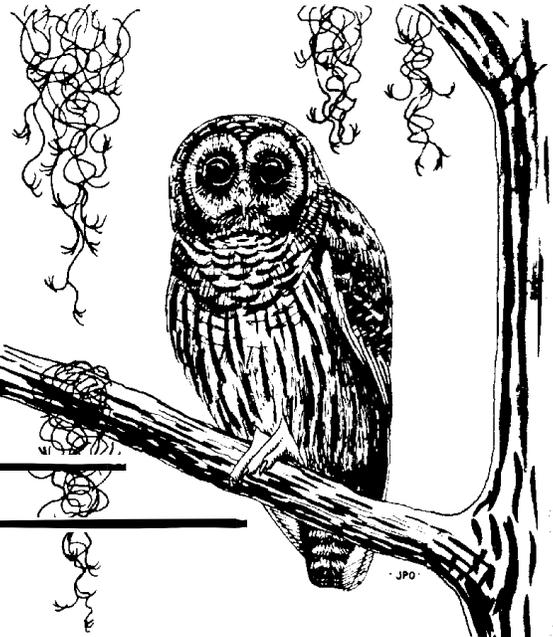


The **BARRED OWL**

Newsletter of the Baton Rouge Audubon Society

Volume XLII, Number 1

1st Quarter, 2015



They're Back!

Wintering & Migrating Birds Find Bluebonnet Swamp a Year Later

Imagine traveling thousands of miles only using the stars and a sense of the earth's magnetic polarity. Each year, millions of birds migrate north and south, finding their way to important habitats and locations that ensure their livelihood. Birds as small as Ruby-throated Hummingbirds and Cerulean Warblers fly across the Gulf of Mexico in a single flight...twice a year. The Northern Wheatear makes a 2,000-mile non-stop flight, which takes about four days, over the Atlantic Ocean to reach its wintering grounds in Africa from the North American arctic. Arctic Terns can travel more than 50,000 miles each year, crossing the entirety of the Earth. Indeed, bird migration is limited by only the size of the Earth, as so beautifully said by avian biologist Dr. Heiko Schmaljohann.

Last winter of 2013-2014 at Bluebonnet Swamp in Baton Rouge Louisiana Bird Observatory volunteers netted 17 "season to season" recaptures: one Orange-crowned Warbler, four Hermit Thrushes, six Ruby-crowned Kinglets, and six White-throated Sparrows. Among all captures that winter, these between-year returning recaptures represented 3.8% of all Orange-crowned Warblers, 14.8% of the Hermit Thrushes, 11.5% of the Ruby-crowned Kinglets, and 5.6% of the White-throated Sparrows.

Although it is still early in the 2014-15 winter season, we have already recaptured six birds at Bluebonnet Swamp that have visited us in previous seasons. Perhaps most remarkably, on 5 October 2014 we captured an Ovenbird that was first captured on 7 October 2013, a bird that was likely just passing through and used Bluebonnet as a stopover in its journey south in two subsequent falls. In addition, a Ruby-crowned Kinglet that was first

captured in 2012 was recaptured on 7 Dec 2014. And finally, four White-throated Sparrows that have visited in previous seasons have already been recaptured this winter.

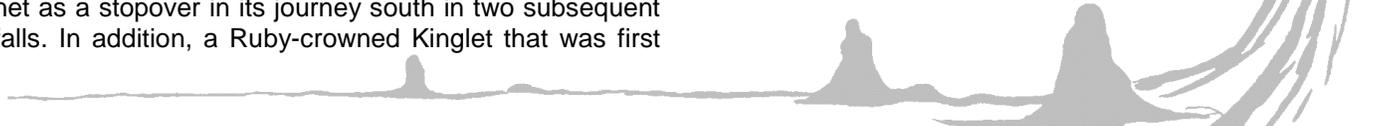
These observations suggest and other research is revealing that many songbirds make the same journey and return to the same site year after year, both among overwintering birds, and perhaps also with migrating birds as exemplified by the Ovenbird. It is amazing to think that these little birds are able to find Bluebonnet Swamp, an important refuge in the middle of urban Baton Rouge, survive the winter, migrate north, find a territory and breed, migrate south, and then relocate to Bluebonnet Swamp a whole year later.

