

The **BARRED OWL**

Newsletter of the Baton Rouge Audubon Society

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2nd Quarter, 2018



A Bird Out of Place

Birders all across Louisiana got a treat recently as a report of a Curve-billed Thrasher hit the birding airwaves. This desert bird has apparently decided that it's ok living in lush suburban Baton Rouge, amidst the live oaks and magnolias! Foraging on the ground in typical thrasher fashion, it is easily seen near the corner of Longwood and Woodside Drives. If you go to try to see it, please note that this a quiet residential neighborhood. The neighborhood watch groups have been alerted to the fact that strangers with bins and cameras may show up on their street. PLEASE be good ambassadors for the birding community and be courteous and respectful of the neighbors. Do not use driveways, trespass in yards, or block traffic. If it becomes an issue, I'm sure the neighborhood patrol will shut things down and we don't want that.

Southern Louisiana recently welcomed a few "celebrity" birds to the area; from the Limpkin couple in Houma to the Black-legged Kittiwake (on the Northshore?), and the Curve-billed Thrasher in Baton Rouge.

As birders, it's natural to get caught up in the urgency and excitement of seeing our unique feathered visitors before they flee, but it's worth taking the time to remember we also share a duty to honor and respect our wildlife and be polite citizens.

Fortunately, the American Birding Association has developed a Code of Ethics that serves as a great reference for veteran birders and a valuable aid to pass along to new birders. Who knows? If we keep up our good manners and hospitality, maybe we can count on even more rare bird visitors to our area!

- Colette Dean

(See the ABA Code of Birding Ethics on Page 5)

Good luck if you try to go view our Celebrity bird!



Using our Wildlife Management Areas for Recreation

I recall, years ago, driving on the interstate and seeing a brown WMA sign on the side of the road. I asked my husband what that area was for and he said "I think it's for hunters." Well, end of interest, since I'm not a hunter. But those Wildlife Management Areas are for us, the non-consumptive enjoyer of green spaces. Whether you are a birder, a herper, and plants-person, a hiker, or a paddler, these acres and acres of public land in Louisiana ARE for us!

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries manages 1.5 million acres of Wildlife Management Areas across the state of Louisiana in all parts of the state. A visit to <http://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/wma> will provide you with an interactive map, a list of all of the various WMA's, and provides pdf maps to each WMA. Many of these areas are adjacent to federal National Wildlife Refuges which are owned by US Fish & Wildlife, but often the LDWF agents are the "feet on the street" to monitor these areas as well.

Naturally, the non-consumptive users of these spaces need to be especially mindful during hunting seasons to ensure everyone's safety. But many of these WMA's include nature trails, many of which are very seldom used, within their borders that are available to us year around.

Please note that it is necessary to acquire a permit to use the WMA's. If you already have a Louisiana hunting or fishing license, you are good to go. If not, you can purchase a Wild Louisiana stamp that allows you access to these areas. For only \$9.50 annually, it's a good deal, and the dollars help to support the non-consumptive programs with LDWF, like the National Heritage program that supports many other programs. You can get permits online on the LDWF website, or you can buy your permit at any place hunting and fishing licenses are sold. If you purchase your permit online, you can reprint it any time you need to if you lose it (something I regularly do).

The other aspects of visiting these WMA's is the use of the Self-clearing check in/out permits. A kiosk is available at many points on the perimeter



Prothonotary Warbler

of each WMA. The permits have two parts; complete the top part and insert it into the kiosk upon entering the WMA. Keep the checkout slip with you and deposit it when you leave. Use of the self-clearing permit helps the Department understand who is using each WMA and the purpose for which it is being used. This in turn helps them to better manage these areas. The government likes nothing better than statistics, but these stats can work in our favor if they see that the non-consumptive crowd is using these spaces regularly!

The Department of Wildlife and Fisheries is considering changing its fee structure for licenses and permits. The process will become considerably more streamlined as they reduce the number of licenses from 117 to 30. In some cases, the cost of a permit will go down. But in others, the cost will go up, as they hope to close the budget deficit that this self-funded agency has been experiencing in the past few years. The changes are proposed to go into effect in July of 2019, pending legislative approval. You can review and comment on these changes here:

<http://www.wlf.louisiana.gov/PriceofParadise>

Hope to see you out on the WMA trails in the near future!

