

The **BARRED OWL**

Newsletter of the Baton Rouge Audubon Society

Volume LIII - Number 2

Summer 2026

Louisiana Takes Action

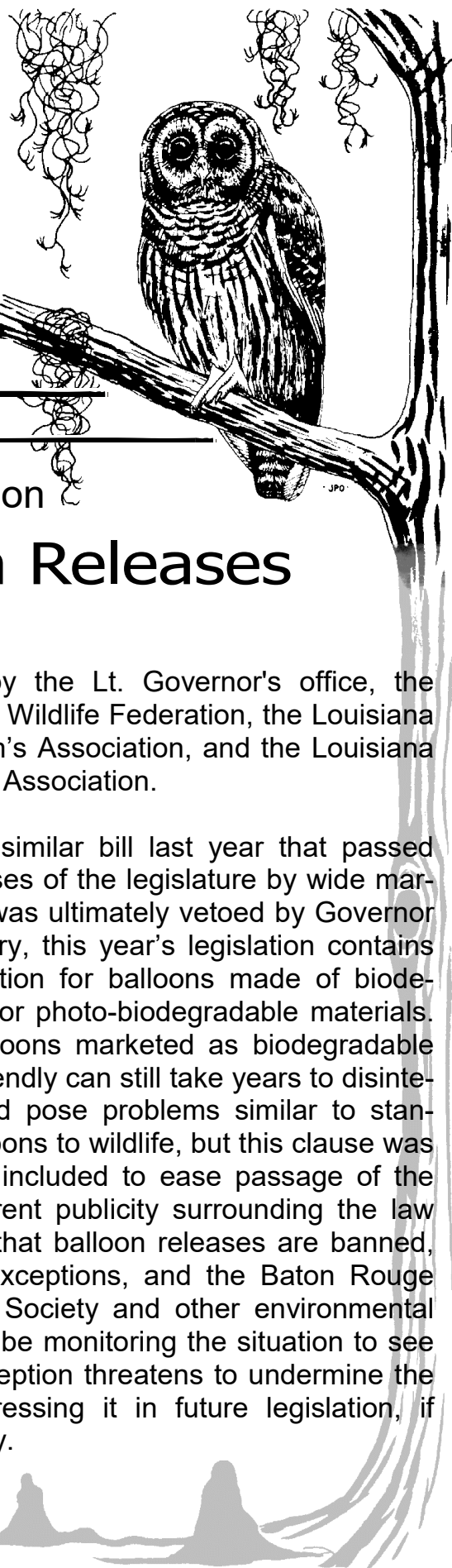
Bans Mass Balloon Releases

by Mark Pethke

Environmental groups statewide cheered the passage of HB 851 prohibiting the mass release of balloons outdoors. The bill became law without the Governor's signature as Act 196 of the 2026 Session of the Louisiana Legislature and takes effect August 1, 2026. It successfully passed the full Senate 32-2, following earlier passage in the House by a vote of 88-6. The new statute bans the intentional outdoor release of lighter than air balloons by persons over the age of sixteen unless the release was for a valid scientific or educational purpose, was a weather balloon, or was a hot air balloon that is recovered after launch, and provides civil penalties for violators. It was sponsored by Rep. John Ilg, (R) Harahan, a board member for Keep Louisiana Beautiful, an agency housed in the office of Lt. Gov. Billy Nungesser that focuses on litter prevention and beautification. Designed to address a particularly noxious form of pollution not covered by existing anti-litter laws, the bill was

backed by the Lt. Governor's office, the Louisiana Wildlife Federation, the Louisiana Cattlemen's Association, and the Louisiana Retailer's Association.

Unlike a similar bill last year that passed both houses of the legislature by wide margins but was ultimately vetoed by Governor Jeff Landry, this year's legislation contains an exception for balloons made of biodegradable or photo-biodegradable materials. Even balloons marketed as biodegradable or eco-friendly can still take years to disintegrate, and pose problems similar to standard balloons to wildlife, but this clause was evidently included to ease passage of the bill. Current publicity surrounding the law stresses that balloon releases are banned, not the exceptions, and the Baton Rouge Audubon Society and other environmental allies will be monitoring the situation to see if the exception threatens to undermine the law, addressing it in future legislation, if necessary.



Volunteer Position Available

BRAS Needs Your Help!

Our illustrious treasurer, Mark Pethke, has notified us that he will not seek re-election next year (2027). As such, we'll need a new treasurer then. We are strongly hoping that there is someone out there willing to take on this important role who can work with Mark for the remainder of this term so that they're prepared next year.

