

The **BARRED OWL**

Newsletter of the Baton Rouge Audubon Society

Volume LII - Number 1

1st Quarter, 2025

Birdie Big Year with Tiffany Kersten

Join us on May 1, 2025 for a very special program! Tiffany Kersten recounts her adventures when she pursued a North American Big Year birding record in 2021

Tiffany Kersten didn't set out to do a Big Year, but after a series of unanticipated and serendipitous events, she suddenly found herself amidst one. As a sexual assault survivor, she spent 2021 traveling to all corners of the country, tallying birds

and gifting personal safety alarms to women she met along the way. Her goal was to see 700 species of birds, and to raise awareness of women's safety in the outdoors. She ended up surpassing her goal and setting a new record, with 726 species. In her presentation, Tiffany will lead us through the fear, empowerment, struggles, and healing that all played vital roles in the personal growth she experienced on this wild adventure.

Brought to you by the Baton Rouge Audubon Society. Program open to the public, but registration is strongly recommended. Visit our website braudubon.org under Events and Field Trips to find the link for registration.



Date: Thurs May 1, 2025

Time: 7:00pm.
In-person social
6pm-7pm

Location: EBRPL - New Rouzan South Branch Library off Perkins Road. South Branch Library is at 2210 Glasgow Avenue in Baton Rouge, but be advised that the entrance and parking lot are accessed off Rouzan Square Avenue (which runs parallel to Perkins).



SAFETY ALARMS

BRAS Dodges Bullet & Asks For Your Help

by Mark Pethke (Treasurer and attorney)

On March 29, 2025, Louisiana voters soundly rejected proposed constitutional Amendment 2, a wide-ranging list of modifications to the ways Louisiana raises and spends money, with 35% of the electorate supporting the provision and 65% opposing. While most public attention on the amendment focused on teachers' compensation, income tax rates, increased tax deductions for seniors, and changes to the funds annually available to the legislature, a little discussed feature of the proposal addressed property tax exemptions, modifying the exemption for religious organizations and removing them entirely for other nonprofit organizations.

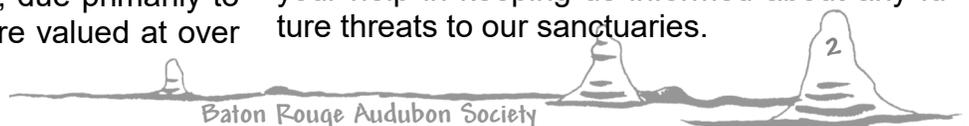
The Baton Rouge Audubon Society is organized under the federal tax code as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation. Article 7, Section 21(B)(1)(a) (i) of the Louisiana Constitution of 1974 specifically exempts such organizations from property taxes. This is important to BRAS due to its ownership, rare among Audubon chapters nationwide, of real property—the Peveto Woods Sanctuary in Cameron Parish and the Amite River Wildlife Sanctuary in Ascension Parish. This stewardship of property to benefit both the public and nature is solely possible due to the longstanding public policy of exempting nonprofits from paying property taxes. The defeated amendment would have removed the protective subsection in its entirety, and House Bill 7, the 115 page long legislative product that provided the basis for the constitutional amendment, did not contain any other changes to current law that would have shielded nonsectarian nonprofits from taxation.

State assessors' offices provide property tax information online that permit BRAS to consider the implications of losing its exemption. The Cameron Parish Assessor's office indicates that the 36 acres at Peveto Woods, due primarily to the near-beachfront location, are valued at over

\$1.2 million and would ordinarily be subject to annual property taxes of \$17,398.08. The Ascension Parish Assessor's office website indicates that annual property taxes for the 36 acres at ARWS, valued at \$89,100.00, would be \$908.11. While our budget could sustain paying property taxes for ARWS, if necessary, the Cameron Parish annual bill would swiftly deplete our resources, resulting in some hard choices to preserve Peveto's future as a crown jewel for the birdwatching world.

While BRAS is fortunate that this amendment failed, the issue is likely to recur. Business and governmental reform organizations have criticized the nonprofit property tax exemption since its inception, arguing that Louisiana's exemption is too broad, in that the 1974 Constitution removed a requirement from the prior constitution that the nonprofit exemption be tied to a legitimate nonprofit purpose, such as educational, charitable or cultural uses. Critics argue that too much property in the hands of nonprofits, particularly in urban areas, is held and then either leased for profit or devoted to nonpublic purposes, defeating the spirit if not the letter of the property tax exemption. Amendment 2, notably, did not propose a limited exemption along these grounds and addressed these, frankly, legitimate concerns, but eliminated property tax exemptions for nonsectarian nonprofits altogether.

