3	4
117	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	3	7
118	Eastern Bluebird	1	2
119	Northern Mockingbird	4	6
120	European Starling	2	20
121	American Pipit	2	10
122	LeConte's Sparrow	1	7
123	Savannah Sparrow	3	150
124	Swamp Sparrow	4	10
125	Lark Sparrow	1	1
126	Eastern Meadowlark	1	2
127	Red-winged Blackbird	4	5000
128	Brown-headed Cowbird	3	30
129	Common Grackle	2	100
130	Boat-tailed Grackle	2	45
131	Great-tailed Grackle	2	20

#	species	Days	High Count
.	Boat-tailed/Great-tailed Grackle	3	50,000
132	Black-and-white Warbler	1	1
133	Orange-crowned Warbler	2	3
134	Common Yellowthroat	4	1
135	Bay-breasted Warbler	1	1
136	Magnolia Warbler	1	1
137	Pine Warbler	1	4
138	Palm Warbler	1	1
139	Yellow-rumped Warbler	4	77
140	Black-throated Green Warbler	1	1
141	Northern Cardinal	3	5
142	Indigo Bunting	2	1
143	House Sparrow	2	15



Live oaks at Myers Landing

In Baton Rouge, I met Van Remsen (my major professor from 1984-1989) for lunch Monday at Walk-Ons, a sports bar founded by unrecruited LSU basketball players. Van has just retired from most faculty activities (I beat him to it) but will teach Ornithology for 2 more years. He is birding almost daily, so we arranged to meet the next morning for a trip to the Sherburne Unit on the edge of the Atchafalaya Basin. Meanwhile, I spent a few hours in the bird collection, where Steve Cardiff showed me recent additions. I was glad to see the bound copy of my field notes and specimen catalog and to find myself in the photographs of ornithology graduate students. – At Sherburne Tuesday, birding was slow while rain threatened but picked up in late morning with mixed flocks dominated by Blue-gray Gnatcatchers. I flew home late in the day, listening to election returns as I drove from Indianapolis to Terre Haute.



Peter and Van, lunch in Baton Rouge



Peter E. Scott, *Ph.D.*, 1989

Angelo P. Capparella, *Ph.D.*, 1987

Those were the days. I grew the beard in a cold mountain camp in Bosque Unchog, Peru. – Angelo & I are now neighbors at Indiana State/Illinois State.