

The **BARRED OWL**

Newsletter of the Baton Rouge Audubon Society

Volume L - Number 2

2nd Quarter, 2023

Blabbermouth

I fell in love with birds and birding well into my late thirties, a bit late to the game. Since that time, 10 years ago now, I have had the honor and opportunity to bird in a wide variety of locations, with a wide variety of fellow birders, and under a wide variety of circumstances. And in almost all birding gatherings, I find myself serving as a spotter. I am almost always the one who points out to the others that there's "something there." Now, what that something is called, I leave that to folks who know a lot more than I do. Sometimes it's not even a bird at all. Hey, I did my part.

Sometimes, it's a common bird that still excites me after all these years even though I see them everywhere, like a Carolina Wren. Sometimes it's a common bird whose nest I don't often get to see. Other times it's a less common migrant that may be sporting some vibrant spring colors and he makes my heart race and my teeth go dry from grinning and gawking. Still other times, it's a bird so rare, so beautiful, so exciting, or so unexpected that I lose my ability to speak at all.

Then all I can do is point, grunt, and slap the arms of my fellow birders.

The one thing all of these instances have in common is that I want to share what I'm seeing with others. Unfortunately, there is one problem I have struggled with in recent years. When I see an exciting bird, I have to fight my inner blabbermouth. I want to tell EVERYbody about this cool bird I just saw. After all, wouldn't I want someone to share with me?

Time after time, my birding success has relied on other people's knowledge and their willingness to share that knowledge. It's contagious. And to me that's a huge part of being a member of this community.

Obviously, I always adhere to any explicit requests for secrecy about a rare bird. That dherence is the tax I gladly pay to continue to be allowed to join the party. And you'd better believe I'm reporting every winter hummingbird in my yard because those data are expressly requested.

But what about the rest? How much is too much?



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Sport Optics & Zeiss Birding Event

by Jane Patterson

In early April, BRAS was pleased to help sponsor a new event for birders in southeast Louisiana. Sport Optics of Hammonds, a birding optic retailer, and Zeiss optics, a major optics brand, presented a workshop and guided field trip for over 50 folks in the northshore area. The workshop started with Richard Moncrief, Birding & Nature Observation Segment Manager at Zeiss, giving an overview of what to look for in birding binoculars as well as an explanation of the advantages of premium optics. Then Catherine Hamilton, Zeiss Birding Ambassador and bird artist gave a class on bird sketch-

ing that really showed how helpful sketching is for noticing details. Richard then gave another educational presentation on digiscoping...that is, connecting your camera or phone to a birding scope to take photos and then closed out the workshop with a demonstration of the hottest topic in birding, using a thermal camera. Owling will never be the same!



Zeiss and Sport Optics generously offered 3 pairs of their amazing binoculars as door prizes to the group! The next day, the attendees were paired with bird guides and perused Fontainebleu State Park looking for birds. The event ended with a casual lunch at the park. A great time was had by all and we hope that we can partner with these folks to do something similar in the future!



BRAS Volunteer of the Year!

At our potluck dinner in May, we announced our Volunteer of the Year! This year, our member Sue Broussard is being honored. Sue was instrumental in getting the culvert installed at the Amite River Wildlife Sanctuary so that we would have proper access to the trail area. She



helped with some of the initial efforts to remove trash from the property. But her largest contribution to date has been regarding her efforts to remove Coral Ardisia, a highly invasive and noxious plant, from the sanctuary. Coral Ardisia is a woody shrub with a glossy leaf and red berries that forms thick mats in the understory of forests and prevents growth and rejuvenation of forests. The leaves are resistant to most herbicides, so the best way to remove it is literally by the roots! The berries are 95% viable so also need to be collected to prevent new growth. Sue has removed tons of this plant from the sanctuary and it is much healthier for her efforts! Sue will receive a gift card from Wild Birds Unlimited store as a thank you.

Jane Patterson Receives LOS Lowery Award!