Making your yard bird friendly this winter will ensure that your visitors come back each fall and winter. Things you can do:

- Plant native trees, bushes, and forbs
- Keep hummingbird and seed feeders clean
- Use high-quality bird food (avoid milo)
- Protect your windows against bird strikes
- Place feeders at least 30 feet away from windows
- Keep cats indoors

Baton Rouge Audubon Society can help any answers you may have about making your yard more bird friendly.

**Contributed by:
Dan Mooney and Erik Johnson**



DO A LITTLE, SAVE A LOT: KEEP CATS INDOORS

by Grant Sizemore
Director of Invasive Species Programs
American Bird Conservancy

As self-proclaimed bird lovers, members of birding and nature organizations across the country are uniquely positioned to enjoy, monitor, and protect America's resident and migratory birds. Whereas enjoying and monitoring these birds is standard practice, how to protect the birds we see is sometimes less apparent. It turns out that one of the best ways to contribute to bird conservation in the United States is to promote the practice of keeping domestic cats (*Felis catus*) indoors.

Outdoor Cats: Impacts on Birds

The introduction of domestic cats to environments around the world has resulted in substantial ecological damage and contributed to the extinction of 33 species. The International Union for the Conservation of Nature lists cats among the world's worst invasive species globally, and in the United States the Department of Interior's State of the Birds 2014 Report recognized outdoor cats as the number one source of direct, human-caused mortality for birds (Fig. 1). A 2013 study by scientists from the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service estimated that outdoor cats kill approximately 2.4 BILLION birds every year in the contiguous United States alone.

Unfortunately, feeding cats is not enough to eliminate the risks to birds. Even well-fed cats instinctively hunt and kill. Although surprising to some cat owners, this behavior is confirmed repeatedly inside the home. When a cat plays with a feather toy or laser, it is demonstrating hunting behaviors that are often lethal when practiced outside on thrushes, sparrows, or other unfortunate victims. Even when cats do not directly kill birds, their mere presence has been shown to result in a reduction in the feeding of nesting chicks by one-third and an increased likelihood of nest failure by an order of magnitude.

Cats Indoors: Protecting Wildlife, Protecting People

Maintaining cats indoors also benefits birds, other wildlife, and people when it comes to disease transmission. Cats are known to carry and transmit a wide variety of parasites and diseases and may serve as a reservoir for some of these. Rabies and toxoplasmosis are of particular concern. Domestic cats are the number one carrier of rabies among domestic animals and, according to scientists from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, represent a "disproportionate risk for potential human exposure" because people are much more likely to interact with a cat than with wildlife. Toxoplasmosis is a disease caused by infection with the parasite *Toxoplasma gondii*, which relies on felids to complete its life cycle. Up to 74% of all cats will host *T. gondii* during their lifetimes and subsequently excrete in their feces hundreds of millions of eggs (called oocysts) into the en-

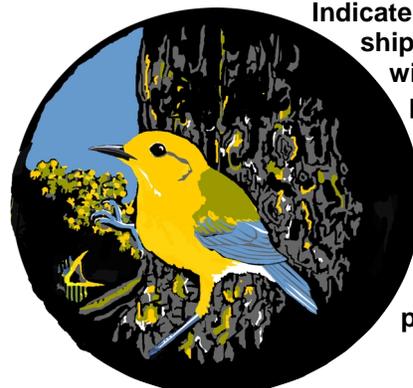
vironment, where they remain infectious to all warm-blooded species for up to 18 months. Consequences of infection in people include miscarriage, blindness, memory loss, and death. For both rabies and toxoplasmosis, outdoor cats are far more likely to spread these diseases than indoor cats.