The duties and responsibilities are described below. It's not terribly time-consuming but it is important! The spreadsheet that is used is not complicated, but it would be helpful if the candidate has at least a rudimentary familiarity with spreadsheet programs like Excel.

Please let Jane or Mark know ASAP if you're interested!

Baton Rouge Audubon Society Treasurer Duties,
Revised May 2026

Weekly

1. Pick up mail at least twice monthly, if not weekly. Set aside mail to deliver to others at board meetings.
2. Open checks and deposit into bank account (physically, ATM or remote electronically via mobile app). Pay invoices (check, electronic payments, PayPal, Zelle, Venmo) and file originals. Send any membership forms to Membership Chairperson. Per IRS rules, send letters acknowledging contributions of \$250.00 or more, although typically we've sent them to anybody giving \$100.00 or more.
3. Record income and payments on financial spreadsheet. Note reasons, invoice numbers, etc., in comments. Record in proper categories on spreadsheet.

Monthly

1. Log into PayPal and transfer balances to BRAS bank account at least monthly, more frequently if a membership renewal campaign is in progress. Log as income on spreadsheet. Notify Membership Chairperson of renewing members and updated information, if applicable, and new members with all available information (address, email, phone number, etc.) Let

Membership Chairperson know if members signing up online (new or renewal) desire patches.

2. Provide up to date financial spreadsheet and bank statement to the Executive Board monthly or when requested.
3. Determine if any expenses incurred by members require reimbursement. Require documentation and file in records. Pay reimbursement and note expenses and reasons on spreadsheet.
4. Pay Peveto Woods bills. Currently we pay the Cameron Water District Number 10 by the 15th of the month and Coastal Cans for porta potties.

Quarterly or other intermittent occurrences

1. Deposit donations received through employer matching funds, Facebook donation campaigns, and other third-party sources of funds, and note as donations on spreadsheet.
2. Review rates on certificates of deposit (currently 4 CDs revolving with staggered 6 month terms) and renew or otherwise distribute monies.

Annually

1. File and pay for annual report to maintain non-profit status with Louisiana Secretary of State.
2. File IRS Form 990N (short form), due on the 15th of the fifth month following the end of our financial year. (May 31, so Oct. 15.)
3. Complete necessary financial information regarding income and expenses for National Audubon Annual Report and forward to BRAS President. (January, covering fiscal year running July 1 to June 30.)
4. Review annual liability insurance renewal and make sure direct debit is active.



Hummingbird Celebration

Baton Rouge Audubon is once again partnering with the LSU Ag Center research station in Hammond to celebrate Ruby-throated hummingbird migration. This event will take place on Sept 19, 2026 at the Research Station (21549 Old Covington Highway, Hammond) from 7:00am to 12 noon. There is no charge to attend.

The event will feature:

- Hummingbird viewing stations
- Hummingbird information tables
- Information about plants for hummingbirds with expertise from the Tangipahoa Master Gardener Assoc
- Observe hummingbird banding for research
- Informational program about hummingbirds
- Opportunity to purchase feeders and other merchandise from local specialty stores



New Bog Bridges At Amite River

Another new section of bog bridge has been constructed at our Amite River sanctuary, thanks to Eagle scout candidate, Ben Collins. With the help of family and friends, Ben installed 5 new bridge sections near the junction of Red Fox and Bobcat trails.



Banding Warblers In The ARWS



Thanks to our intrepid Prothonotary warbler bander, Katie Percy, additional bands have been placed on warblers at our Amite River Sanctuary. The day we were able to do the work just happened to be after the area received between 7 and 10 inches of rain, and we were walking in water up to 3 feet high! It was a little disconcerting, but not as bad as I thought it would be. Thanks to Alicia Barnes for coming along and assisting as well!

Peveto Woods Happenings!

Thank you, Southwest Louisiana National Wildlife Refuges Complex, for loaning your Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) to Peveto Woods Bird and Butterfly Sanctuary.

They did an amazing job opening up some of the trails!