Jane Patterson — BRAS President

BIRDING YOUR PATCH

By Jane Patterson

I heard the term “bird your patch” years ago and thought it was a quaint term. What it really means is getting to know a particular area inside and out. You visit regularly, even daily, and you get to know everything that lives there. You notice the seasonal changes as they occur. You can make careful note of the birds that stay all year, those that come in the fall and winter, those that return in the spring, or even those that are just passing through. You will notice the plants they are using for food, for cover, and for nesting. You may even come to know individual birds or other animals and their habits. This one rests here, feeds here, slips through here to get from one area to another. It’s a way to experience nature on another level. And the fun thing, is that *your* patch can be any size you wish. It may be your own yard; certainly that’s an easy place to visit daily! But it can also be a park or green space that is close to you that is easy to visit regularly.

Since I’ve moved to Ponchatoula, Joyce Wildlife Management Area just south of town, has become my patch. The whole Joyce WMA comprises 28,000 acres, but there is very little foot access and no road access at all. There is a tiny boardwalk, not more than few hundred feet long that provides access into the cypress tupelo



swamp, almost the edge of a marsh. I’ve seen the whole gamut of Louisiana swamp forest wildlife from the boardwalk, from alligators to otters and nutria and many, many kinds of birds. There is a pair of Barred Owls that nested near the boardwalk last year that I’m keeping tabs on; I hope to find their nest again this year. I’m get-

ting to know the herps; I can ID most of the snakes now and I’ve got really close photos of several of them.

It’s fun getting to know everything that lives in my patch! I highly recommend you find your own!



2018 BRAS Speak Series Recap

In January, freezing temperatures forced us to cancel Doug Meffert’s presentation on the findings of the National Audubon Society’s Birds and Climate Change Report. Fortunately, we were able to reschedule Mr. Meffert’s presentation for April 12th. Please visit www.climate.audubon.org for more information about the climate report and to explore interactive range maps of the species potentially threatened by climate change.

In February, we were pleased with the turnout for Dr. Peter Marra’s presentation on his recent book titled *Cat Wars – The Devastating Consequences of a Cuddly Killer*. Dr. Marra presented the most recent science about the threats that free-ranging cats pose to biodiversity and public health throughout the world.

In March, Samantha Collins, research ornithologist at Rockefeller Wildlife Refuge with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, presented the latest research of North America’s rarest ardeid, the Reddish Egret (*Egretta rufescens*).

We will take a break from hosting speakers during the summer months. We will begin again in September. If you would like to suggest a topic or presenter please email us at programs@braudubon.org

Black Rails Discovered in Cameron Parish

Just in Time for Liquefied Natural Gas Expansion

The Black Rail is one of those mythical birds easily found in field guides, but rarely seen in real life. It's one of the hardest birds in North America to actually find (especially see). Its status in Louisiana is poorly known, with many one-off records, but only about a dozen with hard evidence...ever. Most of these records occur during the period of migration; presumably when interior U.S. populations migrate to and from the Gulf Coast. In contrast, almost no records exist from the over-wintering or breeding seasons in Louisiana.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is in the process of gathering information on the "eastern" Black Rail population to determine whether it qualifies as an endangered species. Numbers have dropped alarmingly along coastal mid-Atlantic sites over the last 20 years, and other Gulf and Atlantic populations are small, isolated, and relatively under studied. LDWF conducted widespread marshbird surveys following the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, but Black Rails remained frustratingly undetected during that herculean effort.

I spent a few days in January 2017 with researchers in TX who have been conducting Black Rail surveys there, and got a good sense of what the habitat looks like. It's entirely different from what comes to

mind when you think "marsh" – it's rarely inundated with tides, but still coastal and salty, and thus often referred to as a high salty marsh. It's exactly the stuff still found in isolated pockets of Cameron Parish, but primarily where cattle or other human development is minimal.



LDWF and USFWS provided funding to Audubon Louisiana to conduct an intensive Black Rail status assessment in this remaining habitat in coastal Louisiana, which began in summer 2017. We found them at 4 of 14 sites during the breeding season a minimum of 5 birds, and 5 of 30 sites this winter! Most of these occupied sites are centered around Calcasieu Pass, exactly where multiple LNG handling facilities have been proposed. Although we now know there is a small population in Louisiana, how long can we hang on to them?