How to Help

Birding organizations have an opportunity to lead on an issue that is critical to the conservation of birds in America. For those of us that own cats, like myself, we can no longer avoid the inconvenient truth that allowing our pets outdoors kills birds. Whether our cats are walked on a leash or kept in an outdoor enclosure, we must represent the change we wish to see in the world and lead by example. Second, kind but persistent education of our communities about the many benefits of maintaining cats indoors (e.g., cats live longer, healthier lives) is necessary. A number of resources are available to help with this endeavor, but I recommend beginning with American Bird Conservancy's Cats Indoors website (www.abcbirds.org/cats). Finally, promoting bird-friendly legislation and speaking against misguided public policies is essential to ensuring long-term conservation. With determination, it is possible to prevent the deaths of billions of birds throughout the United States and to show people that keeping cats indoors is better for cats, better for birds, and better for people.

New BRAS Patches for 2015!

Renew your 2015 Baton Rouge Audubon Society membership to receive your 2015 BRAS Peveto Woods Sanctuary patch. This year's patch features the Prothonotary Warbler, in honor of the research focus of the newly-created Louisiana Bird Observatory, which BRAS proudly sponsors and supports.



Indicate on your membership renewal if you wish to receive a patch. Additional patches may be ordered at a cost of \$10. All proceeds from patch sales go to support BR Audubon programs directly.

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correspondence should be sent to:

Baton Rouge
Audubon Society
P.O. Box 67016
Baton Rouge, LA 70896

What Our Friends Are Doing Orleans Audubon Society

New Guinea-Birds and Nature

Presenter: John Sevenair

Date: Tuesday, January 20, 2015

Time: Social at 6:30 p.m., program at 7:00 p.m.

Location: Community Church Unitarian Universalist, 6690 Fleur de Lis
Dr., New Orleans, LA 70124.

John is well known by all of us. He has literally traveled the world and since his retirement from Xavier University, he has been in ultra-drive! This time he traveled 8,895 miles from home. Join John on his exciting adventure in New Guinea, certainly a land of enchantment.

Birding Audubon Park (half-day trip)

Date: Saturday, January 10

Time: 8:00 a.m.

Meet in the parking lot off Magazine St.
(St. Charles side of Magazine) near the golf club house.

Leader: Mary Joe Krieger 866-3396 (home)

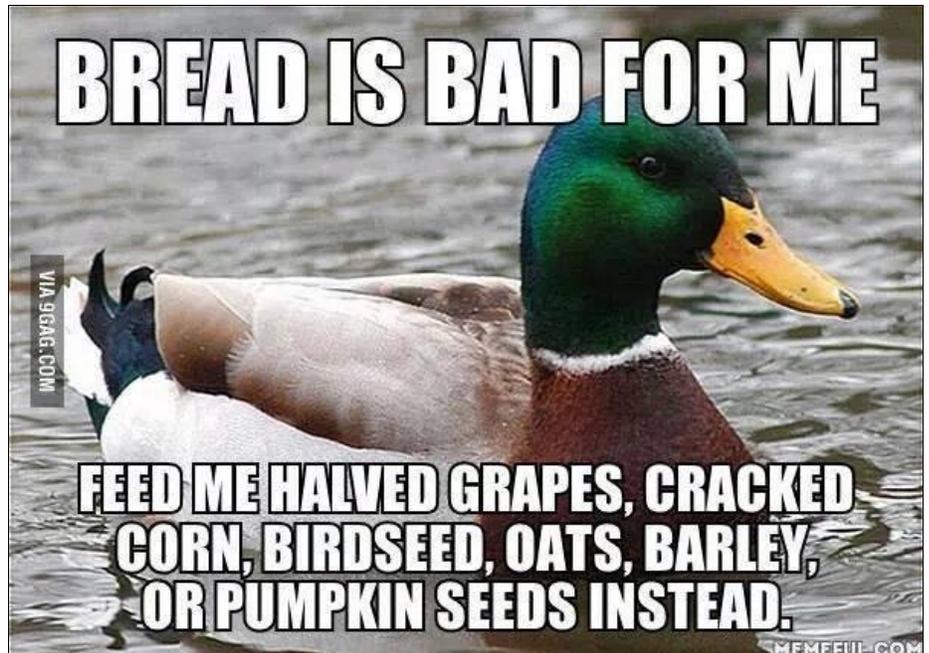
Birding New Orleans East Canals and Lakes (half-day trip)

Date: Saturday, January 17

Time: 8:00 a.m.

