

# The **BARRED OWL**

Newsletter of the Baton Rouge Audubon Society

Volume XXXVIII, Number 1

1st Quarter, 2011

## Peveto Woods Sanctuary Receives a Beach Make-Over!

**A**lton Pucket with LSU AgCenter Youth Development organized a beach planting along a section of the Cameron coast that included our entire beach front at the sanctuary. A school bus of students from St. Martin Catholic School in Lake Charles arrived on the morning of Sept 20th along with a truck full of Bitter Panicum. The students were instructed in the planting technique for the grass and started spreading out along the beach. Teams worked together in digging and setting the small bunches in place. In one day the entire stretch in front of Peveto Woods was planted with hundreds of sprigs. The plants will serve to knock down the blowing sand and initiate the building of sand dunes. As the dunes build, the grass will continue to grow above them continuing the process. Thanks to Alton and the students for contributing to the restoration effort along our beach front.



The fall season has provided several special treats along with a lot of good birding as migrants moved through Louisiana. The day of the beach planting was also the day a Townsend's Warbler was found in the sanctuary. LOS weekend produced a steady stream of visitors. Many were treated to good looks at a Black-headed Grosbeak at the water hole. This has also been a great winter for hawks at Peveto Woods. A Ferruginous Hawk was seen for several weeks just west of the sanctuary and there still continues to be a large winter population of Red-tailed Hawks around the sanctuary. Nine were counted at one time in December hunting over the sanctuary.

Dave Patton  
Sanctuary Chairman

### The 111th Christmas Bird Count

**P**lease join us on January 2nd for the Baton Rouge Christmas Bird Count. Those interested in participating should contact Jeff Harris at [jwharris30@gmail.com](mailto:jwharris30@gmail.com) as soon as possible. For those who might like to join other counts around the state a list can be found at [losbird.org](http://losbird.org). This is a wonderful opportunity to enjoy good fellowship and contribute to one of the largest, longest-running and most important Citizen Science initiatives ever.

*Eric Liffmann*  
President, Baton Rouge Audubon Society

(Read more about the CBC on page 6)

# BRAS Field Trips

Jeff Harris reporting:

**Bird Walk at Bluebonnet Swamp** - The bird walk is a monthly event scheduled for the first Saturday of every month. Because the first Saturday of January 2011 falls on New Year's Day, Jane Patterson will lead a birdwalk through the Bluebonnet Swamp and Nature Center on January 8, 2011. Jane is the Educational Director for BRAS and an excellent birder. Bluebonnet Swamp consists of about 65 acres of cypress-tupelo swamp with an additional 40 acres of woodland trails, making it a wildlife oasis in the middle of urban Baton Rouge. Please encourage novice birders, even children, or other nature lovers to attend. These walks are excellent opportunities to get help with bird identification, and it is a great way to meet others who share similar interests. If interested in participating, please meet Jane in the parking lot near the Nature Center at 10503 N. Oak Hills Parkway, Baton Rouge, LA 70810. Admission fee: \$2.00 for children (3-18 years old), \$3.00 for adults and \$2.50 for seniors (> 64 years old).

The next Bird Walk at Bluebonnet Swamp will be held February 5, 2011 at 7:00 AM.

**Field Trip to Lake Ramsey WMA on Sat., January 23, 2011** - Erik Johnson, a Ph.D. student in the Department of Renewable Natural Resources at LSU, will lead this outing. Erik studies the ecology of birds in the Amazon river basin of South America, and he is an excellent birder with much experience tromping around Louisiana. He will lead us through remnants of a Longleaf Pine savannah that is fire-managed to support the unique plant communities of this ecosystem. We will likely see common wintering birds, especially various sparrows. Erik will also capture and band a few Henslow's Sparrows and Sedge Wrens so that participants see these species up close. Lake Ramsey WMA is located 7 miles northwest of Covington. Participants should meet at the head of the Nature Trail, which is near a barn, on Horse Branch Rd. at 8:00 am. If people need directions, they can email Erik at [ejohn33@tigers.lsu.edu](mailto:ejohn33@tigers.lsu.edu). People wishing to carpool from Baton Rouge can meet Jeff Harris at Coffee Call between 6:00-6:30 am. It takes about an hour and half to drive to the WMA from Baton Rouge, so departure from Coffee Call will be prompt at 6:30 am.

Participants should be prepared with rubber boots (knee boots are ideal), layers of clothing, and the usual gear (binocs, water, food, etc).

