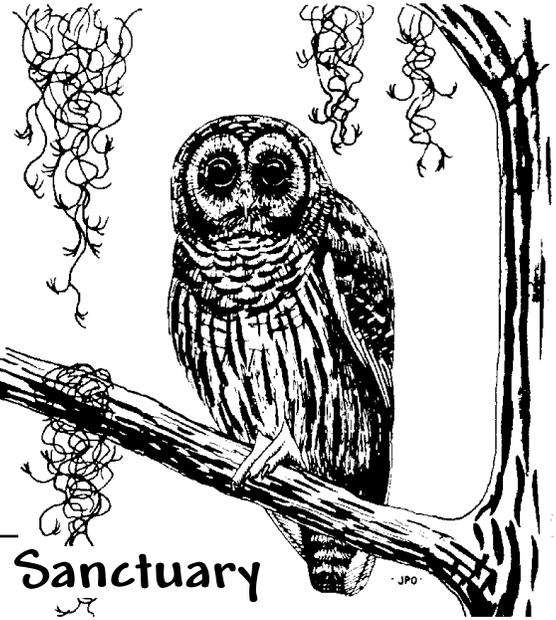


The **BARRED OWL**

Newsletter of the Baton Rouge Audubon Society

Volume L - Number 3

3rd Quarter, 2023



Progress at Amite River Wildlife Sanctuary

Probably the most significant update in the past few months has been the addition of a few more bog bridges. A bog bridge is a low bridge that basically keeps you out of the mud. (Not that we've had much mud lately. Both of our swamp areas are completely dry at the moment.) Abraham Dickson is an eagle scout candidate with Troop 136 from Baton Rouge. He and his crew put in seven 12-foot lengths of bridges in various spots in the sanctuary. Thanks for your good work, Abraham and crew!

We have ordered the signs for our plant interpretation project. We'll be installing them in November and early December and building out the website with plant information.

I did a presentation for the Rotary Club of Greater Ascension parish to tell them about the sanctuary, and they were eager to help. They applied for a grant from the Rotary organization to help us with acquisition of the additional trail markers we need to finish out our trails. The grant was received a couple of weeks ago, so we'll be acquiring and installing the markers later this fall.

We will be doing an invasive species removal work day on Nov 11 at the sanctuary. If you're interested in volunteering, send me an email (seejanebird@gmail.com).

- Jane Patterson



MORE PHOTOS, PAGE SIX!

Our Wonderful Volunteer Crew!

Beauty of Beautyberries

If you're wanting a native plant that is as ornamental as it is beneficial, then American Beautyberry (*Callicarpa americana*) should be at the top of your list!

Also known as French Mulberry, this woody perennial or shrub generally grows about 3-5 feet tall and retains a very nice shape, with arching branches growing from the center. It can grow larger but can be cut back in the winter to keep it the shape and size you like in your landscape. It grows naturally as an understory plant, generally in pine or mixed hardwood forests. It requires some sun but doesn't like full sun all day.

The plant has yellow-green fall foliage, but its most striking feature is the clusters of glossy, iridescent-purple fruit (sometimes white) which hug the branches at leaf axils in the fall and winter. The flowers are small, pink, in dense clusters at the bases of the leaves, clusters usually not exceeding the leaf petioles and not remarkable though may be visited by pollinators. The

fruit, which is distinctly colored, rose pink or lavender pink, berrylike, about 1/4 inch long and 3/16 inch wide, grows in showy clusters, persisting after the leaves have fallen.

The foliage is a favorite of White-tailed Deer. The seeds and berries are important foods for many species of birds, particularly overwintering sparrows. According to Bill Fontenot's frugivory report, 20 species of birds have been observed by birders eating the fruit from this plant. A nice addition to any birder's garden!

- Jane Patterson



BRAS Program Schedule

Thursday, October 12th

PRESENTER: Dr. Peter Yaukey, Chair of Department of Biological and Physical Science at University of Holy Cross, New Orleans

TOPIC: "Louisiana: A Special Place for Birds"

TIME: 7:00 - 8:00 PM (in-person social 6:30-7:00)

Thursday, November 9th

PRESENTER: John Dillon, Past-president of Louisiana Ornithological Society and Founder of the Minden High School Nature Club

TOPIC: The Minden High School Nature Club was featured in American Birding Association's "Birding" Magazine in 2019. John Dillon will share information about the club and their experiences thus far.

TIME: 7:00 - 8:00 PM (in-person social 6:30-7:00)

Thursday, December 14th

Annual Potluck Holiday Celebration**

PRESENTER AND TOPIC: TBD

TIME: 6:00 - 8:00 PM

****ZOOM will not be available for this program**

LOCATION for all meetings:

BREC's Bluebonnet Swamp Nature Center, Education Building, 10533 N. Glenstone Place, Baton Rouge, LA 70810. Reminder - this is NOT the main entrance to Bluebonnet Swamp; it is located two streets south, and there is a large swamp mural on the building.

