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Preliminary Checklist of the Birds of Oakland Plantation and the Cane River Creole National Historical Park, Natchitoches Parish, Louisiana

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Introduction

Lying along the banks of Cane River in Natchitoches Parish, Louisiana, Oakland Plantation and the Cane River Creole National Historical Park are situated in an area rich in avian diversity. Varying landscapes, combining mixed bottomland hardwood forests, open agricultural areas, and abundant water features, draw a diverse number of resident and migratory birds to the area in search of life sustaining resources such as food, water and nesting sites. Since its inception, there have been only limited observations of bird species taken within the park's boundaries. The aim of this project is to expand on the park's current checklist by creating an updated checklist of bird species found on the grounds of Oakland Plantation and other sites within the Cane River Creole National Historical Park complex.

Methods

In a personal communication with Laura Gates (2005), superintendent of the park, I was informed that only one known avian survey has taken place in the park. It was undertaken in the mid-1990s by David Muth who is the current Chief of Planning and Resource Stewardship at Jean Lafitte NHP&P. I subsequently contacted Mr. Muth in March 2005 and he responded with four checklists that he had prepared between 1995 and 1998. He also sent two additional checklists of birds reported by Paul Conzelman while he was conducting the 2002-2003 herpetofaunal surveys of Oakland and Magnolia Plantations. The following list of species was compiled using data from these checklists as well as my own personal sightings taken during pedestrian surveys of the Oakland Plantation property in March and April 2005.

Results

Combining previous sightings by David Muth and Paul Conzelman, along with my own observations during March and April 2005, the park's checklist of birds currently stands at 105 species. Of these, 35 species can typically be found year-round in the park, 25 species are winter residents, 24 species are summer residents, 11 species are spring and/or fall migrants through the area, and 9 species were deemed as likely occurring in multiple seasons. Of those species present during the summer, 1 species was recorded as a confirmed breeder, 27 species as probable breeders, and 26 species as possible breeders within the park. Additional surveys could easily expand the current park checklist, species breeding status, and basic knowledge of bird movements within the park.

List of Species

Key to Status

- R – Yearound: Species present all year at this location.
- W – Winter: Species present only in winter.
- S – Summer: Species present only in summer.
- M – Migrant: Species present as migrant during spring and/or fall.
- ? – Status Uncertain

Key to Breeding

- B – Breeder: Breeding confirmed (nest building, recently fledged young, etc.).
- P – Probable: Breeding probable but undocumented thus far.
- ? – Uncertain: Breeding possible due to proper habitat or other factor(s).

<i>Common Name</i>	<i>Status</i>	<i>Breeding</i>	<i>Comments</i>
Pied-billed Grebe	R	?	2
Wood Duck	R	P	