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## The Barred Owl

is published quarterly by the  
Baton Rouge chapter of the NAS.  
Submissions should be emailed to  
[newsletter@braudubon.org](mailto:newsletter@braudubon.org)

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

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

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## Baton Rouge Audubon Society

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The Baton Rouge Audubon website has had a facelift!  
Visit today to see what's new! [www.braudubon.org](http://www.braudubon.org)



# Small-scale Marsh Restoration is Underway at the Paul J. Rainey Wildlife Sanctuary

December 7, 2010  
Karen Westphal

**S**mall-scale marsh restoration at the Paul J. Rainey Wildlife Sanctuary was officially started on November 22, 2010 with the first mud pumped from the adjacent canal to the target test area by the Audubon owned mini-dredge, the "John James." This is part of a project initiated through and partially funded by Together-Green.

Timmy Vincent and Karen Westphal of the National Audubon Society handled the dredge and the Louisiana State University group consisting of Dr. Irv Mendelssohn, Sean Graham, John Cross and Joe Baustian handled the pond preparations. Settling disks for measuring the depth of fill were placed in the pond connected to cane poles that were marked with the target fill-elevation. Eddie Weeks from LSU brought a remote controlled plane mounted with a remotely operated camera to provide an aerial overview of the operation.

The dredge pipe used to convey sediment from the dredge in the



**The small dredge (at the bottom of the photo) pumps mud that has settled on the bottom of the canal through a 4" hose across the spoil bank and into a pond that was created by Hurricane Ike in 2008.**

canal to the pond was assembled on top of the previously constructed walkway to have a limited impact on existing marsh. The test area will be used to explore various dredge and fill techniques as we learn how to utilize the small dredge most efficiently. LSU has selected the eastern end of the 16-acre pond for their study area, and dredging to fill each of the 1/3-acre cells will be started sometime after the holidays.

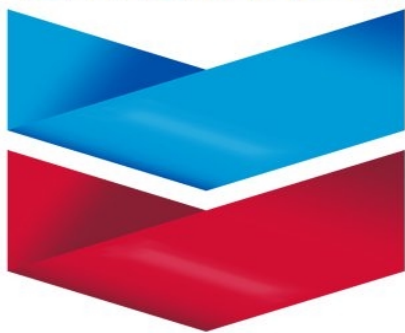
The first trial was with the open end of the pipe curved around under the walkway and into a small cove on the east side of our test area. We had access to the pipe end this way to watch closely the result of what was done at the dredge. The aerial pictures were taken during this time. The next trial was with a "spreader" attached to the end of the hose that sprayed the mud from 6 feet high over a larger area. Both resulted in a build-up of material that was readily apparent. The heavier parts of the material settle relatively quickly in the quiet waters of the shallow embayment, with the

plume of finer material spreading very slowly into the larger pond. By the next day, the water is clear enough to see the bottom and observe the results of our time and effort.

We decided not to use containment (yet) since the sediment seems to drop out rather quickly, and the wind seems to be keeping the plume of finer sediment on our side of the pond. After a cumulative 10 hours of intermittent pumping, it appears that the entire test area has been coated with a layer of sediment (none of the settling disks were visible), and approximately 3 sq ft of "land" has been built in a semicircle around the spreader. This is not up to the target marsh level, but I'm guessing this was about 6-10 inches of fill for about a 4th of the test area. We have been estimating that it would take a minimum of 40 hours of dredging to fill the area under the best conditions at the maximum production level for our pump, so we feel that this is a very good start as we learn to use the dredge.

**Baton Rouge Audubon thanks**

**Chevron**



**for their sponsorship of our education programs!**



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# The Scientific Importance of Bird Banding in Baton Rouge ~ a Historical Perspective ~

by Jared Wolfe, Programs Chair

*This is the second of two installments detailing the cultural and scientific importance of monitoring our local bird communities.*

**P**eople have been marking birds in order to send and receive messages since 200 BC. However, nobody was marking birds for scientific purposes until a Haitian-born Frenchman working in the United States became interested in migrant bird site fidelity (faithfulness). In 1803, John James Audubon tied a piece of silver wire around the leg of a nestling Eastern Wood-pewee in order to determine if migrant birds faithfully returned to their breeding grounds; the bird was subsequently re-sighted the following year. Several decades later, Ernest Thompson Seton (a Scots-Canadian, naturalized U.S. citizen and founding pioneer of the Boy Scouts of America) was studying bird movements by marking Snow Buntings with ink. Despite initial interest in marking and banding birds, early pursuits were unregulated and not systematic until 1899 when Denmark began the first regimented and scientific bird banding program. A few years later, American ornithologists Leon Cole and P.A. Taverner began promoting a similar regulated bird banding program in the United States.



