

# The **BARRED OWL**

*Newsletter of the Baton Rouge Audubon Society*

Volume XLI, Number 1

1st Quarter, 2014

## The Inimitable Kenn Kaufman

In 2010, I was fortunate to attend Hog Island camp in Maine. The main draw for the camp is the Atlantic Puffin, and the National Audubon camp is now run by Dr. Stephen Kress, who is the individual responsible for the return of the Puffin to North America. The week is wonderful mix of seminars and field trips in out of the area. The especially fun thing is that "counselors" at the camp are well known birders and ornithologists. I met Kenn and Kimberly Kaufman that week. What struck me about the two of them was how obvious it was that this "job" was a labor of love; they not only love birds but love to share that love with others. They were warm and funny and enthusiastic. It took a while to get on their professional calendar, but we were very excited to welcome Kenn to Baton Rouge this past week. Unfortunately, due to other commitments, Kimberly was not able to join him.



Kenn shared his birding expertise with students at the LSU School of Renewable Resources on Friday afternoon. He focused on the wonders of bird migration and spent some time comparing what we experience here in Louisiana versus what he sees in the northwest part of Ohio where he now lives. Kenn also touched on the issues and problem with wind energy and its impact on birds -- specifically the placement of wind farms in areas that are known to be significant migratory routes or otherwise critical bird habitat. The program was well received and Kenn remarked that he felt the students that attended were very engaged. Friday night, we treated Kenn to a feast of homemade gumbo and other treats. He left well replete! Saturday morning, Kenn conducted a workshop and program focused on tricks and tips of bird identification. He was very impressed with Bluebonnet swamp nature center and park and remarked how lucky we are to have it here in town (we know that's true!). It was not a particularly busy day, bird-wise, but Jeff and Carol Newell were able to show us the particular spot where an over-wintering Buff-bellied Hummingbird was hanging out and we all got good looks at that good-looking bird!

The program Saturday night also focused on migration, and in particular warbler migration. To paraphrase Kenn, he "goes to sleep thinking about warblers and wakes up thinking about warblers"! It's easy to do; warblers are one of those groups of birds that separate the casual backyard birder from the more serious type, as many people aren't even aware warblers exist until they get out in the field with a pair of binoculars. Kenn told us about the "Biggest Week in American Birding" that they've created in northern Ohio. It's a week-plus festival of birds that coincides with the migration of thou-

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# *Happy Holidays to all of our members!*

This has been an especially busy year for Baton Rouge Audubon! We have, of course, continued our regular, well-attended, bird walks each month, led by our own Dan Mooney. Our outstanding Program chair, Jared Wolfe, brought an impressive group of local speakers to our podium, but also an outstanding guest in David Sibley. And then this past week we added the esteemed Kenn Kaufman to our lineup – what a treat that was! A big thank you to everyone who made our programs so successful!

First Rufous Hummingbird of the year arrived Sept 23, 2013



photo by Jane Patterson

**Want more Hummers? See Page Six!**

I am especially proud of the creation of our brand new “Birds of Southeastern Louisiana” poster that we put together this year! It features the wonderful artwork of our resident bird artist Dan Lane. We are offering these posters to all Baton Rouge Audubon members and friends and especially encourage you to take them for kids to take to share at their schools! Please pick up a poster when you attend of our programs.

Work continues on our quest to add to our sanctuary portfolio. As you know, we are in discussion with BREC about acquisition of property that adjoins the Frenchtown Conservation area in northeast Baton Rouge. Hopefully we should know something very soon and be able to move forward with that partnership purchase.

In a most exciting development, our highly motivated team of Jared Wolfe, Erik Johnson and Dan Mooney, lead banders on the Bluebonnet Monitoring project have entered a new area of monitoring technology with miniature geolocators. They are placing these tiny geolocators on Prothonotary Warblers. The warblers will carry these devices with them as they travel from breeding grounds to wintering grounds and, when retrieved, will provide data to the researchers that will reveal the routes and location of their travels. National Audubon and other bird conservation organization have also expressed interest in similar projects in other areas around the country, but it all started here! It's very exciting technology and Baton Rouge Audubon is very proud to help sponsor this project as it grows. Each of these geolocators cost about \$180, so we will need financial input to support this ground-breaking work. If you have followed the many activities throughout the past year in our “Barred Owl” newsletter, then you know that Baton Rouge Audubon remains a vibrant chapter and one that you can be proud of supporting. Please consider a tax-deductible financial gift this season. If you would like to donate, please visit the BRAS website ([www.braudubon.org](http://www.braudubon.org)) and look for the DONATE link. You may also send a check of course (P.O. Box 67016, Baton Rouge, LA 70896).