Meet just inside Joe Brown Park. Exit I-10 at Read Blvd. and
turn right on Read. Joe Brown Park
will be on the left about ½ mile down Read.

Leader: Joelle Finley (504) 715-2647



"THE DUCK LADY"

R.I.P. MICHELL BOND

by Jane Patterson

Michell Bond, aka, "the Duck Lady" who fed the ducks, geese, and other animals at the Capitol Lakes in Baton Rouge passed away this past November. It's very likely that, if you have birded around the lakes, you've seen Michell, with her large cart of day-old bread and bird seed, feeding and talking to her favorite Baton Rouge residents, the animals of Capitol Lakes. She would come every day, rain, shine, hot and humid or freezing cold...sometimes twice a day. The colder months were her favorite, as it brought in the winter ducks, which increased her charges hundred-fold. She had names for individual birds...the Canvasback named "Annie", the American Coot named "Suzy." Could she really tell these birds apart? Only Michell knows for sure...

Michell was a big help to birders in the area, because she would report unusual birds in and around the lakes. For example, she was the first to report the Common Loon that stayed at the lake in May of 2012 for several weeks. She reported the Brown Pelican that visited the area during last year's Christmas Bird Count. She would tell me when the occasional Horned Grebe showed up at the lakes. She also reported a spill of diesel fuel that occurred last year and impacted the lake and was instrumental in getting the hazard cleaned up quickly.



We will miss Michell, but surely not as much as the birds, turtles, nutria, and other animals that live in and around the lakes. I think someone is taking over her role in the feeding the animals, but it's hard to imagine that anyone will keep it up for the next 40-plus years.

Below is Michell's obituary as published in the Advocate last month:

N Michell Bond passed away on Friday, November 7, 2014 after a brief illness at age 67. Born Nancy Michell, she was widely known as Michell Bond for many years. She was preceded in death by her husband, James C. Bond, Jr., and by her parents, Norman and Mary Catherine (Parrish) Michell. She is survived by her dogs Agatha and Sailor, her cats, and "flutterbird", the survivors of a long line of rescued animals. Michell was born in New Orleans, had close family ties to New Orleans, and attended and graduated from St. Joseph's Academy in Baton Rouge in 1965. She also graduated from LSU with a degree in criminal justice. Michell worked for the State of Louisiana and retired after 36 years of service. She worked for many years for the Secretary of State, and her last position was with the Louisiana Department of Insurance, where she worked her way up to become the Director of the Fraud Division. She also earned the designation of Certified Fraud Examiner. After retirement, she went on to get her Private Investigator's license, and assisted various law enforcement

agencies and others in need. Michell was well known in and around the State Capitol building, and had many friends from all walks of life. She could be seen daily at the Capitol Lake, feeding ducks and geese, and any other animals she encountered. She had names for many of them, and could tell you a lot about them. She cared deeply for the wildlife at the lake, and was passionate about animal rights, the environment, preservation and politics. She was also an avid fan of all LSU Tiger sports. After having moved to Addis, LA over 30 years ago, she and her husband promptly re-named the place "Spam Corners". Michell was truly a remarkable lady, fiercely eccentric, and touched many people's lives. Following her wish to be cremated, a memorial service will be held at the Capitol Lake near the Court of Appeals on Saturday, December 6th at 1:00 pm. In lieu of flowers, it is asked that memorial donations be made to Best Friends Animal Sanctuary, Project Purr, Greenpeace, Southern Poverty Law Center, or other similar organizations.