from 33 bird banding stations to illustrate how global climatic phenomenon, such as the El Niño Southern and North Atlantic Oscillations, strongly influenced prey availability and subsequent warbler reproductive success. Similarly, biologists associated with the longest-running bird banding project in Costa Rica (Tortuguero Integrated Bird Monitoring Project) used banding data to describe the inability of migrating birds to deposit crucial fat stores during El Niño events. This finding is important because biologists from Dartmouth College and Patuxent Wildlife Research Center used Black-throated Blue Warbler banding data to determine that the majority of bird deaths (85%) occurred during migratory periods. Our collective understanding of how climate change influences birds during all phases of the avian life-cycle is enhanced by bird banding. Knowledge of habitat, demographics and climatic interactions ultimately leads to informed and wise management decisions – in other words,

*(Continued on page 6)*



According to the North American Banding Council, “in 1904 Taverner placed a note in the Auk, offering bird bands to ornithologists wishing to cooperate in a banding project. James H. Fleming of Toronto, Ontario, was the first to use these bands, in 1905.” The 1904 distribution of aluminum bands signified the beginning of a systematic American bird banding scheme for scientific and conservation purposes.

Since Taverner’s preliminary band distribution program, marking and banding birds is commonly used to monitor the fate of endangered species from California Condors to Kirtland’s Warblers. Bird banding is also used to study bird demographics (survivorship and population growth) and how birds respond to climatic change. For example, the Institute for Bird Populations used data





## Peveto Woods Sanctuary Receives a Make-Over!



### BRAS EMAIL LIST

If you would like to be informed of upcoming Baton Rouge Audubon events via email, send a request to Jane Patterson at [Education@braudubon.org](mailto:Education@braudubon.org) and you'll be added to the BRAS email list.

## What Our Friends Are Doing

### LSU HILLTOP ARBORETUM SYMPOSIUM 2011

*"Lively Gardens: Flora and Fauna"*

Saturday, January 15, 2011  
8:30 am – 1:00 pm

LSU DESIGN CENTER AUDITORIUM

Hilltop Members: \$45  
Non-members and guests: \$60

For more information or to register,  
call 225-767-6916 or e-mail us at [hilltop@tigers.lsu.edu](mailto:hilltop@tigers.lsu.edu).  
Proceeds benefit the educational programs of the Arboretum.

BRAS wishes to acknowledge  
**Downtown Kiwanis Club  
of Baton Rouge**  
for their support of our  
Education Programs



*Thank you so much!*

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## More on the Christmas Bird Count from Audubon.org:

*(Continued from page 1)*

From December 14 through January 5 tens of thousands of volunteers throughout the Americas take part in an adventure that has become a family tradition among generations. Families and students, birders and scientists, armed with binoculars, bird guides and checklists go out on an annual mission - often before dawn. For over one hundred years, the desire to both make a difference and to experience the beauty of nature has driven dedicated people to leave the comfort of a warm house during the Holiday season.

Each of the citizen scientists who annually braves snow, wind, or rain, to take part in the Christmas Bird Count makes an enormous contribution to conservation. Audubon and other organizations use data collected in this longest-running wildlife census to assess the health of bird populations - and to help guide conservation action.

From feeder-watchers and field observers to count compilers and regional editors, everyone who takes part in the Christmas Bird Count does it for love of birds and the excitement of friendly competition -- and with the knowledge that their efforts are making a difference for science and bird conservation.

Prior to the turn of the century, people engaged in a holiday tradition known as the Christmas "Side Hunt": They would choose sides and

go afield with their guns; whoever brought in the biggest pile of feathered (and furred) quarry won.

Conservation was in its beginning stages around the turn of the 20th century, and many observers and scientists were becoming concerned about declining bird populations. Beginning on Christmas Day 1900, ornithologist Frank Chapman, an early officer in the then budding Audubon Society, proposed a new holiday tradition-a "Christmas Bird Census"-that would count birds in the holidays rather than hunt them.

So began the Christmas Bird Count. Thanks to the inspiration of Frank M. Chapman and the enthusiasm of twenty-seven dedicated birders, twenty-five Christmas Bird Counts were held that day. The locations ranged from Toronto, Ontario to Pacific Grove, California with most counts in or near the population centers of northeastern North America. Those original 27 Christmas Bird Counters tallied around 90 species on all the counts combined.