ZOOM registration **IS AVAILABLE** for October and November Programs. Send an email to Programs@braudubon.org for the registration link.

Birding in August with David Booth

August is the time of year birders refer to as the "summer doldrums". Breeding birds have pretty much stopped singing and are harder to detect. Fall migrants really haven't started arriving yet to liven things up. The woods are full of aggravating insects. And it's hot, hot, hot and so humid. The smartest thing to do is go early early and be done by 10am or so. Wading birds are fun if you can find water sources like rice or crawfish ponds that are being let down. Hummingbirds are starting their fall migration and the numbers ramp up in August. But overall, it's pretty quiet. The best choice might just be to get out of Louisiana!

Two birding events that occur in August are the Southeast Arizona Birding Festival in Tucson and the Davis Mountains Hummingbird Festival in west Texas. You may be thinking that both of these locations sound hotter than Louisiana, but the key is elevation! Included below are accounts of each of these festivals by recent participants.



Broad-billed Hummingbird

Southeast Arizona Birding Festival (usually second weekend in August)

The main draw for this festival is the variety of hummingbirds that show up in southeast Arizona in late summer. Tucson is surrounded by five mountain ranges. The festival hotel is in Tucson itself, but many of the field trips associated with the festival are to the various mountains and canyons that surround the city. The festival features a number of optics vendors as well as tour operators and Arizona conservation-related agencies offering information. There are times to gather and visit and a banquet is offered on Saturday evening. A keynote speaker is featured at the banquet. This year it was the world Big Year Champion, Arjan Dwarshuis of the Netherlands who saw 6842 species in a single year!

Field trips are offered to local parks and preserves but it's still deadly hot down in Tucson city proper in August, so the key is to find trips that are going to take you to the elevated locations. And since there are mountains literally 360 degrees around Tucson, you have your pick of directions! The forests of Mt. Lemmon to the north are delightfully cool. There are a number of hotspots just off the main road as well as a number of scenic vistas. Specialties of the area like the Red-faced Warbler and others are generally easy to find. When we

were there, a Blue-throated Mountain Gem had taken up residence at a hummingbird feeder at the visitor's center and was a slam dunk sighting!



Rivoli Hummingbird & friends

To the south and east there are a number of canyons and ravines, all famous in the birding world. You can spend a delightful day just moving from Madera Canyon to Ramsey Canyon and several spots in the area. Hummingbirds like the Violet-crowned and Lucifer's are regular here but you may also find specialties like the White-eared Hummingbird. We were particularly thrilled to see a Plain-capped Starthroat at the feeders at Ash Canyon.

In addition to the hummingbirds, you'll find many, many desert specialties in the area that are exciting to see. For some of them, you may want to visit again in the cooler months, but just like in Louisiana, if you get out bright and early before the heat of the day you will have good luck before it gets too hot. I highly recommend a visit to south Arizona!

Proceed to  **The Davis Mountains!**

“My newest Most Favorite Place”

The Davis Mountains

by David Booth

The sky was buzzing and birds were in and out, at this feeder and then another. “Feeder No. Five has a Lucifer’s Hummingbird ... No. 3 has the Calliope ... a male Rufous is at No. 7”. Wow! Our heads turned like an owl to see all these great birds. It was day one at the Davis Mountains Hummingbird Celebration for our group of 14 Louisiana birders. With over 30 species, it was like Christmas morning the colors were the wrapping paper. Well, in fact we were at the Christmas Mountains Oasis, so it makes sense. This is a spot just North of Big Bend National Park. It is a true oasis created by Carolyn Ohul and her husband in the years past. They decided to ‘save’ the water which flowed down the arroyo, occasionally. They built tanks (small ponds) to store the water and then irrigate several acres. The oasis had many trees and shrubs nursed to life by Carolyn’s love of the land, birds and butterflies. She has trails, benches and an observation center at the feeding station. What a setup! There are a dozen hummingbird feeders, hanging seed feeders, as well as ground feeders which stay full of interesting birds. The cast of characters was constantly changing for us. The star of the day was the Lucifer’s Hummingbird. It is a brilliant bird with a magenta gorget. It dominated the scene with its’ air dance. It was a day to remember.

Day two started in a similar fashion, we were seated in the front yard of Steve Cardiff and Donna Dittman in the higher mountains of Davis Mountains Resort. Amid a number of feeders, hummers were streaking in and out at a pace I could not keep up with. The immersion effect was wonderful, I felt like I was one of them in a whirlpool of motion and colors. The star of the day was the Rivoli’s Hummingbird a larger colorful species. Here we had 33 species including 8 species of hummers. These included Anna’s, Rufous, Broad-tailed, Black-chinned and even one Ruby-throated. We also had additional species up the mountain at the second home of the High Mountains Home Tour.

