

Rare Animals of Louisiana



Crested Caracara

Caracara cheriway

Rarity Rank: S1/G5

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--------|-----------|---|------|---|--------|
| State | | | | | |
| Global | | | | | |
| | imperiled | | rare | | secure |



Photo by Dan Lane

Identification:

- Medium sized raptor with total length ranging from 49 to 58 cm
- Black crest and bare, orange face
- Black lower back and belly, white neck, patterned upper breast and back, long yellow legs
- In flight, white patches on tips of wings with white head and tail with a black tip
- Immature birds lack the white neck, but have a continuation of the brown pattern of the upper breast and back of mature birds

Taxonomic comments:

Formerly included in *C. plancus*, but recognized as a separate species on the basis of analyses of plumage, morphology, and reported hybridization. *C. planus*, now referred to as the Southern Caracara, is restricted to southern Peru and central Brazil south to Tierra del Fuego and the Falkland Islands.

Habitat:

This species occurs in open areas such as prairies or rangeland with scattered trees

Food habits:

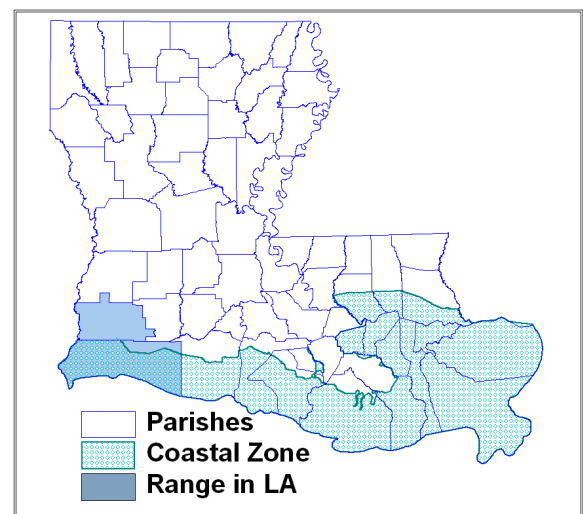
Carrion, insects, fish, reptiles, amphibians, birds and eggs

Range:

- Mainly southeast Texas, also Florida
- Louisiana population is restricted to the extreme southwest portion of the state, particularly Cameron Parish
- Range extends into South America

Reproduction:

- Pairs mate for life and live together throughout the year
- Both sexes build nest between January and March after which 2 to 3 large brown eggs with brown blotches are laid
- Both parents incubate the eggs for one month, and young fledge about 2 months after hatching



Range based on occurrences in Natural Heritage database

Rare Animals of Louisiana



Threats:

- Unwarranted negative attitudes towards these birds result in shooting and poisoning in parts of its range
- Collisions with vehicular traffic when scavenging along roadsides, particularly for first-year juveniles
- Loss of habitat due to urban and agricultural development

Beneficial Management Practices:

Raise awareness of and educate the general public about where species occurs

LA River Basins:

Mermentau, Calcasieu, Sabine

References:

Lowery, G. H. Jr. 1974. Louisiana Birds 3rd Ed. Kingsport Press, Tennessee.

NatureServe. 2003. NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. Version 1.8. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available <http://www.natureserve.org/explorer>.

Morrison, J. L. 1996. Crested caracara (*Caracara plancus*). In The Birds of North America, No. 249 (A. Poole and F. Gill, eds.). The Academy of natural Sciences, Philadelphia, PA, and The American Ornithologists' Union, Washington, D.C.

Peterson, R.T., and V.M. Peterson. 1980. A field guide to the birds: A completely new guide to all the birds of Eastern and Central North America 4th Ed. Houghton Mifflin Company, New York.