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Louisiana Scenic Bayou Scenic  
Byway: West Florida Parishes Loop

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Part of The Great American Trails Network

# Bayou Birds

America's  
Wetland  
Birding Trail  
On Louisiana's  
Great Gulf Coast





# WEST FLORIDA PARISHES LOOP

Louisiana's western "Florida parishes," possess an interesting mix of upland hardwood forests (the only such examples within the entire Great Louisiana Gulf Coast Birding Trail), beech-magnolia transition forests, "black water" swamps, and mixed pine forests of various elevations. Here, bird life is more often secreted up within the canopy layer of the forests, or down in the shrub layer of deep wooded ravines. Excellent ecological interpretive information abounds at the Audubon State Historic Site, Bluebonnet Swamp Nature Center, and Tickfaw State Park Nature Center. Make a point of visiting one or all three of these facilities.

Mammal watchers will want to spend time at the many upland sites such as Audubon State Historic Site, Port Hudson State Historic Site, and Rosedown Plantation, the only public sites where the Eastern Chipmunk may be observed in all of Louisiana! Look also for large "chuckle-head" subspecies of Fox Squirrel, distinguished from the regular species by its large size as well as white ears, face, and feet.



## Cat Island NWR

Site I I-1



**Site access:** Free, Daily

**Site contact:** Virginia Rettig, Refuge Manager; 225-635-4753

**GPS coordinates:** N 30.79324; W 91.43641

**Website:** <http://southeast.fws.gov/CatIsland>

**Directions:** From the I 110 Exit off I 10 in Baton Rouge, go north on I 110 for 8.4 miles to the US 61 Exit. Go right (north) on US 61/ Scenic Hwy about 25.9 miles through St. Francisville to LA 66. Turn left (west) and drive 1.5 miles to Solitude Road. Turn left (south) and follow 3.5 miles and turn right (west) onto the Cat Island NWR entry road. Drive for 1.6 miles to the Cat Island NWR entrance.

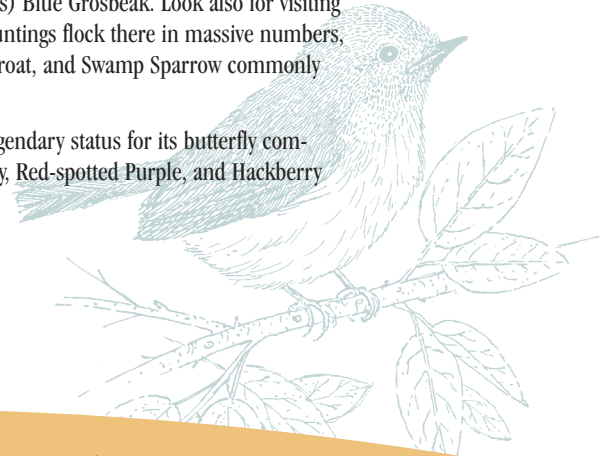
**Description:** Cat Island National Wildlife Refuge is a 9500-acre catch-basin for the nearby Mississippi River with most of the refuge being flooded with 6-15 feet of water from January through June. It is precisely this hydrological peculiarity which generates the site's allure and intrigue.

Because of the magnitude and duration of flooding each year, the bottomland hardwood forest component of the refuge possesses no perennial/woody understory. The result is an open, park-like landscape comprised of only a few herbaceous annual plants like turnsole, false-nettle, and swamp panic-grass covering the forest floor. These plants lie beneath massive specimens of baldcypress, tupelo gum, green ash, honeylocust, American sycamore, water hickory, hackberry, and overcup and Nuttall's oaks.

So massive, in fact, are the baldcypress trees in particular, that Cat Island NWR can boast of being home to the National Grand Champion baldcypress, which is actually the largest tree in the U.S. east of the Sierra Nevadas! The "Big Cypress Trail" trailhead and parking area are easily accessed by driving on the main refuge road, 5.0 miles west and south from the refuge entrance to the trailhead. Similarly, Blackfork Trail, a 2.75-mile hiking trail along Blackfork Bayou, can be accessed by driving 1.7 miles west and south on the main refuge road.

