

The **BARRED OWL**

Newsletter of the Baton Rouge Audubon Society

Volume L I - Number 2

2nd Quarter, 2024



It's Baby Season!

It's that time of year again when thoughts turn to love and babies!

Two of the three Wood Duck boxes at our Amite River Wildlife Sanctuary have been active with ducks this year, and the third was taken over by a Carolina Wren :) The ducks seem to have left the box as of the end of March. I set up a trail camera, hoping to catch the babies leaving the box, but alas, it did not work. We'll keep an eye out for the families in the nearby water bodies. One of

the six Prothonotary Warbler boxes is being used by a Carolina Chickadee family this year, so I added a new house in the same vicinity, hoping to entice the warblers. Fingers crossed that we see any of the 4 adult or five offspring warblers that were banded here last year! The Bluebirds that nest in the house in the parking lot have already fledged their first brood.

50th Anniversary of Baton Rouge Audubon Society

2024 marks five decades since Baton Rouge Audubon first established its charter as a chapter of the National Audubon Society. We will be commemorating this milestone with an event this summer, date and place to be determined. If you've ever been involved in the chapter, particularly the early days...served on the board, attended programs, went on field trips, contributed to the newsletter, etc, and have memories and information to share, please contact Jane Patterson at

seejanebird@gmail.com

We'd love to hear your stories!



City Nature Challenge 2024

City Nature Challenge is a global event that takes place over a 4-day period at the end of April, April 26-29, 2024. During this period, community scientists like you and I will use the app iNaturalist to document every bit of the natural world around us and upload it to the inaturalist database. Cities around the world compete for the honor of obtaining the most observations during this 4 day period. In our area, the challenge is being spearheaded by the Master Naturalists of Greater Baton Rouge (Imngbr.org). Baton Rouge has fared very well in this global event and hopes to do even better this year, with your help! See the results of Baton Rouge's efforts in 2023 here: <https://www.brnaturechallenge.org/results-2023>

How to participate:

Download and install the iNaturalist app on your phone. There are many tutorials for how to use the app. In a nutshell, the app uses a photo or a recording to tentatively identify a species, and then other iNaturalist participants (many of whom are scientists and experts) chime in to agree with that ID, or suggest another. Find insects, plants, reptiles, any living thing around you, snap and photo and identify! Practice and become familiar with it before the event!

Between the dates of April 26 and 29, 2024, if your observations are in the following parishes: Ascension, East Baton Rouge, East Feliciana, Iberville, Livingston, Pointe Coupee, St. Helena, St. Tammany, Tangipahoa, Washington,

West Baton Rouge, and West Feliciana, your observation will count for the Baton Rouge total.

Find an event:

BREC generally holds a similar smaller scale bioblitz event in one of its parks in April, but this year is scheduling that event to coincide with the Baton Rouge CNC. The featured location this year is Bluebonnet Swamp Nature Center. Contact BREC to join a bioblitz / CNC team!

Baton Rouge Audubon will be holding a bioblitz for CNC on Monday, April 29 at the Amite River Wildlife Sanctuary. Contact Jane Patterson (seejanebird@gmail.com) to participate.

Go out on your own or create your own group -- the more participants and the more observations, the merrier! This is a great activity to do with kids!

For more information, visit brnaturechallenge.org



One of the mascots for CNC 2024 - the Scarlet-bodied wasp moth (photo by Jane Patterson)

Got Plants?

We recently received a donation of several plants for the Amite River Wildlife Sanctuary. Kent Benton gifted us with 2 native blueberries, a wax myrtle, two native mulberries, two mayhaw trees, and a native persimmon which have been installed near the parking area and trailhead at the sanctuary. Fingers crossed we get enough rain to keep these plants going this year!



We also purchased 100 native Louisiana iris plants from a grower in Lafayette and our volunteer, Toni Phillips and helper has installed these in the southeast swamp. The irises that were planted last year along the iris trail in the northwest swamp are just about to bloom!

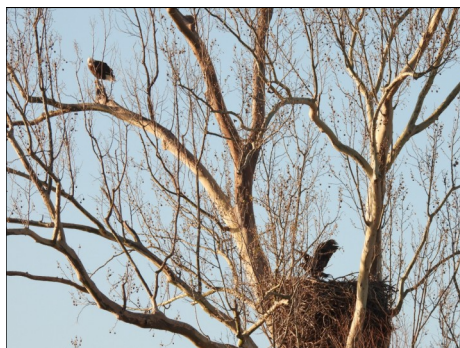
Spring is garden cleanup and garden show time. If you have extra Louisiana natives you'd like to donate to the sanctuary, please contact Jane Patterson at seejanebird@gmail.com

KidsWhoBird

At our February meeting, KidsWhoBird and their grownups learned about our national symbol, the Bald Eagle and then visited a local eagle's nest on the Mississippi River just south of LSU. For many of those participating, it was their first time seeing a Bald Eagle in real life. We got to see both parents and the single chick in the nest this year, who was nearly as large as its parents and very close to fledging. We also observed over 20 other species of birds on our walk to and from the nest.

If you have a kid aged 9 to 16 who is fascinated by birds, they may be interested in joining our KidsWhoBird club. Meetings will be held (usually) on the third Sunday afternoon of each month at Fairwood branch of EBR Public library on Old Hammond Highway in Baton Rouge. To be added to

the mailing list to find out more about club events, please send an email to Jane Patterson at seejanebird@gmail.com



Trail markers installed - check!

With the generous help of the Rotary Club of Greater Ascension, over 70 trail markers were installed at the Amite River Wildlife Sanctuary in Ascension parish which completes our project to mark the trails at this sanctuary. As it now stands, over 2 miles of trails have been identified. These durable trail markers will withstand weather and periodic flooding events that are inevitable at the location. The trail markers will help visitors feel comfortable as they hike through the sanctuary as they are easily visible.