The Davis Mountains Hummingbird Celebration is a wonderful event. Located in the heart of Texas’ Chihuahuan Desert, Fort Davis, at an elevation of 5,000 ft, is known as the Hummingbird Capital of Texas. If you get in the summer doldrums, plan to make this event in 2025. It is held on odd numbered years. Don’t pack for the desert, but for the Desert Mountains. We found it to be cool at night and pleasant in the day. The temperatures ran about 10 degrees cooler than in South Louisiana and since there is no humidity so it feels like 20 degrees of difference. And those night skies are wonderful for star gazing. The Celebration is a perfect storm of birding enthusiasts, helpful local birding volunteers, the Fort Davis Chamber of Commerce, many helpful private property owners, State Park employees, and experts from The Nature Conservancy and Texas at large. Here you can pack your life list with hummingbirds and great southwestern bird species. They offer many exceptional field trips to spectacular private ranches, and bird gardens for attendees. These are by appointment only. Each trip has dedicated guides to help participants. All of this made the trip very enjoyable.

I can definitely see future trips into the Davis Mountains, one of the ‘cool’ Sky Islands of West Texas.



Violet Crowned Hummingbird



Peveto Wood Sanctuary Progress

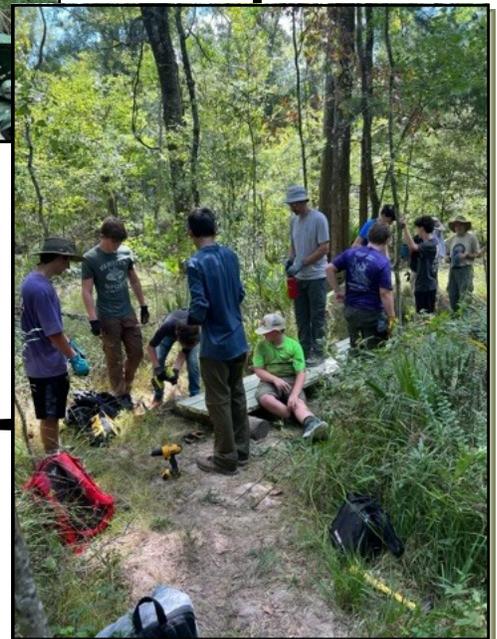
It will be interesting to see what fall migration looks like at Peveto Woods this season. The sanctuary shows the signs of 100+ degree temperatures and little rain in July and August. Thankfully, there are still resources for migrants to refuel, rest, and continue. One thing they will find is a new water feature. We still need to work on the cosmetics, but it is functioning and being used by a variety of residents. We received a contribution from Andy and Lynn Hollerman for a new bench, and it is positioned to view the new water feature. There is a low wooden wall in front of the bench with a fold up section for photographers. There is a hose on a timer to keep water in a new dish, which drops into a small pool, then to a larger pool. We have a couple of trail cams positioned to capture some of the animals using the watering hole, and I will be posting photos and videos on our facebook page. A bobcat, coyotes, raccoons, rabbits and armadillos are regular visitors each night. I will work on a camera better positioned for birds next. Thanks to Tom Hanson for helping and the photo from our recent work day. Pictured L to R: David Booth, Paul Wallace, Charlotte Chehotsky, Scott Delaney, Dave Patton, and Mark Pethke.

Dave Patton - Refuge Manager



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Progress at Amite River Wildlife Sanctuary



All photos by Dave Patton

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Keeping your membership current is important!

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You may join NAS by going to their website (audubon.org) and you automatically become a member of both NAS and BRAS. You will receive the quarterly award-winning *Audubon* magazine as well as the quarterly BRAS newsletter, *The Barred Owl*.

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If you want all of your dues to support local conservation and education, join BRAS only. You will NOT receive the *Audubon* magazine. You WILL receive *The Barred Owl* and a free sanctuary patch. You may join on-line at any level by visiting our website www.braudubon.org, or send this form with your check to: BRAS, P.O. Box 67016, BR LA 70896.

Patches!

Extra sanctuary patches or patches for NAS members are \$10 each and can be ordered by using the form to the right. If you are joining BRAS and want a **free** patch, you must put "1" in the blank.

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- \$100 Rose-breasted Grosbeak Membership
- \$250 Louisiana Waterthrush Membership
- \$500 Painted Bunting Membership
- \$1000 Cerulean Warbler Membership
- \$ _____ Additional Contribution
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- Electronic version of newsletter **only** (do not mail)
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