Baton Rouge Audubon thanks



for their sponsorship of  
our education programs!

Many, many thanks to all of our members for your ongoing support! We have a great chapter here in Baton Rouge and are doing good things for birds and the people who love them!

*Jane Patterson* - BRAS President

## ***Do we have your email address?***

**Keep up to date** with all of Baton Rouge Audubon Society's events and programs by joining our email list. We won't inundate you with email, we promise! Send a request to "President@braudubon.org" and ask to be added to the list!

Also follow us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/BRAudubon](https://www.facebook.com/BRAudubon).



# Baton Rouge CBC

From the Audubon Christmas Bird Count web site:

*"At first it was just a game, but it was launched for the best of reasons. Back in 1900 Frank Chapman--editor of Bird-Lore, the precursor to what would eventually become Audubon magazine--suggested a new Yuletide recreation. He wanted to replace the old "side hunt," in which teams of Christmas revelers had gone out with guns to see which side could bring back the biggest pile of dead birds and other animals. Chapman's suggestion? Go out with keen eyes and a notebook instead, and see who could count the most birds in their native habitat.*

*"The "side hunt" has faded away, but Chapman's little alternative has grown and grown. In December 1900 only 27 people went out to count birds, at 25 sites, mostly in the northeastern states. This winter an estimated 60,000 people in the United States, Canada, and elsewhere in the Western Hemisphere will take part in*

*the 114th annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count (CBC). From Alaska to Antarctica, between December 14 and January 5, within count circles registered in advance with Audubon, teams of birders will take to the field for fun, for tradition, and for science."*

This season's Baton Rouge CBC is scheduled for the last Saturday in the count period, January 4, 2014. Last year volunteers put in a total of 143 hours in the field or watching feeders. The result was a list of 150 species despite less than ideal weather conditions.

This will be the 40th count done in Baton Rouge. It will be difficult to beat last year's total which is tied for our second highest total. The record for the Baton Rouge count is 151. Last year's list included four first time species for the count and seven species of hummingbirds.

If you would like to join in the fun on January 4th, contact me at

The first Mottled Duck recorded on the Baton Rouge CBC, 2012



photo by Jane Patterson

brcbc@birdnerds.com

Come and help us find  
specie number 152!

Dan Mooney  
CBC Compiler

## PEVETO WOODS-WORK



Gene Barnett and Bill Gover of Lake Charles are regular visitors to Peveto Woods Sanctuary, and they wanted to contribute something to show their appreciation. Gene likes woodworking and Bill agreed that if Gene built 3 benches, he would help install them at several of their favorite spots in the sanctuary. They arrived at the sanctuary the first week of November with benches, tools, and cement. After several hours of digging and mixing, the sanctuary now has 3 new benches along the trails. Thanks you Gene and Bill for the contribution.



Photos: Gene Gover and Bill Barnett

# Calling All Birders!

## *“Get Rusty” this Spring to save a declining blackbird!*

### Rusty Blackbird Spring Migration Blitz

**Why?** Over the past half-century, the historically abundant Rusty Blackbird has endured one of the steepest population declines ever documented among North American land birds. Within the last 15 years, scientists have learned more about this bird's breeding and wintering ecology, and this knowledge allows us to target conservation initiatives during these phases of this bird's annual cycle. However, as with many migratory species, we know very little about Rusty Blackbird ecology, distribution, and habitat use during migration. Are there hot spots where many individuals congregate? Are there stopover areas that are used predictably each year, and are these locations protected? The Rusty Blackbird Spring Migration Blitz will address these and other questions to help focus future research and conservation of one of North America's most vulnerable blackbirds. We're recruiting an army of birders to participate in this effort to help conserve this fascinating songbird. Will you accept our birding challenge?