The Louisiana Ornithological Society selected Jane Patterson to receive the 2023 Dr. George H. Lowery Award, its premier recognition award. Jane was awarded this honor for her "long commitment and major contributions to bird, wildlife and habitat education and conservation in Louisiana. Jane has

introduced many people of all ages to the joy of birding, but also taught them the importance of conserving habitat and wildlife resources. Jane has developed innovative programs to pursue those objectives and has shown strong leadership in birding and conservation organizations. Jane was a strong voice and leader in acquiring and developing the Amite River Wildlife Sanctuary in Ascension Parish, LA." Jane received her award at the LOS Spring Meeting banquet from Dr. Lowery's daughter, Carol Lynn Lowery Loker and Marty Guidry.



Jane was also nominated and selected as the Volunteer Conservationist of the Year by the Louisiana Wildlife Federation, primarily for her work in 2022 on the development of the Amite River Wildlife Sanctuary. She will receive that award at the LWF 57th annual banquet on June 9, 2023 in Baton Rouge.

PROW Banding with KWB at ARWS

We now have 6 bird boxes designed for nesting Prothonotary Warblers at our Amite River Wildlife Sanctuary. Three of these boxes show signs of use this year so far! The pair in Box 1 were furthest along and Katie Percy, certified bird bander, was able to band the chicks in early May. The 5 nestlings each received a band with a unique alphanumeric sequence that identifies each bird. Katie was also able to install color and metal bands on the adults, as well as the adults using Box 6, so we will be able to positively identify these individuals in the future!

On hand to witness the event were several members of the KidsWhoBird club as well as members of

the St. Amant High School Environmental Club and sponsor/teacher Chantal Correll. The kids were also treated to a walk through the sanctuary to see birds and were all thrilled by the pair of baby Great Horned Owls that were also checking them out.

A few of the high school kids also helped clear a couple of fallen trees off the trails, which we greatly appreciate!

If you have or know of a kid who is into birds and might like to join in KidsWhoBird activities, please see our webpage at

<http://braudubon.org/education/kids-who-bird>



Noah Strycker Visits Baton Rouge Audubon

Baton Rouge Audubon Society hosted a special program for the public Thursday evening, April 13, featuring birder “celebrity” Noah Strycker at LSU’s Energy, Coast and Environment Building.

Strycker shared his story and inspired all of us when he described his quest, at age 29, of seeing a record-breaking 6,042 species chronicled in his book, *“Birding Without Borders: An Obsession, a Quest, and the Biggest Year in the World.”*



Much like his 2015 whirlwind bird quest, Strycker’s Baton Rouge visit was fast paced. Shortly after his arrival to the Baton Rouge Airport on the afternoon of April 12, less than an hour in the city, a quick stop at the trails behind Pennington Biomedical Research Center led to spotting several migrant birds, including the coveted painted bunting. Not too shabby a start!

The morning of his speaking event, Strycker, wearing a borrowed pair of white “Swamp Nikes” toured the BRAS Amite River Wildlife Sanctuary in Ascension Parish. There, he enjoyed not only the birds, but the lush plant life as he stopped every so often

to snap photos with his phone. He was then whisked away to tour BREC’s Bluebonnet Swamp led naturalist John Hartgerink and BRAS president Jane Patterson where he learned about the Louisiana Bird Observatory and the Prothonotary Warbler research project. Then it was off to LSU Natural History Museum for a tour of LSU’s world-class ornithology department and bird collection led by graduate student Samantha Rutledge. Friday morning after the program and before his flight home, he birded BREC’s Forest Park, for more bird sightings and sounds. Not surprisingly, he is extremely proficient at birding by ear.

Noah enjoyed some Louisiana delicacies: gumbo, jambalaya, pecan pie, strawberries. He was intrigued by the story of Raising Cane’s, (they don’t have one in Eugene Oregon – yet) so he opted to forgo the shrimp po-boy at the Chimes and dine at the original Cane’s restaurant outside the LSU gates instead. So much food, so little time. He admitted that he will have to come back to spend more time in Louisiana just to sample dishes.