The data collected by observers over the past century allow researchers, conservation biologists, and other interested individuals to study the long-term health and status of bird populations across North America. When combined with other surveys such as the Breeding Bird Survey, it provides a picture of how the continent's bird populations have changed in time and space

over the past hundred years.

The long term perspective made possible by the Christmas Bird Count is vital for conservationists. It informs strategies to protect birds and their habitat - and helps identify environmental issues with implications for people as well. For example, local trends in bird populations can indicate habitat fragmentation or signal an immediate environmental threat, such as groundwater contamination or poisoning from improper use of pesticides.

In the 1980's CBC data documented the decline of wintering populations of the American Black Duck, after which conservation measures were put into effect to reduce hunting pressure on this species. More recently, in 2009, the data were instrumental in Audubon's Birds & Climate Change analysis, which documented range shifts of bird species over time. In 2007, the data were instrumental in the development of two Audubon State of the Birds Reports - Common Birds in Decline, which revealed that some of America's most beloved and familiar birds have taken a nosedive over the past forty years, and WatchList 2007, which identified 178 rarer species in the continental U.S. and 39 in Hawaii that are imperiled. These three reports helped scientists and policymakers to both identify threats to birds and habitat, and promote broad awareness of the need to address them.

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## The Scientific Importance of Bird Banding in Baton Rouge

*(Continued from page 4)*

there is a finite amount of money for conservation and bird banding data can help us spend it wisely.

Recognizing the scientific importance of establishing a bird banding program, Baton Rouge Audubon Society partnered with BREC and LSU to create the Bluebonnet Bird Monitoring Project (BBMP). Since March-2010, volunteers help safely capture, band, measure and release resident and migrant birds in one of the last vestiges



of mature forest in Baton Rouge. BBMP data will be used to determine if remnant patches of forest in Baton Rouge provide migrating birds with quality 'stopover' habitat. Biologists and volunteers associated with BBMP will also be generating demographic estimates for resident birds to ensure that our common birds remain common. BBMP volunteers and biologists have worked hard to lay the ground-work for quality bird banding programs in Baton Rouge and will continue to provide our community with sound science and unique outreach opportunities. If you are interested in learning more about BBMP, please visit us online: [www.braudubon.org/bluebonnet-swamp-bird-monitoring.php](http://www.braudubon.org/bluebonnet-swamp-bird-monitoring.php)



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# Winter Hummingbird Tour

**T**he Audubon Christmas Bird Count is an annual event. Birders and bird lovers around Baton Rouge look for all the birds in our area, but there's a particular group that's looking for the rarest and tiny birds. Every winter, several species of hummingbird that don't technically "belong" here, show up in our yards and gar-

dens. Dennis Demcheck heads up the team that helps to document all of these hummingbirds for the Christmas count. But then comes the best part...we all get to see them! Some time in January, keep your eye out for an announcement about the Baton Rouge Winter Hummingbird tour. The tour usually features several



houses that host a variety of hummingbirds – Rufous, Calliope, Buff-bellied, and Black-chinned are pretty much a given. If we're lucky there will also be a Broad-billed, a Broad-tailed, an Anna's, or something else really special.

You'll also get to see the gardens that are designed to attract these wonderful birds and learn what to grow to try to attract them to your yard. Don't miss it!

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## 6th Annual Eagle Expo

**D**o you love Eagles? Who doesn't? Mark your calendar for the end of January. It's the 6th annual Eagle Expo in Morgan City, LA. This wonderful event feature boat tours into various waterways to view eagle's nests. There will presentations on the American bald eagle, wildlife, flora, fauna and the culture of the area by wildlife professionals and photographers, and much more. For more information and to find the registration form, visit <http://www.cajuncoast.com/public/events/eagleexpo/>



Baton Rouge Chapter of the National Audubon Society

**Baton Rouge Audubon Society**

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If your membership expires, you will no longer receive *The Barred Owl*. Well, eventually we 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*.

**Patches** Extra sanctuary patches or patches for NAS members are \$10 each and can be ordered by mailing the form below. 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
- # \_\_\_\_\_ of patches (indicate 1 which is free with BRAS membership; additional patches \$10 each; NAS member patches @ \$10 each; no patch will be sent if there is no indication.)

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Baton Rouge Audubon Society; PO Box 67016; Baton Rouge, LA

**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.