**Who?** The International Rusty Blackbird Working Group, eBird, and the Vermont Center for Ecostudies are partnering with Louisiana State University to recruit volunteer observers from across the southeastern U.S., East Coast, Midwest, Alaska, and Canada.

**What?** Each participating state, province, and territory will have a 3-8 week target window during which birders will search for Rusty Blackbirds. Within this window, birders may explore favored birding haunts or newly identified areas that they suspect may harbor Rusty Blackbirds. We'll provide some guidance on potential



habitats to explore, but birders should feel free to get creative – and ambitious! – with their searching.

**When?** Spring 2014 kicks off the first year of this three-year Spring Migration Blitz; the Blitz window will span early March through mid-June, with more specific timeframes identified for each state or province to account for the northward migratory progression. The target period for Louisiana includes all of March.



**Where?** Get ready for a continent-wide event! The Spring Blitz will span the Rusty Blackbird's entire spring migration range, from the wintering grounds in the southeastern United States, up the East Coast and through the Midwest to Canada and Alaska.

**How do I get involved?** Easy! If you'd like to contribute data to the Spring Migration Blitz effort, bird as you normally do, focusing on potential Rusty Blackbird habitat during the Blitz time frame established for your region. You can seek out the best-known places for Rusty sightings or explore uncharted territory. Make sure to report ALL of your observations to eBird – we want to know both where you saw these birds and where you didn't. Check out the newly revamped website of the International Rusty Blackbird Working Group (<http://rustyblackbird.org/outreach/migration-blitz/>) for information about identification, vocalizations, habitat preferences, and types of data to collect to support this initiative. Also, check with your state coordinator Sinead Borcher (sborch2@lsu.edu) for additional ways you can help with the Blitz efforts in your region, or contact Spring Migration Blitz Coordinator Judith Scarl (jscarl@vtecostudies.org) to get involved in the broader Blitz initiative!

Thanks for “Getting Rusty” with us this spring! Like us on Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/rustyblackbirdspringblitz>) to follow up-to-the minute information about our Blitz, and happy birding!

The International Rusty Blackbird Working Group  
eBird and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology  
Vermont Center for Ecostudies  
Louisiana State University

# Bluebonnet Bird Monitoring Project Partners with Woodlands Conservancy

As Baton Rouge Audubon Society's Bluebonnet Bird Monitoring Project nears its fourth year, we are excited to announce another new partnership as the project grows to include monitoring at other sites around Louisiana. A project at Woodlands Conservancy is beginning in December 2013, funded through Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program's 2014 Annual Workplan Projects as part of their Protection of Habitat for Migratory and Resident Birds Action Plan.

Woodlands Conservancy is a nonprofit, regional land trust that was founded in 2001 to protect natural habitats, provide opportunities for outdoor recreation, and educate communities about the value of these habitats. The organization manages Woodlands Trail, a 600 acre tract of coastal bottomland hardwood forest in the Belle Chasse community of Plaquemines Parish. Woodlands Trail is open to the public and includes more than 10 miles of hiking and horseback riding trails. In 2012, Woodlands Conservancy acquired 190 acres of coastal bottomland hardwood forest in the English Turn/Lower Coast Algiers community of Orleans Parish.

Woodlands Conservancy has active restoration projects underway and others in development to eradicate invasive species like Chinese tallow and Chinese privet, and Baton Rouge Audubon will help document the response by bird communities with this initiative. These restoration projects have already commenced on 126 acres where more than 10,000 seedlings have been planted! In addition to conducting area searches for resident and migratory birds, we will conduct monthly banding operations at two sites following protocols implemented through the Bluebonnet Bird Monitoring Project to understand bird movements, survivorship and health, and breeding productivity. This will allow us to not only under-



White-throated Sparrow



stand responses of bird communities to changes in habitat at Woodlands Conservancy properties, but also make broader comparisons across multiple sites where we are actively working, putting the results in a regional context. To learn more about Woodlands Conservancy, visit [www.woodlandsconservancy.org](http://www.woodlandsconservancy.org).

We are extremely excited to launch this new and fruitful partnership with Woodlands Conservancy. If you are interested in learning more about the project, or would like to be on our email list to learn about upcoming bird banding days at Woodlands Conservancy or other sites where we band birds, including Bluebonnet Swamp (Baton Rouge) and Palmetto Island State Park (near Abbeville), please contact us.