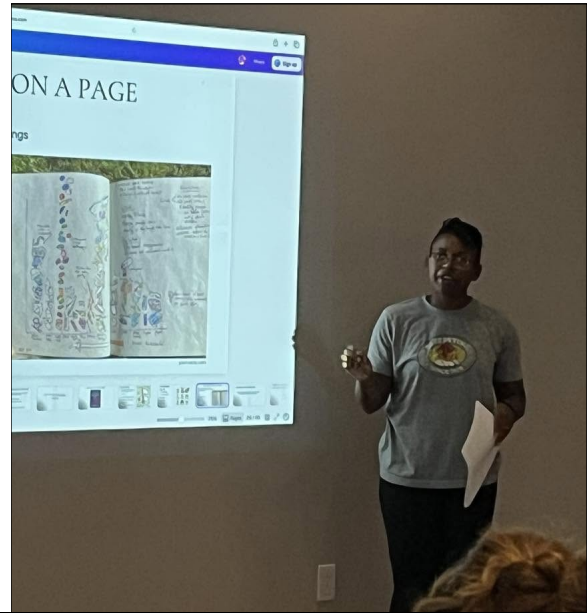


Thank you so much to the Louisiana Ornithological Society (LOS) for donating this picnic table to Peveto Woods Bird & Butterfly Sanctuary, and to Paul Zimmerman for helping with the delivery and setup! It will get plenty of use.

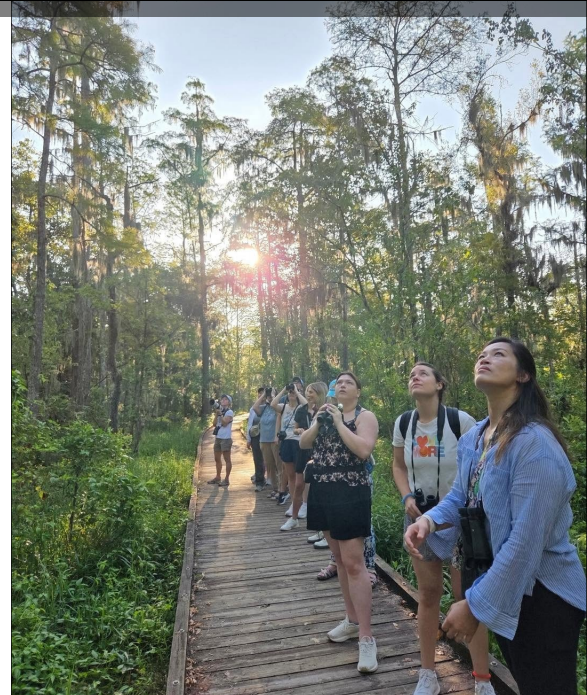
As always, everyone is reminded we have no trash pickup at Peveto, so all waste needs to be packed out!



The Mindfulness Workshop...



...spearheaded by members Alicia Barnes and Britni Serou was a great success and resulted in a wonderful donation by the attendees to Baton Rouge Audubon Society. This two day event featured a gentle yoga session led by yogi Britni Serou at her yoga studio, Downtown Yoga in Hammond, LA. Then Alicia led a guided nature journaling session to help the group explore new ways to express themselves and capture experiences. Jane did an introduction to birding skills and led the group on an early morning bird walk the next morning. The workshop ended with another journaling exercise and meditation and gratitude for all nature has to offer. Many thanks to all who participated and especially to Alicia and Britni for organizing this special event.



BRAS PROGRAM SCHEDULE

September 30

Banding Together for Birds: What 15-years of Bird Banding through the Louisiana Bird Observatory has Revealed.

Since 2010, more than 600 volunteers have helped the Louisiana Bird Observatory uncover the hidden lives of Louisiana's birds. What began as a single bird-banding station has grown into a network of research sites, generating over 25,000 banding and recapture records. Join us as we hear from Dr. Erik Johnson, one of the principals of LABO, explore what tiny bands have revealed about the molt, breeding biology, migration, and longevity of the amazing birds that call Louisiana home.

Join us at the Main Baton Rouge library on Goodwood Blvd in Baton Rouge. At 6:30 we will have refreshments and time to socialize. The program will start at 7:00pm. A Zoom option is available. Please see braudubon.org/calendar for link to Zoom registration.

October 28

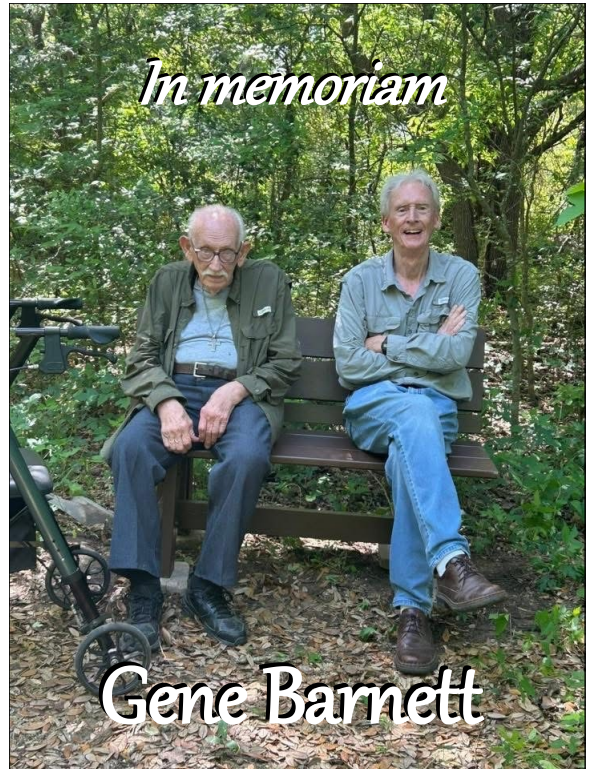
Katherine Gividen will present BATS
(just in time for Halloween)