Marty Floyd wrote an excellent article in the latest (spring 2018) Louisiana Ornithological Society newsletter discussing the latest developments with LNG (liquefied natural gas) facility proposal on the east side of Calcasieu Pass. There are similar proposed developments on the west side. Together, these would impact the heart of the known Black Rail population in Louisiana. Simply moving these facilities a little further north (1-2 miles) could actually minimize the potential disruption to Black Rail habitat, the narrow fringe of high salty march just behind coastal dunes.

There's still so much to learn about this Black Rail population, and Audubon will continue surveys into summer 2018, and again in winter 2018-19. In the meantime, we are working closely with USFWS and LDWF to find solutions to protect what habitat we can in this period of intensive industry development. As we continue survey efforts, we are hopeful that additional pockets of occupied habitat exists elsewhere in coastal Louisiana. Stay tuned!

Erik I. Johnson, Ph.D.
Baton Rouge Audubon board-
member-at-large
Director of Bird Conservation,
Audubon Louisiana



American Birding Association Code of Birding Ethics

1. Promote the welfare of birds and their environment.

1(a) Support the protection of important bird habitat.

1(b) To avoid stressing birds or exposing them to danger, exercise restraint and caution during observation, photography, sound recording, or filming.

Limit the use of recordings and other methods of attracting birds, and never use such methods in heavily birded areas or for attracting any species that is Threatened, Endangered, of Special Concern, or is rare in your local area.

Keep well back from nests and nesting colonies, roosts, display areas, and important feeding sites. In such sensitive areas, if there is a need for extended observation, photography, filming, or recording, try to use a blind or hide, and take advantage of natural cover.

Use artificial light sparingly for filming or photography, especially for close-ups.

1(c) Before advertising the presence of a rare bird, evaluate the potential for disturbance to the bird, its surroundings, and other people in the area, and proceed only if access can be controlled, disturbance minimized, and permission has been obtained from private landowners. The sites of rare nesting birds should be divulged only to the proper conservation authorities.

1(d) Stay on roads, trails, and paths where they exist; otherwise, keep habitat disturbance to a minimum.

2. Respect the law, and the rights of others.

2(a) Do not enter private property without the owner's explicit permission.

2(b) Follow all laws, rules, and regulations governing use of roads and public areas, both at home and abroad.

2(c) Practice common courtesy in contacts with other people. Your exemplary behavior will generate goodwill with birders and non-birders alike.

3. Ensure that feeders, nest structures, and other artificial bird environments are safe.

3(a) Keep dispensers, water, and food clean and free of decay or disease. It is important to feed birds continually during harsh weather.

3(b) Maintain and clean nest structures regularly.

3(c) If you are attracting birds to an area, ensure the birds are not exposed to predation from cats and other domestic animals or dangers posed by artificial hazards.

4. Group birding, whether organized or impromptu, requires special care.

Each individual in the group, in addition to the obligations spelled out in Items #1 and #2, has responsibilities as a Group Member:

4(a) Respect the interests, rights, and skills of fellow birders, as well as people participating in other legitimate outdoor activities. Freely share your knowledge and experience, except where code 1(c) applies. Be especially helpful to beginning birders.

4(b) If you witness unethical birding behavior, assess the situation

and intervene if you think it prudent. When interceding, inform the person(s) of the inappropriate action and attempt, within reason, to have it stopped. If the behavior continues, document it and notify appropriate individuals or organizations.

Group Leader Responsibilities [amateur and professional trips and tours]:

4(c) Be an exemplary ethical role model for the group. Teach through word and example.

4(d) Keep groups to a size that limits impact on the environment and does not interfere with others using the same area.

4(e) Ensure everyone in the group knows of and practices this code.

4(f) Learn and inform the group of any special circumstances applicable to the areas being visited (e.g., no audio playback allowed).

4(g) Acknowledge that professional tour companies bear a special responsibility to place the welfare of birds and the benefits of public knowledge ahead of the company's commercial interests. Ideally, leaders should keep track of tour sightings, document unusual occurrences, and submit records to appropriate organizations.

Please Follow this Code and Distribute and Teach it to Others

The American Birding Association's Code of Birding Ethics may be freely reproduced for distribution/dissemination. Please acknowledge the role of ABA in developing and promoting this code with a link to the ABA website using the url <http://www.aba.org>. Thank you.