BRAS is confident that it could meet the requirements of a limited property exemption, when one is inevitably proposed. Peveto Woods and ARWS are open to the public, used wholly for educational and cultural purposes, and serve important environmental ends. We cannot, however, withstand a more general cancellation of the exemption, and will be watching the legislature, the Governor's Office, and other policymakers for further developments. We ask for your help in keeping us informed about any future threats to our sanctuaries.



Foot Bridges Installed at Amite River Wildlife Sanctuary

Thanks to the generosity of two local groups, we now have our first foot bridges at the Amite River Wildlife Sanctuary in Ascension parish.



The East Ascension Sportsman League provided a monetary donation toward the material for the foot bridges. Many of the members remembered this area fondly and said they'd explored and hunted there when they were younger. They are glad to see some of the green space in Ascension parish preserved for outdoor activities.

The heavy lifter for this project was the Rotary Club of Gonzales, led by Mark La-Cour. Mark applied for a grant from the national Rotary Club organization on behalf of BRAS, which was subsequently awarded. He led the construction effort, purchasing materials, staging things at his home workshop, even constructing a purpose-built handcart to move materials over the uneven terrain of the sanctuary. He also rounded up volunteers who didn't mind working in the challenging conditions.



We are very proud of the new bridges and want to extend our heartfelt gratitude to these groups for supporting the sanctuary.



Christmas Bird Count Results!

by Katie Percy

The Baton Rouge Christmas Bird Count (CBC) was held on Saturday, January 4, 2025. This is a relatively urban circle with ever increasing development of the remaining agricultural fields and wooded tracts. Still, we had stellar participation with approximately 70 people contributing to field and/or feeder watch efforts and a commendable species total.

Weather conditions were partly to mostly cloudy all day, but thankfully no rain; temperature ranged 44-65 F; and winds were gusting above 15 mph in some locations, which certainly seemed to affect counts.

A total of 133 species were recorded, which is the exact same total as last year and slightly below the 33-year average of 137 species (range 114 to 150) for this circle.

We added one new species to the circle this year – a CASSIN'S KINGBIRD. Rarities (with exact count in parentheses) included: Krider's Red-tailed Hawk (1), Common Gallinule (6), Limpkin (1), Whip

-poor-will (1), Broad-tailed Hummingbird (1), Calliope Hummingbird (1), Broad-billed Hummingbird (1; count week only), Vermillion Flycatcher (1), Ash-throated Flycatcher (1), Summer Tanager (1), Western Tanager (1), and Baltimore Oriole (2).

Additionally, we had two high count records, which were Turkey Vulture (554) and Tree Swallow (5,356).

Low counts included Green-winged teal (1), Cattle Egret (3), Barn Owl (1), Buff-bellied Hummingbird (1), Fox Sparrow (1), Red-headed Woodpecker (2), Hairy Woodpecker (1), Winter Wren (2) and Marsh Wren (1). Complete misses included American Woodcock, Forster's Tern, Field Sparrow and Lincoln's Sparrow.

If you have any questions or would like additional information about the count this year, please email myself, Katie Percy, at katiepercy@gmail.com

Historical CBC records for all count circles and species can be accessed at: netapp.audubon.org/cbcobservation/



Existential Twitching

by Dan Mooney

We don't travel much anymore. Even when we did, we only went to Costa Rica once on a birding trip. Otherwise, all our birding has been in the U.S., at least until I stumbled upon live feeder cams via YouTube.



When the news causes us to have blood pressure problems, we often look for less stressful entertainment. Especially before sunrise. Live bird cams seem to be the answer for us.

At 5:00a.m. we can go bird watching in South Africa, Scotland, and Poland to name a few sites around the world with feeder cams. Right now, I am watching Hans Nature

Channel in the Netherlands. Great Tits, Blue Tits, European Blackbirds, European Robins, Nuthatch, and Great Spotted Woodpeckers are feeding in a pretty steady stream. Earlier this morning I was seeing Gray Hornbills, Gray Go-a-way Birds, Speckled Mousebirds, Masked Weavers, Lovebirds, Common Mynas, Cap Sparrows and Green Woodhoopoes in Peoria, South Africa on Allenbirdcam.com. I have learned to identify 34 species at that feeder.

Since these eastern hemisphere cams are live, early morning here is afternoon there. I always thought 2:30p.m. was a pretty slow time at our feeders, the that doesn't hold true in South Africa, or Scotland. There is constant action at those feeders in the afternoon (there time).