November 16

Gina Periou, of the Wild Birds Unlimited store on Perkins Road in Baton Rouge will talk to us about backyard bird feeding and attracting and caring for wild birds in our yards.

December 16 (tentative)

Holiday potluck dinner and social gathering



This past July we lost a great friend and supporter of Peveto Woods, Gene Barnett. Gene and his friend Bill Gover spent many a day over the years installing and maintaining benches at the sanctuary. We plan to install a bench in his honor in the future. Thanks for your hard work and dedication, Gene!



Do you have your 2026 Baton Rouge Audubon Sanctuary patch?

The 2026 BR Audubon sanctuary patch features an adult male Cape May warbler, rendered in wonderful detail by Donna Dittmann. If you are an active BR Audubon member and you wish to receive a 2026 patch, please contact Mark Pethke at

treasurer@braudubon.org

Meet Cathy Hansen & Kate Stewart!

Introducing our new Vice President!

If you don't know Cathy Hansen, be sure to say "*hello*" at one of our meetings and thank her for volunteering! Cathy is a native and lifelong resident of Baton Rouge and is honored to serve as Vice President of the Baton Rouge Audubon Society. After retiring from a career in state government in information technology, she has been able to spend even more time enjoying the outdoors.



Whether she's camping, fishing, hiking, or traveling in search of new adventures, Cathy has always found balance and inspiration in nature. Her interest in birding began in 2014 when she took an LSU leisure class on bird watching taught by Jane Patterson. What started as curiosity grew into a lasting passion for birds, conservation, and sharing the natural world with others. Cathy is also an active member of the Louisiana Master Natural-

ists of Greater Baton Rouge, where she served for six years on the Board of Directors, including three years as secretary. Cathy looks forward to supporting the Society's mission and helping others discover the joy of birding and the natural beauty of Louisiana.

Introducing our new volunteer Programs coordinator!

Kate Stewart has been birding for two years and her favorite bird is the Mississippi Kite. Her other hobbies are sewing and watching Formula 1 racing. She lives in Baton Rouge with her husband and four pets.



Welcome, Kate! And thank you so much for volunteering so that we can continue offering programs to Baton Rouge Audubon members and the public!



BRAS Election Results



Annual officer elections were conducted in May 2026 to elect new officers and At Large board members for the Baton Rouge Audubon Society. Several of our At Large members also serve on committees. We are pleased to announce the following results:

Officers

Jane Patterson - President
Cathy Hansen - Vice President
Donna LaFleur - Secretary
Mark Pethke - Treasurer

Board Members at Large

Colette Dean (Programs committee)
Katherine Gividen (general)
Erik Johnson (general)
Casey Wright (general)
Debbie Taylor (hospitality)
Maddi Cowen (field trips)

As always, all of these are volunteer positions. We extend our deepest gratitude to all of these folks for offering their time to support our organization!

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**

Baton Rouge Audubon Officers

President

Jane Patterson
president@braudubon.org

Vice-President

Cathy Hansen
vice-president@braudubon.org

Secretary

Donna LaFleur
secretary@braudubon.org

Treasurer

Mark Pethke
treasurer@braudubon.org

Committee Chairs

Conservation

Richard Condrey
conservation@braudubon.org

Education

Jane Patterson
education@braudubon.org

Membership

Heather Wilson 985/768-9285
membership@braudubon.org

Sanctuaries

Charlotte Chehotsky
sanctuary@braudubon.org

At Large Members...

Maddi Cowen (Field Trips)
Colette Dean (Programs)
Debbie Taylor (Hospitality)
Casey Wright (general)
Katherine Gividen (general)
Erik Johnson (La Bird Observatory)

Webmaster

Daniel Patterson
webmaster@braudubon.org

Newsletter

Steve Mumford
newsletter@braudubon.org

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newsletter@braudubon.org

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



Baton Rouge Chapter of the National Audubon Society

Baton Rouge Audubon Society

P.O. Box 67016

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Join online at www.braudubon.org/join

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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 online 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