These trails, both located within a designated 800-acre no hunting zone offer the best birding opportunities. In spring and summer Cat Island NWR is a veritable epicenter for breeding Mississippi Kite, Red-shouldered Hawk, Barred Owl, and Yellow-throated Vireo. Other prominent breeders include Acadian Flycatcher, Summer Tanager, and (in open areas) Blue Grosbeak. Look also for visiting Wood Stork, especially between July and August. During the fall, both Indigo and Painted buntings flock there in massive numbers, while Wood Duck, Hooded Merganser, Wild Turkey, American Woodcock, Common Yellowthroat, and Swamp Sparrow commonly occur in winter.

In its short history since it was established in 2000, Cat Island NWR has already attained legendary status for its butterfly community. Cloudless Sulphur, Sleepy Orange, Question Mark, Eastern Tiger Swallowtail, Viceroy, Red-spotted Purple, and Hackberry butterflies are all abundantly present.



## Cultural/Historical Attractions

### LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY MUSEUM OF NATURAL SCIENCE

The Louisiana State University Museum of Natural Science is one of the sixteen components of the Louisiana Museum of Natural History located on the campus of LSU in Baton Rouge. Founded in 1936, the museum is currently one of the nation's largest natural history museums, with over 2.5 million specimens and extensive exhibits, habitat dioramas, and lecture programs. For hours of operation and more information call 225-578-2855 or visit [www.museum.lsu.edu](http://www.museum.lsu.edu).





## Rosedown Plantation State Historic Site

Site 11-2



**Site access:** Fee  
**GPS coordinates:** N 30.79081; W 91.37270

**Site Contact:** Rosedown Plantation State Historic Site;  
 225-635-3332

**Website:** [www.lastateparks.com](http://www.lastateparks.com)

**Directions:** From the I 110 Exit on I 10 in Baton Rouge, go north on I 110 for 8.4 miles to the US 61 Exit. Go right (north) on US 61/ Scenic Hwy for 21.6 miles to LA 10. Turn right (east) onto LA 10, go 0.12 mile, see front gate on left (north) side of road.

**Description:** Settled and built around 1835, Rosedown Plantation is nestled within a rolling beech-magnolia forest just east of the town of St. Francisville, LA. Once encompassing nearly 3,500 acres (most of it planted in cotton), today's Rosedown's 13 historic buildings and accompanying gardens rest on 371 remaining acres. The gardens are nearly as lush as the surrounding forest, and contain old roses, camellias, and azaleas planted beneath massive specimens of live oak, southern magnolia, pecan, and red cedar.

The bird community associated with Rosedown is much the same as with nearby Oakley House (Audubon State Historic Site) and Fort Desperate (Port Hudson State Historic Site): Lots of woodpeckers (including Pileated, Red-headed, Red-bellied, Downy, Hairy, and Northern Flicker, plus Yellow-bellied Sapsucker during the winter months), Carolina Wren, Carolina Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, several vireo and warbler species, and numerous other woodland songbirds.

## Audubon State Historic Site

Site 11-3



**Site access:** Fee, Daily (9am-5pm)  
**GPS coordinates:** N 30.79717; W 91.30693

**Site contact:** Historic Site Information;  
 225-635-3739 or 888-677-2838

**Website:** [www.lastateparks.com](http://www.lastateparks.com)

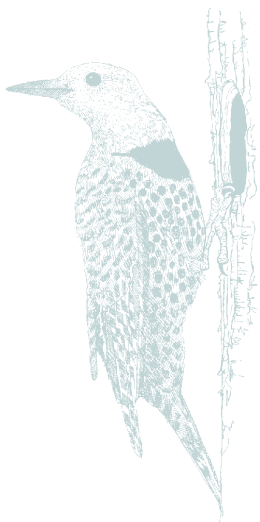
**Directions:** From the I 110 Exit on I 10 in Baton Rouge, go north on I 110 for 8.4 miles to the US 61 Exit. Go right (north) on US 61/ Scenic Hwy for 20.6 miles to LA 965. Turn right (east) on LA 965; the park is located 3.0 miles from US 61.

