

# Be There Or Bust

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If you move quickly you still have a chance to enjoy one of the best weeks of your life – the AFA Annual Convention to be held in the magnificent old city of New Orleans, Louisiana. Don't dally around, find the registration forms in this issue and sign up. You'll hate yourself if you fail.

The organized programs are the highest possible quality where you'll have opportunities to meet some of the best known and most knowledgeable aviculturists in the world. You'll also meet wildlife biologists, zoo curators, bird product manufacturers, authors of bird books, wildlife artists and a whole flock of interesting and exciting people sharing a thousand and one different aspects of the bird world. And all of this will take place in a warm, friendly atmosphere with lots of laughter and camaraderie.

But you may find, as I do, that many of the most enjoyable things are informal and unplanned. Rest assured, the atmosphere will be informal. Most folks will be in their shirt sleeves and shorts as the weather will be rather warm. There will be no stick-in-the-mud snobbishness or one-upsmanship tolerated. If you find such a one, let me know and I'll apply liberal doses of the well known Bourbon Street drink called "Hand Grenade" guaranteed to loosen up the

stiffest old coot as well as all the teeth in one's mouth. Cold drinks of the most exotic sort are *de rigueur* and to be consumed in copious amounts. The very topography of New Orleans lends itself to walking about in the evening to see the sights (providing the exotic drinks have not yet rendered you unstable).

The hotel is within a very easy walk to all the sights and sounds of famous old New Orleans. Just head up Canal Street and I personally guarantee that within 10 minutes you can be on the Cajun Queen, the Creole Queen or the Flamingo Casino river boat. Just a bit north you'll find the Aquarium of the Americas on the edge of the great Mississippi River. (Feel free to apply your gaming table winnings to the entrance fee.) If you are the wimpy sort, or are indisposed by an abundance of grog, you can hop on the Riverfront Streetcar and cruise the whole waterfront and see the levee that holds the great river in check. Since you're already in the French Quarter you'll find it's a very short walk to Bourbon Street, where you can hire a fine horse and carriage for a mere pittance and see the city in style.

Take careful note of the classic old balconies that elicit so much interest during Mardi Gras. I look upon a couple of them with the fondest memories. You

should be told that during the frivolities of Mardi Gras, said balconies are the stages, as it were, for the most voluptuous and beautiful young ladies to display their multitudinous charms to those revelers in the streets below. The formula has something to do with the more Mardi Gras beads that are tossed up to the beauties, the more of their charms they expose. In several cases, all the beads in the world must have been tossed up because the beauty bared all, fore and aft, top and bottom, reserving nothing – nothing, dear friend, should there be a new supply of beads. There were no new beads, however, as I know for a fact that Rick Jordan spent \$1,200 and got all the fifty cent strings of beads on the market. The over exposure of frivolous flesh was something of an embarrassment to me so I spent no more than 10 or 15 hours below the balconies.

When walking the streets you should keep a look out for clowns, jugglers, dogs in flamboyant finery, the odd pickpocket, and a whole variety of colorful folks that add a charm to New Orleans that is not to be found in any other city in the world. There is something for everyone including Civil War history, plantation estates of the Old South, the historic St. Louis Cathedral at Jackson Square, swamp tours where the 'gators snap and the owls hoot, museums and music, music, music. And the food... New Orleans is famous world wide for the richness and variety of its food and restaurants. See Rosenblatt's write-up on this subject.

When you add all the wonderful things you'll find actually at the AFA convention site to all the adventures in food, fun and frolic that you'll find in the immediate neighborhood, it should be impossible for you to stay home. If you attend, you'll never forget it. If you stay home, you'll never forgive yourself. See you in N'Awlins.

## Notes on Carnival and Mardi Gras

Carnival is the season stretching from "Twelfth Night" (January 6) through Fat Tuesday (Mardi Gras). Mardi Gras is also known as Shrove Tuesday and is the culmination of the Carnival season. It falls the day before Ash Wednesday when the Roman Catholic 40-day (not including Sundays) penitential season of Lent begins. It is governed by the date on which Easter falls, coming 46 days before. Mardi Gras is always on a Tuesday, the words are French for Fat Tuesday. ➤



Photo by Sheldon Dingle

Apartments and homes on Bourbon Street. A lot of action goes on behind the balcony doors.