Once the sun has set on the eastern hemisphere cams you can switch to Sax-Zim Bog, or

Cornel's Panama Fruit Feeder at Canopy Lodge, Cornel's feeder cam at Sapsucker Woods. There is lots to choose from just an internet search away!



The most active feeders I have found on YouTube so far are:

- **Allenbirdcam.com, Peoria, South Africa**
- **Scottish Wildlife Garden, Argyll Scotland**
- **Hans Nature Channel, Mortel, The Netherlands**



Nightjars are a family of poorly-known crepuscular and nocturnal birds whose populations, like those of other aerial insectivores, are declining rapidly. Nightjar monitoring efforts in Louisiana are currently inadequate, and the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries' Wildlife Diversity Program seeks to expand nightjar surveys in May 2025, the success of which will hinge on volunteer participation. Contact Robert Dobbs at rdbobs@wlf.la.gov for more information on the surveys and requirements/expectations of volunteer surveyors.

photo by Katherine Gividen



Keeping Us Out of the Mud



Tommy Berthon



John Hart and Dad Bryan



John's Crew

Two more Life Scouts have completed bog bridges at our Amite River Wildlife Sanctuary!

Tommy Berthon from Troop 136 from Baton Rouge completed a new section of bog bridges in January. Thanks to him all his helpers!

John Hart with Troop 50 from Baton Rouge, along with his dad Bryan and other volunteers from his troop and their folks, built several sections of bog bridges in February. It was a muddy experience, but they persevered!



Tommy's troop of volunteers

BATON ROUGE AUDUBON SOCIETY BYLAWS

Article I -

Board of Directors

Section 1. The direction, control, and conduct of business of Baton Rouge Audubon Society (hereinafter called BRAS) shall be vested in a Board of Directors (hereinafter called the "Board").

Section 2. The Board shall include:

- A) Elected officers as defined in these bylaws;
- B) Chairpersons of standing committees as defined in these bylaws;
- C) No more than six directors elected from the membership at-large, and
- D) The immediate past-president.

Section 3. All persons on the Board shall be members of BRAS.

Article II - Officers

Section 1. The officers are: President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer.

Section 2. The President shall be the President of BRAS, Chairperson of the Board, and an ex-officio member of all committees. The President shall make an annual report to the membership of BRAS, and shall ensure that the annual summary report is filed with the appropriate offices of the National Audubon Society. The President is responsible for ensuring that BRAS performs all chapter activities required by the national Audubon Society, and shall perform all other duties associated with the office.

Section 3. The Vice-President shall assist the President and shall preside at all meetings in the absence of the President. The Vice-President may perform such other duties as assigned by the President and/or the Board.

Section 4. The Secretary shall keep a record of all proceedings and meetings of the Board and

BRAS, and shall perform such other duties as may assist the President and/or the Board in fulfilling the purposes of BRAS.

Section 5. The Treasurer shall have custody of the funds of BRAS, and shall distribute the funds as may be ordered by the Board. The Treasurer shall report to the Board at its regular meetings, or as requested. The Treasurer shall prepare an annual written report on the financial condition of BRAS for distribution to the member at the annual meeting of the membership.

Section 6. All checks and drafts of BRAS may be signed by the President, Vice-President, or Treasurer. All checks and drafts of the Society, less than or equal to the amount of one thousand dollars (\$1000), shall be signed by the Treasurer at the Treasurer's discretion: any and all actions requiring an encumbrance of Society funds in excess of the above amount must have board approval.

Article III - Committees

Section 1. The Standing Committees of BRAS are:

- A) Membership Committee
- B) Conservation Committee
- C) Publications Committee
- D) Education Committee
- E) Sanctuary Committee

Section 2. The President, with the approval of the Board, shall appoint chairpersons for each of the Standing Committees, and each chairperson shall appoint members to the Standing Committees.

Section 3. The Duties of the Membership Committee are to cooperate with the membership department of the National Audubon Society, to conduct membership campaigns, to keep a register of the members of BRAS, and to perform such other duties as

may be appropriate and necessary.

Section 4. The duties of the Conservation Committee are to keep informed on local, state, national and international issues relating to the conservation of natural resources and relating to governmental policies and actions affecting the natural environment and the conservation of natural resources; to develop draft positions on issues for presentation to the Board and membership, to advise the Board, other Audubon chapters in Louisiana, and the National Audubon Society, to carry out the policies of the Board, and to perform such other duties as may be appropriate and necessary.