**Description:** This gorgeous 100-acre upland hardwoods site pays homage to John James Audubon, who headquartered here for 4 months in 1821 when it was known as Oakley Plantation. Though his stay was short, his impact was not. No less than 32 paintings were produced or initiated here!

The forest surrounding Oakley is dominated by American beech and southern magnolia, especially down toward the bottoms of the ravines. The broad ridge tops support additional tree species including loblolly pine, slippery and winged elms, black cherry, and American holly, as well as swamp chestnut, shumard, cherrybark, water and coast live oaks.

Audubon State Historic Site is a veritable woodpecker haven, with at least 7 species known to be present including Red-headed, Red-bellied, Hairy, Downy, Pileated, Common Flicker (mostly winter), and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (winter) woodpeckers seen on a somewhat regular basis. Other common year-round residents include Blue Jay, Carolina Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Wren, Brown Thrasher, Eastern Towhee, and Northern Cardinal. During spring and summer additional neotropical songbird nesters visit such as Great Crested Flycatcher, Eastern Wood-Pewee, White-eyed, Yellow-throated and Red-eyed vireos, Wood Thrush, Worm-eating, Hooded and Kentucky warblers, and Summer Tanager.

Additionally, Audubon, along with Port Hudson, is one of the few sites on the America's Wetland Birding Trail which hosts Eastern Chipmunks! When you visit, be sure to avail yourself to their fine Oakley Plantation Home tour, interpretive center, picnic area, and nature trail.



## Centenary State Historic Site

Site I I-4



**Site access:** Fee, Daily

**GPS Coordinates:** N 30.84055; W 91.21215

**Site Contact:** Centenary State Historic Site

Information; 888-677-2364

**Website:** [www.lastateparks.com](http://www.lastateparks.com)

**Directions:** From the I 110 Exit on I 10 in Baton Rouge, go north on I 110 for 8.4 miles to the US 61 Exit. Go right (north) on US 61/ Scenic Hwy for 21.6 miles to LA 10. Turn right (east) onto LA 10, go 11.0 miles into the town of Jackson, LA. Turn left (north) on College Street. Centenary is one block down on the right.

**Description:** This 40-acre site served as the location for two 19th century colleges. Today, these stately grounds are maintained as a state historic site by the Office of Louisiana Parks. Beech-magnolia slope forests cover over half of the Centenary site, featuring beautiful specimens of black cherry, winged elm, Sweet Gum, and several species of oaks. Slash pines were planted on the campus itself many years ago.

The strident “Cheet!” notes of Eastern Chipmunks fill the air of the forest all around Centenary. Nesting birds include Cooper’s Hawk, Red-bellied, Downy, Hairy, and Pileated woodpeckers, White-eyed and Red-eyed vireos, Carolina Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, Wood Thrush, and Carolina Wren, along with Pine, Worm-eating, and Hooded warblers. Winter additions include Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Eastern Phoebe, American Robin, Hermit Thrush, Cedar Waxwing, and Orange-crowned and Yellow-rumped warblers.

## Port Hudson State Historic Site

Site I I-5



**Site access:** Fee, Daily (9am-5pm)

**GPS coordinates:** N 30.69255; W 91.26922

**Site contact:** Port Hudson State Historic Site; 888-677-3400

**Website:** [www.lastateparks.com](http://www.lastateparks.com)

**Directions:** From the I 110 Exit on I 10 in Baton Rouge, go north on I 110 for 8.4 miles to the US 61 Exit. Go right (north) on US 61/ Scenic Hwy for 12.4 miles to Port Hudson State Historic Site on the left.