**Happy Holidays!**  
*And as always, Happy Birding!*

**Erik I. Johnson**  
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# Got hummers ?

Hummingbirds in winter are a very special thing!

**O**n Jan. 24, 2014, please join us for a wonderful presentation from one of our local hummingbird aficionados, Dennis Demcheck, as he talk about each of the types of hummer that might visit us in winter, and we'll also learn what we can do to attract these birds to our yards. Please join us at Bluebonnet Swamp Nature Center on January 24 from 6:30-8:00 pm for our program. Registration is required as space is limited. Send an email to President@braudubon.org to register. Admission is free for Baton Rouge Audubon members (with registration) and \$3.00 for non-members.

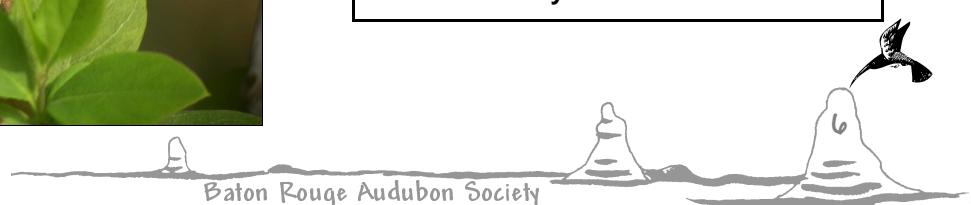
Then, on Jan. 25, we will have our annual BRAS Winter Hummingbird



Tour. Again, registration is required so that we know how many people will be participating and how many trip leaders we'll need. We'll meet at 7:30a.m. at Brew Ha-Ha Coffee house at 711 Jefferson Ave in Baton Rouge. We'll travel by carpool to at least 4 homes in the Baton Rouge area to see the special winter visitors. The tour should wrap up about noon. There is no charge for this event. Always a fun time, so be sure to sign up now!

*Hope to see you at one or both of these special events!*

PHOTOS by Dennis Demcheck



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# BIG SIT! 2013

For the third year in a row, birdwatchers spent the day on the Mississippi river levee at the Plaquemine Lock State Historic Site trying to see as many species of birds as possible from a 17 foot circle as part of the Birdwatchers Digest annual *Big Sit!*

Some people have called the *Big Sit!* a "tailgate party for birders." There are 'Big Sit!' circles all over the world, including Guatemala, India, the Netherlands, England, Vietnam, and New Zealand.

This year the circle at the Plaquemine Lock was occupied from sunrise to sunset on October 13th with birders from the Baton Rouge Audubon Society and the Friends of Plaquemine Lock State Historic Site. Observers were able to identify 58 different species of birds ranging in size from Blue-gray Gnatcatchers to Bald Eagles. All of the species seen were expected at this time of year in Iberville Parish but several that are expected were missed.

Swallows feeding along the levee really put on a show for the bird-



American Kestrel, one of 58 species of birds seen at the Plaquemine Lock State Historic Site during the 2013 'Big Sit!'

ers. At a mixed flock of at least two hundred swallows swooped and dived around the site for about an hour after sunrise. Most of the flock was Tree Swallows with almost as many Northern Rough-winged Swallows and a few Barn Swallows in the mix. They were all feasting on mosquitoes!

The birders are already planning their return for the *Big Sit!* Next year that will happen on the second Sunday of October 2014.

by Dan Mooney  
BRAS Fieldtrip Coordinator

## The Inimitable Kenn Kaufman

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sands of warblers and other songbirds as they move to nesting ground in the northernmost parts of North America. The events bring in hundreds of people as well and have a proven significant economic impact to the area, which is the early "shoulder" part of tourist season. Kenn assured us all that if we want to see scads of warblers at eye-level, it's the place to be in early May!

Several people remarked to me how much they enjoyed meeting Kenn. He took time to really connect with people, whether it was a brief moment during a book-signing or an extended conversation at dinner. And Kenn remarked how much he enjoyed the food here in Louisiana. I don't think it will be too difficult to get him to come back some time in the future--provided we can find time on his schedule!

Story and photograph  
by Jane Patterson

[www.braudubon.org](http://www.braudubon.org)

Baton Rouge Chapter of the National Audubon Society

**Baton Rouge Audubon Society**

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