In addition to serving as an associate editor for American Birding Association and leading expeditions to Antarctica, he is currently working on another bird book for National Geographic and was



recently contacted by Apple TV for a possible documentary on Penguins – his research bird. It’s evident that Noah Strycker will continue to engage in projects helping us explore the world of birds. Hopefully there will be more Louisiana visits from him in the future.

Thanks to BRAS for hosting the event and BRAS board members Mark Pethke and Deborah Taylor and BRAS member Cathy Hansen who were invaluable for their help with event logistics. Kudos to BRAS member Dr. Crystal Johnson for helping us secure a great spot at LSU for the event.

In case you missed the event, or want to share it with others, BRAS has the recording of the “Noah Strycker, *Birding Without Borders*” talk on our YouTube channel.

**Colette Dean,
Program Committee**



LSU Birding and Botany Clubs' Fundraiser Results

The **LSU Birding Club** detected 78 bird species during Sunday, April 2, on their Big Day effort within the Amite River Wildlife Sanctuary. They reported an impressive surge of migrants and a great raptor flight. Highlights included Red-headed Woodpecker, arriving Kentucky Warbler and Orchard Oriole, a migrant Scarlet Tanager, and 120 Broad-winged Hawks! Their official list is here: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S132538427> and will eventually be decorated with some media from the Bird Club Vice President, Jack Rogers. The eight hard-working volunteers also cleared trails, sprayed and hand pulled invasive weeds, and documented plant life within the sanctuary. For a more comprehensive write-up on their efforts and how the bird survey went, look for a post on our blog lsubirds.blogspot.com in the coming days. In addition to birding, they recorded 100 plant species on the dot, many of which are thanks to the enormous contribution of Dr. Chris Reid, Botany Club's supervisor. The full plant list can be seen here:

<https://tinyurl.com/3nv4emu7>

This effort was a fundraiser for both the LSU Birding and Botany Clubs and they are generously sharing their proceeds with BRAS. This contribution will go directly to improvements at the Amite River Wildlife Sanctuary.



BRAS Program Schedule for Fall 2023

September, Thursday, 14:

Samantha Rutledge, PhD student, Mason lab, LSU Museum of Natural Science will speak on "*The Avian Rainbow: The Mechanisms and Biology of Bird Color*"

October, Thursday, 12:

Dr. Peter Yaukey, Chair of Department of Biological and Physical Science at University of Holy Cross, New Orleans will speak on "*Louisiana: A Special Place for Birds*"

November, Thursday, 9:

John Dillon, Past-president Louisiana Ornithological Society, founder, Minden High School Nature Club will share his student's club experiences. The club was featured in American Birding Association's "*Birding*" Magazine in 2019.

HELP SUPPORT ARWS!



Help out our Amite River Wildlife Sanctuary by buying one of these beautiful t-shirts! The shirts feature the beautiful artwork used for our sanctuary sign. The shirts come in two styles in various sizes and colors. You order directly from the manufacturer and they are shipped directly to you!

Order yours today at:

www.bonfire.com/bras-amite-river-sanctuary/

The BRAS program committee has stacked the deck with some great speakers for the next six months, so mark these meeting dates on your calendars so you don't miss anything.

Meetings are now in person, but hybrid/ zooming capabilities are offered if you register in advance. Social hour is 6:30 p.m. and talks begin at 7 p.m. Please attend in person, if possible, to make our speakers feel welcome!

Blabbermouth

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After all, if *too* many people find out, might that increase the chances of bad birder behavior or a negative outcome for the bird? I have witnessed otherwise respectful bird-lovers become downright naughty brats over an exciting bird. If I decided to vacation on a beautiful beach, only to have noisy paparazzi crowd around me pointing 4-foot long lenses while I fed my kids, I would probably leave that beach and never come back.

I have seen people camp out within a few feet of a Barred Owl's nest just so they can say they got the picture, as if they are on assignment for National Geographic, and their Pulitzer Prize hinges on whether they got a fledgling shot.