**Description:** Port Hudson State Historic Site commemorates Louisiana’s Civil War activities. Over six miles of trails take visitors along bluffs, sandy creek bottoms, piney woods, and fields as well as new growth and climax forest areas. The forested component of this 909-acre site is comprised of upland hardwood or “bluff land” type woods, featuring a diverse tree community that includes cherrybark and water oaks, coastal pignut hickory, slippery and winged elms, pawpaw, American hornbeam, red mulberry, black cherry, beech, and native cane, all situated amongst an equally diverse topography. During the Civil War, Yankees once described Port Hudson as “a giant magnolia forest.” The same can be said today as magnolia is still a prominent species at Port Hudson.

The year-round bird community at Port Hudson State Historic Site is representative of southern Louisiana forests with Red-shouldered and Red-tailed hawks, Eastern Screech, Great Horned and Barred owls, Red-bellied, Downy, Hairy and Pileated woodpeckers, Blue Jay, American Crow, Carolina Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Wren, Brown Thrasher, Eastern Towhee, Common Grackle, and Northern Cardinal. The community is heavily augmented during both migration periods and winter when visitors can expect common migrants and neotropical nesting species such as Broad-winged Hawk, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Great Crested Flycatcher, White-eyed, Yellow-throated and Red-eyed vireos, Wood Thrush, numerous warbler species, Summer and Scarlet tanagers, and Baltimore and Orchard orioles.

Winter brings a whole new cast of nearctic species with it. Species to look for include Sharp-shinned Hawk, American Kestrel, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Eastern Phoebe, Blue-headed Vireo, House Wren, Ruby-crowned and Golden-crowned kinglets, Hermit Thrush, Orange-crowned and Yellow-rumped warblers, and White-throated Sparrow.



Louisiana ranks second in the eastern United States for Bald Eagle nesting. Over 100 active Bald Eagle nests were found in south Louisiana in 1995, most of which were located in Barataria-Terrebonne.



## Bluebonnet Swamp Nature Center

Site 11-6



**Site access:** Fee

**GPS coordinates:** N 30.36907; W 91.10491

**Site contact:** Nature Center Information; 225-757-8905

**Website:** [www.brec.org](http://www.brec.org)

**Directions:** From the intersection of I-10 and I-110 at the east bank of the Mississippi River in Baton Rouge, go east on I-10 for about 7.25 miles. Take the Bluebonnet Road Exit (Exit 162). Go right (south) on Bluebonnet Road for about 2.3 miles to the intersection of Bluebonnet and North Oak Hills Parkway. Go right (west) on N. Oak Hills Parkway for 0.12 miles to the entrance of Bluebonnet Swamp Nature Center.

**Description:** Part of the BREC system, which operates public park and recreation facilities and programs throughout East Baton Rouge Parish, Bluebonnet Swamp Nature Center opened to the public in 1997. The Nature Center is situated within the southeastern quadrant of Baton Rouge on 101 wooded acres, 65 of which are comprised of pristine baldcypress-tupelo gum swamp. The remainder of the acreage is riparian-transitional forest, dominated in the upland portions by sweetgum, water oak, coast live oak, and green ash, along with pockets of remnant American beech-southern magnolia forest. Nature trails run throughout.

Over 100 species of birds have already been recorded in and around this young facility. Nesting species include Wood Duck, Red-shouldered and Broad-winged hawks, Mississippi Kite, Barred Owl, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Red-bellied, Downy, Hairy, and Pileated woodpeckers, Great Crested and Acadian flycatchers, Carolina Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Wren, White-eyed and Red-eyed vireos, Northern Parula, Prothonotary, Hooded, Kentucky, and possibly Swainson's warblers.