Section 5. The duties of the Sanctuary Committee are to manage the sanctuary lands owned by BRAS according to policies established by the Board; to assist in the acquisition of new sanctuary lands and properties; to assist in fund raising activities; to keep the Board informed on the status of all sanctuary matters; and to perform other appropriate activities.

Section 6. The duties of the Publications Committee are to publish a newsletter for distribution to the members and such others as may be appropriate, and to prepare any other publications helpful to the on-going programs of BRAS.

Section 7. The duties of the Education Committee are to further the educational services of BRAS and the National Audubon Society; to conduct lectures, field trips and/or workshops in natural science for members and friends of BRAS and others; and through other means to inform and educate the public about the natural environment of the globe, country, region, and state.

(Continued on page 8)

BATON ROUGE AUDUBON SOCIETY BYLAWS

(Continued from page 7)

Section 8. The Board may establish such other committees as may be appropriate from time to time to carry out the purposes of BRAS.

Section 9. All chairpersons of committees shall regularly report to the Board.

Article IV -

Meetings of the Membership

Section 1. There shall be an Annual Meeting of the membership of BRAS in the month of May of each year.

Section 2. There shall be at least two meetings of the membership of BRAS in each calendar year at such place as the Board may direct.

Section 3. Voting by proxy is not allowed at membership meetings. Only members in good standing and present may vote at any meeting of the membership.

Section 4. Notice of the meetings of the membership shall be given to the members of BRAS at each member's last known address or by an announcement in the newsletter or on the BRAS web site or by email.

Section 5. A quorum of the membership is required to do any business, and a quorum is a majority of the members present at any meeting.

Article V -

Meetings of the Board

Section 1. The Board shall meet on at least six occasions in each calendar year at such place as the Board may direct.

Section 2. Voting at meetings by proxy is not allowed. Only members of the Board present in person may vote. Voting on issues outside of meetings may be accomplished by email and results are valid when a majority responds.

Section 3. Any member in good standing of BRAS may attend any meeting of the Board.

Section 4. Notice of the meetings of the Board shall be given to the members of BRAS at each member's last known address or by an announcement in the newsletter or BRAS web site.

Section 5. A quorum of the Board is required to do any business, and a quorum is defined as at least half of the Board.

Article VI - Terms of Office

Section 1. The members of the Board are elected for a term of one year, with the exception of the chairpersons of the Standing Committees who are appointed for such terms as the Board may establish at the time of appointment.

Section 2. The members of the Board shall hold office until their successors are elected.

Section 3. The chairpersons of any other committees established by the Board shall serve such terms as the Board may establish.

Article VII - Elections

The election of officers and Board members at large shall take place at the annual meeting in April of each year.

Article VIII - Removal

Section 1. Any member of the Board who purports to represent BRAS without approval of the Board may be relieved of his/her office.

Section 2. Failure to attend board meetings for two consecutive times without good cause is grounds for removal.

Section 3. The Board of Directors has the power to vote board members off the Board for cause. This will take a minimum of two-thirds of those board members present at a regularly called meet-

ing that has a quorum.

Article IX - Chapter Policy

The relationship between BRAS and the National Audubon Society shall be governed by the Chapter Policy.

Article X - Amendments

Section 1. These bylaws may be amended by a majority vote of the members in good standing present at any regular meeting or any special meeting of the membership.

Section 2. Prior notice of the proposed amendment to these bylaws shall be given to the members at his/her last known mailing address or email address at least 15 days prior to the regular or special meeting. Publication in the newsletter shall be sufficient to meet this requirement.

Article XI – Voting via E-Mail

Section 1. In order to facilitate decisions that must be made in between Board Meetings, Board members may submit and discuss proposals online. If a final decision is of a timely nature, votes may be cast via e-mail, and a simple majority of the Board will approve or disapprove the motion.

Section 2. The results of e-mail voting should be reported at the next regular meeting of the Board, and recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

Adoption and Amendment History

Adopted: April 5, 1993

Amended: Oct 24, 2002

Draft & Amendment: Oct 15, 2003

Amended: May 12, 2010

Amended: July 2024

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by buying one of these beautiful t-shirts!

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*Do you subscribe to the Baton Rouge
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Subscribe now and get a notification when a new video is uploaded
our channel. All of our monthly programs will be stored there, as well
as other special programs.

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! To be added to
the email list, simply send an email with only your name in the body of the email
to braudubon+subscribe@groups.io

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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Vice-President

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The Barred Owl

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correspondence should be sent to:

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Baton Rouge, LA 70896



Baton Rouge Chapter of the National 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
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Baton Rouge, LA 70896