Annual Winter Hummingbird Program and Tour



On January 30, 2015, please join us for a wonderful presentation from one of our local hummingbird aficionados, Dennis Demcheck, as he talks 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 Education Center on January 30 from 6:30-8:00 pm for our program. Please note that the Education Center is the newly renovated building just to the south (the left) of the Nature Center. Parking is accessible by turning west onto North Glenstone Place; the Education Center will be straight ahead on the right as the street curves. Admission is free for Baton Rouge Audubon members (with registration) and \$3.00 for non-members.

Then, on January 31, we will have our annual BRAS Winter Hummingbird Tour. 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!



BRAS Speaker Series Kicks Off on Jan. 22nd!

The Baton Rouge Audubon Society Speaker Series continues this spring with some very interesting topics.

🌐 On Thursday, January 22, 2015 at 7:00 PM, join us to hear Kacy King, Cypress Island Program Manager at The Nature Conservancy in Breaux Bridge, LA discuss the natural history of Lake Martin, including the rookery, which features Roseate Spoonbills, Great Egrets, and Little Blue Herons, among others.

🌐 Then on Thursday, March 26, 2015 at 7:00 PM join us to hear Wylie Barrow, a USGS research wildlife biologist, discuss

the use of radar to detect, predict, and chronicle bird migration. We are also excited to announce that we will be treated to a talk by Dan Lane, of Field Guides Birding Tours Worldwide, who will share his experiences in partici-

pating in the recent globally revered LSU Peru Big Day on Team Tigrisomas, which broke the long-held world record for most bird species identified in one day.



Come On Down to New Orleans, LOS Winter Meeting

LOS is excited to announce the 2015 Winter Meeting which will be held January 23-25 in New Orleans. Our evening speakers will be Dr. Donata Henry and Dr. Jennifer Coulson, both well known to the birding community. Bird all of the "hot spots" that we have to offer: Bayou Sauvage, Venice/Diamond, Couturie Forest, Bonnet Carré Spillway and more! The meeting will be headquartered at the Wyndham Garden New Orleans Airport Hotel, 6401 Veterans Memorial Blvd in Metairie. It's where I-10 crosses over Veterans Blvd. Special meeting room rates of \$89/double (plus tax and fees) are available until December 24, 2014. Reserve your room now by calling 1-877-999-3223 and ask to make a reservation under the "LOS Meeting". For further information contact Joelle Finley, 504-715-2647 or joellefinley@bellsouth.net.

April 24-25, 2015 will be the dates of the LOS Spring Meeting in Cameron. Our Saturday speaker will be Dr. Sidney Gautreaux. Come join the excitement of spring birding along the Louisiana coast.

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.

Baton Rouge Audubon thanks

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Baton Rouge Chapter of the National Audubon Society

Baton Rouge Audubon Society

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Keep Your Membership Current!

If your membership expires, you will no longer receive *The Barred Owl*. Well, eventually we take your name off the list. It is expensive to produce and membership dues help to cover that cost. Please see the expiration code on the first line of the label above your name. The month and year in which your membership expires are indicated after your membership organization (e.g., BRAS DEC 09 for BRAS-only members and NAS DEC 10 for NAS members).

Keeping your membership current is important!

BRAS and National Audubon Membership

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*.

BRAS Only Membership

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.

If you would prefer to receive the newsletter in electronic form only rather than a printed version, please email our Membership chair and let her know! Membership@braudubon.org

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

Baton Rouge Audubon Society (BRAS)

Please enroll me as a member of BRAS! Enclosed is my check for:

- \$25 Individual Membership
- \$30 Family Membership
- \$50 Wood Thrush Membership
- \$100 Rose-breasted Grosbeak Membership
- \$250 Louisiana Waterthrush Membership
- \$500 Painted Bunting Membership
- \$1000 Cerulean Warbler Membership
- \$ _____ Additional Contribution
- # _____ of patches (indicate 1 which is free with BRAS membership; additional patches \$10 each; NAS member patches @ \$10 each; no patch will be sent if there is no indication.)
- Electronic version **only** of newsletter (do not mail)

Name: _____ Ph: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

E-mail: _____

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Baton Rouge Audubon Society; PO Box 67016; Baton Rouge, LA 70896