## Tickfaw State Park

Site 11-7



**Site Access:** Fee

**GPS Coordinates:** N 30.38162; W 90.63089

**Site Contact:** Park Information; 888-981-2020

**Website:** [www.lastateparks.com](http://www.lastateparks.com)

**Directions:** From the intersection of I-10 and I-110 at the east bank of the Mississippi River in Baton Rouge, go east on I-10 for about 4.0 miles. Take Exit 159 and take the ramp onto I-12. Follow I-12 right 29.0 miles to LA 441. Go right on LA 441 for 2.4 miles to LA 42. Turn left (east) for 1.2 miles to Old CC Road. Go right (south) for 1.5 miles to Lilly Road. Turn right (south-west) for 1.0 mile to LA 1037. Go left (south) on LA 1037 for 1.5 miles and turn right (west) on Patterson Road. Go 1.2 miles on Patterson Road to the park entrance.

**Description:** Equipped with 4 nature trails, 3 major ecosystems (pine-hardwood uplands, bottomland hardwoods, and cypress-gum swamp), a canoe trail (and canoe rentals), and a nature center, Tickfaw State Park is an excellent site for birders of all persuasions. The 0.75-mile raised-boardwalk Nature Center Trail traverses all 3 systems. The 0.5-mile raised-boardwalk Gum Cypress Trail traverses a permanently-flooded swamp filled with Great and Snowy egrets, Wood Duck, Barred Owl, and numerous other swamp denizens. The 0.75-mile raised-boardwalk Bottomland Hardwood Trail terminates at the Tickfaw River, and is perhaps the "birdiest" of them all. Follow the 0.5-mile gravel Pine-Hardwood Trail through drier upland habitats filled with southern magnolia, winged elm, flowering dogwood and witch hazel.

Neotropical breeding birds include Anhinga, Little Blue Heron, Yellow-crowned Night Heron, Mississippi Kite, Broad-winged Hawk, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Acadian and Great Crested flycatchers, Barn Swallow, Wood Thrush, Red-eyed Vireo, Northern Parula, Prothonotary, Kentucky, and Hooded warblers, Yellow-breasted Chat, Summer Tanager, and Indigo Bunting.

In winter, look for Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Eastern Phoebe, Hermit Thrush, Cedar Waxwing, Blue-headed Vireo, Orange-crowned and Yellow-rumped warblers, Song, Swamp, and White-throated sparrows, Dark-eyed Junco, and American Goldfinch. Make sure to visit the park's nature center, which houses much natural history information, programming, and a fine exhibit.



## Joyce Wildlife Management Area

Site 11-8



**Site access:** Free

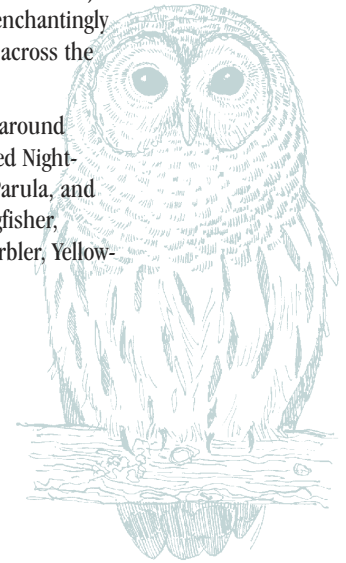
**Site contact:** Joyce WMA Information; 225-765-2360

**GPS coordinates:** N 30.39726; W 90.42913

**Directions:** From the intersection of I-10 and I-110 at the east bank of the Mississippi River in Baton Rouge, go east on I-10 for about 4.0 miles to the I-10/ I-12 split. Follow I-12 East (left two lanes) 38.1 miles to the I-55 Exit (Exit 38). Go south on I-55 for 6.6 miles to Exit 23/ Frontage Road. Swing left (east) under the freeway, take a right, then a quick left into the parking area. To access the boardwalk into the swamp, walk several yards across the railroad tracks onto the boardwalk.

**Description:** Located in southern Tangipahoa Parish, Joyce Wildlife Management Area occupies over 15,000 acres of baldcypress-tupelo swamp and freshwater marsh. Land access into the area is via a 1000-foot elevated boardwalk located just off of the parking area in the extreme northwestern corner of the site. Visitors to this section will encounter an enchantingly beautiful swamp filled with pond-cypress, tupelo gum, red maple, wax myrtle, and colonies of royal fern strewn across the swamp floor.