Since the borders of the sanctuary are not marked, it's very important that visitors to the sanctuary stay on the trails to avoid trespassing on neighboring properties, so these trail markers are key. A map of all the trails is available on the kiosk in the parking area of the sanctuary as well as at the Visitor cupboard by the picnic table.



Many thanks to Justin Champlin, president of the Rotary Club, as well as all the members and volunteers who came out to help install the trail posts.



As a bonus surprise, the Rotary Club also provided the sanctuary with a beautiful large new sign so that visitors can clearly spot the parking area for the sanctuary.



Peveto Woods Sanctuary

Many thanks to the volunteers that helped with a short notice work day at Peveto Woods. The extreme drought of August and September combined with the deep freeze in January to knock back vegetation. The trails were easier to cut back and open than most winters. Gordon Griggs and Charlotte Chehotsky worked on trails, cut back vines, and planted trees. Scott Delaney and Paul Wallace did an excellent job as always cleaning and preparing the water features around the sanctuary. The mister continued through the cold spell that dropped to 22 degrees on Jan 17th, and created an ice sculpture for the birds to enjoy. The sanctuary is in good shape for spring migration.



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- Dave Patton
Sanctuary Manager



Do you have your 2024 Baton Rouge Audubon Sanctuary patch?

This beautiful work of art features a Yellow-billed Cuckoo. The artwork is courtesy (once again) of Donna Dittmann. If you are an active Baton Rouge Audubon member, please contact our membership coordinator, Heather Wilson, at membership@braudubon.org to request your 2024 patch.

Amite River Wildlife Sanctuary Receives State Recognition

The LA Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Natural Areas Registry program encourages voluntary, citizen-based conservation of natural areas on public and private lands. When a property is registered with the Natural Area Registry, the landowner agrees to protect the property and minimizes the risk of significant natural areas being inadvertently destroyed. By register-



ing the property, landowners not only learn more about the unique flora and fauna present but also what management techniques are best suited to maintain those elements.

Baton Rouge has now received approval to include its Amite River Wildlife Sanctuary in this program. The agreement cites: "Baton Rouge Audubon Amite River Wildlife Sanctuary Natural Area is located southeast of Port Vincent in Ascension Parish, Louisiana. This property consists of approximately 40 acres of woodlands composed of two primary habitat types including cypress swamp (S4/G3G5) and spruce pine-hardwood flatwoods (S1/G1G2). These communities provide important habitat for several Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) including many Neotropical migratory birds such as the prothonotary war-

bler. In addition to providing critical habitat for SGCN, these forested wetlands enhance the surrounding communities, absorbing and filtering stormwater runoff and providing wildlife observation opportunities. Portions of the property have significant populations of coral ardisia; Audubon is currently working to control and remove this and other invasives, when feasible. Audubon recognizes the importance of said Natural Area and intends to continue to preserve and enhance its natural values."

Chris Doffit, LDWF program manager, awarded BRAS its certificate and Natural Area Registry sign in Jan 2024. We are proud to display the sign to demonstrate our commitment to preserving a bit of the wild in an area that is being increasingly developed,

Thanks to the East Ascension Sportsman's League!

In December 2023, I did a short presentation for the East Ascension Sportsman's League about the Amite River Wildlife Sanctuary. The program was well received. Many of the attendees were familiar with the property and the land adjacent, having grown up in the parish and spent time in the woods, playing as children and hunting and fishing in the area their whole lives. They were very excited and gratified to see a piece of it preserved since so much of the surrounding area has succumbed to development. As a way of supporting the efforts of Baton Rouge Audubon, the EASL board voted to give a donation to BRAS to help build one of the bridges that we need at the sanctuary to help cross the spots that typically hold standing water. Mark Pethke, our treasurer, is seen here receiving a check from James "Goosie" Guice with the EASL. We are very appreciative of this gift and of the support from this organization that represents the local community in Ascension parish.



- Jane Patterson

Launching the Urban Native Greens Community Science Initiative

Requesting Nest Monitoring Data

Urban and suburban habitats with increasing diversity of native plantings and green spaces have been demonstrated to increase bird diversity and abundance, breeding outcomes, and survivorship. Still, these ideas need to be more deeply explored, especially in the southeastern United States, where urban sprawl is rampant, and there may be different ecological consequences of sprawl and urbanization, and its impact on birds, in warmer environments.



Audubon Delta has convened a partnership with Louisiana State University, Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program, Purple Martin Conservation Initiative, and Baton Rouge Audubon Society (through the Louisiana Bird Observatory program) to launch a community science-based project to monitor nests of four insectivorous focal species: Prothonotary Warbler, Carolina Chickadee, Carolina Wren, and Purple Martin. Each of these species has different ecological traits that may provide insights into how they adjust (or not) to the built environment.

Broadly speaking, we will explore relationships between human-caused land cover change, plant and animal species ecology, and wildlife diseases that are relevant to environmental quality and human health but remain understudied in urban ecosystems. Specifically, we will examine the effects of mosquito control and native plant diversity on the prevalence of avian malaria and insect diversity in birds' diets along an urban-rural gradient. We will test the following hypotheses:

- 1) Mosquito control may...
 - a. Decrease insect abundance and diversity, reducing the diet breadth for birds, making it harder to raise young and survive.
 - b. Decrease the prevalence of vector-based diseases like avian malaria, improving health outcomes for birds.
- 2) Increased native plant diversity may increase insect abundance and diversity, increasing the diet breadth of birds, improving nesting success and survivorship.



This is where you, the community scientist, can help!



(Continued on page 8)

Help Support Our Amite River Wildlife Sanctuary



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/

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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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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