I have stood agape while an ignorant potato used her cell phone to blast Painted Bunting playback. In spring. WHILE a singing male Painted Bunting perched in the sun 20 feet away from her. I thought, *"What do you want, lady, for the bird to perch on your shoulders? You're not a female bunting, and you're no Disney princess."* I could feel my heart-

beat in my ears and had to walk away.

I, myself, once slammed my car door and almost spooked a Wood Stork. I suspect my excited squealing alone has scared away birds in the past. I am not proud of this. But I am working to do better.

Other horror stories I have heard but not witnessed firsthand include cell phones dropped on Prothonotary Warbler eggs, children throwing rocks into nest cavities, birders trespassing on private property, and other atrocities.

I have to admit, if I see someone approaching who looks like they won't appreciate "my" bird, I keep my mouth shut. If they look sketchy when they ask what I'm looking at, I reserve the right to say "red birds" with a straight face and a clear conscience.

That's the thing, though. That is the exact type of person who DOES need to hear about that bird and why it's so exciting.

In today's world of *"you can't tell me what to do,"* how does one know when, what, and with whom to share?

On the other hand, who am I to act as gatekeeper? I am not an ornithologist. At best, I am a bird groupie. I don't even submit full eBird reports like I should. And for every atrocious act, there are 999 good acts.

Is it possible that there just always has to be some sacrifice for the greater good? How many of us would never have come to appreciate a zebra if we hadn't visited a caged one in a zoo at some point? Someone, somewhere, at some point, had to take the risk to share that zebra with us. That zebra is taking one for the team, so when laws are created in Botswana to preserve their ever-shrinking habitat, people 10,000 miles away might have at least had the opportunity to see one. Some might even have a vote in the matter, or find a reason to donate to the cause.

What if that picture that took 4 hours, 83 mosquito bites, and 6 cups of coffee to capture ends up in The Advocate and sparks a local student who never knew what a Limpkin was? What if the taking of that picture did no harm to the nestlings' food delivery schedule because the photogra-

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BRAS Election Results:

Annual election of officers was held by electronic ballot in early May 2023. This election is to elect officers to serve the 2023-24 fiscal year. All of the current officers agreed to serve again and were duly elected so our officers are once again:

Jane Patterson - President
Katherine Gividen - Vice President
Donna Lafleur - Secretary
Mark Pethke - Treasurer

We also have several appointed positions:

- Dave Patton - **Peveto Woods Sanctuary Manager**
- Dan Mooney - **Field Trips**
- Heather Wilson - **Membership**
- Richard Condrey - **Conservation**
- Colette Dean/Katie Percy/Marie Varnes - **Programs**
- Debbie Taylor - **Hospitality**
- Jane Patterson - **Education**
- At Large - Erik Johnson, Casey Wright

If you are interested in serving on the board, please let us know. We'd love for you to be President next year!!

Blabbermouth

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pher used a blind? What if my ecotourism dollars contributed to helping a local family's kids take a school trip?

Don't I owe it to the birds to share that I saw 2 Peregrine Falcons on Ben Hur Road? If we don't know what birds are there, then deforestation continues un-checked and in full ignorance of what we're losing. If we don't share, then we're burning books we haven't even read yet... burying art the world never had a chance to see.

Is it inevitable that there will always be some risk in the sharing part of this adventure we all love so much? In reality, how much would sharing benefit or harm that individual bird? How much would it impact that bird's species in general?

Some of us birders will take what we saw to our graves, and others of us are sharing it on social media in real time so that others have the opportunity to see it too.

How do we keep ourselves optimistic, and patient, and ...ahem... unbanned from the park for yelling at the bunting-harasser? Maybe readers of The Barred Owl will share their thoughts or experiences in a future edition.

- **Crystal Johnson** - Bird Groupie - Spotter - Blabbermouth

Baton Rouge Audubon YouTube Channel

**Do you subscribe to the Baton Rouge
Audubon YouTube channel?**

<https://tinyurl.com/28h2cjxt>

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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At Large Members...

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Casey Wright

The Barred Owl

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Changes of address and other official correspondence should be sent to:

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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: _____

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