Here, bird life is dominated by swamp-dwelling species, though marsh-dwelling species are sure to fly over and around the boardwalk system. Look for birds such as Anhinga, Little Blue Heron, Great and Snowy egrets, Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, White Ibis, Wood Duck, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Pileated Woodpecker, Tufted Titmouse, Northern Parula, and Prothonotary Warbler in spring and summer. In the fall and winter look for swamp-dwellers such as Belted Kingfisher, Eastern Phoebe, Winter Wren, Ruby-crowned and Golden-crowned kinglets, Brown Creeper, Orange-crowned Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, White-throated Sparrow, and American Goldfinch.



## Cultural/Historical Attractions

### LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY RURAL LIFE MUSEUM

As one of the best outdoor museums in the United States, the Rural Life Museum is an outstanding complex consisting of over 20 Louisiana plantations and rural structures depicting the various cultures of pre-industrial 19th century Louisiana. With its extensive collection of tools, utensils, furniture, farming equipment, and other artifacts, the museum preserves and interprets an important part of Louisiana's rural heritage. For hours of operation and more information, call 225-765-2437 or visit <http://rurallife.lsu.edu/>.





## Convention and Visitors Bureaus and Chambers of Commerce

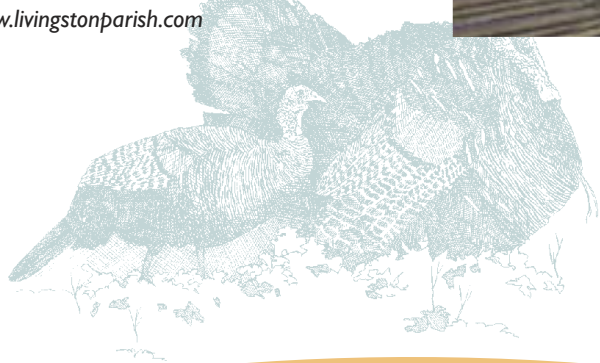
Baton Rouge Area Convention & Visitors Bureau  
 730 North Boulevard  
 Baton Rouge, LA 70802  
 Toll Free Consumer: 800-LA-ROUGE  
 Fax: 225-346-1253  
[www.VisitBatonRouge.com](http://www.VisitBatonRouge.com)

St. Francisville Tourist Commission  
 PO Box 1538  
 St. Francisville, LA 70775  
 Phone: 225-635-6769

Tangipahoa Parish Convention & Visitors Bureau  
 42271 South Morrison Boulevard  
 Hammond, LA 70403  
 Toll Free Consumer: 800-542-7520  
 Fax: 985-542-7521  
[www.tangi-cvb.org](http://www.tangi-cvb.org)

Livingston Parish Convention & Visitors Bureau  
 30340 Catholic Hall Road  
 Albany, LA 70711  
 Toll Free Consumer: 888-317-7899  
[www.livingstonparish.com](http://www.livingstonparish.com)

Saint Francisville, LA Chamber of Commerce  
 PO Box 545  
 Saint Francisville, LA 70775  
 Phone: 225-635-6717



## Louisiana Scenic Bayou Scenic Byway

The Louisiana Scenic Bayou Scenic Byway, centered around Baton Rouge, leads visitors across 13 parishes through upland and bottomland hardwood forests, baldcypress-tupelo gum swamp and freshwater marsh habitats. Visit the various state parks, state historic sites, wildlife preserves, the famous Atchafalaya Swamp, magnificent plantations, and small towns bursting with culture and southern charm. Explore the many beautiful rivers along the byway via canoe or boat.

Follow the byway along stretches of River Road on both banks of the Mississippi. From here, head north to experience the heart of "English Louisiana," or take a ferry across the Mississippi and continue east into the Florida Parishes, once known as the Republic of West Florida.