Spring Fling Plant Sale @ Hilltop Arboretum

Saturday, APRIL 7th, 2018

9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.



Hilltop's Hodge Podge Nursery stands ready to turn your garden's brown Winter frown upside down! Our horticultural spectrum covers ALL pre-existing gardening conditions, and the Podge Posse's "plant literati" will screen your gardening needs and carefully outline the "perks and quirks" for anything they might prescribe. You also have our guarantee of more than the required RDA of hospitality ... free parking; valet toting; a "Yarden" Sale; and, gardening books and tools to help you better rule your gardening roost, plus a vendor or few to further spice up your shopping experience. AND, to feed your soul, an opportunity to purchase a copy of the Hodge's "hot off the press" second cookbook: Passalong Recipes from the Podge II "Digging Deeper"

Our plant roster will include offerings selectively solicited from carefully vetted Friends and fans. But should you feel compelled to up your dosage with a few special supplements, we will be importing a sampling of choice plants from some of our favorite growers guaranteed to put some pep in your garden's step. From Acer to Zephyranthes, we've got you covered!!! (P.S. ~ a complete availability list will be posted on our website www.lsu.edu/hilltop one week prior to the sale!)

Trees and shrubs guaranteed to please will include ... but are not limited to:

Southern Sugar Maple	<i>Acer barbatum</i>
Chalk Maple	<i>Acer leucoderme</i>
Swamp Red Maple	<i>Acer rubrum drummondii</i>
Pawpaw	<i>Asimina triloba</i>
Beautyberry	<i>Callicarpa americana</i>
Buttonbush	<i>Cephalanthus occidentalis</i>
Parsley Hawthorn	<i>Crataegus marshallii</i>
Mayhaw	<i>Crataegus aestivalis</i>
Native Persimmon	<i>Diospyros virginiana</i>
Virginia Willow	<i>Itea virginica</i>
Black Walnut	<i>Juglans nigra</i>
Chapman's Rhododendron	<i>Rhododendron chapmanii</i>
Pond Cypress	<i>Taxodium distichum var. nutans</i>
Dwarf Walter's Viburnum	<i>Viburnum obovatum</i> 'Mrs. Shiller's Delight'



Plants guaranteed to **s-t-r-e-t-c-h** your garden's horizons:

Leucothoe	<i>Agarista populifolia</i>
Butterfly Milkweed	<i>Asclepias incarnata</i>
Vintage Jade Evergreen Distylium	<i>Distylium hybrid</i> 'Vintage Jade'
Carolina Yellow Jessamine	<i>Gelsemium sempervirens</i>
Red Yucca	<i>Hesperaloe parvifolia</i>
Iris, Louisiana Giant Blue	<i>Iris Louisiana</i> 'giganticaerulea'
Little Girl Hybrid Magnolias	Magnolia hybrids 'Betty', 'Ann', and 'Jane'
Wire Vine	<i>Muehlenbeckia axillaris</i>
White Pitcher Plant	<i>Sarracenia leucophylla</i>
Narrow Leaf White Rain Lily	<i>Zephyranthes candida</i>

LOS SPRING MEETING

27-28 April 2018
Cameron, LA

*Join us in Cameron for our
2018 Spring Meeting.*

Please pre-register online by April 23rd

For more information see:

http://losbird.org/2018_spring_meeting.pdf



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 spam, we promise! Simply send a request to president@braudubon.org and ask to be added to the e-list!

AND If you would prefer to receive the BRAS "*Barred Owl*" newsletter in electronic form **ONLY** (rather than the printed version thereby lessening your carbon footprint) please email our Membership chair and let her know! Drop her a line at membership@braudubon.org

**Also please follow us on Facebook at
www.facebook.com/BRAudubon**

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Changes of address and other official
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Baton Rouge, LA 70896



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*. We'll eventually 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.

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.

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
- \$ _____ Total remitted with form

#____ of patches (indicate 1 which is **free** with BRAS membership. Additional patches are \$10 each; NAS member patches @ \$10 each; no patch will be sent if there is no indication.)

- Electronic version of newsletter **only** (do not mail)
- Add me to the BRAS email list (to be informed of field trips, etc.)

Name: _____ Ph: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

E-mail: _____

MAIL COMPLETE FORM TO:
Baton Rouge Audubon Society
PO Box 67016
Baton Rouge, LA 70896