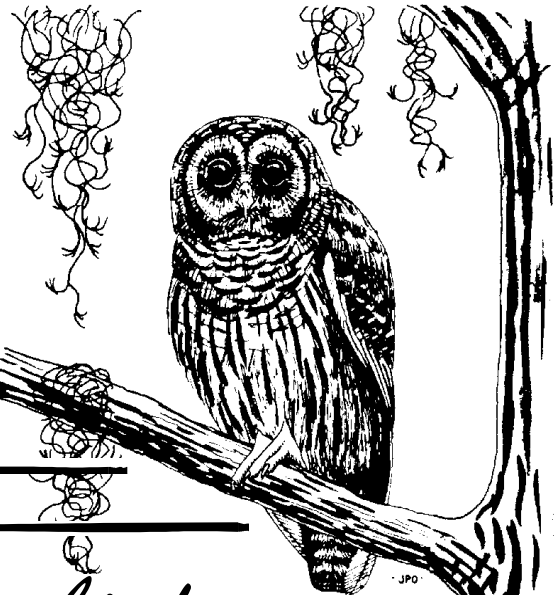


# The **BARRED OWL**

Newsletter of the Baton Rouge Audubon Society

Volume XXXIX, Number 4

4th Quarter, 2012



## How to report your rare bird . . .

**C**ongratulations, you just observed a rare bird in Louisiana during the Baton Rouge Christmas Bird Count! While still in the glow of your stellar find, someone asks that you please submit your record to the appropriate database. For some, this is a chance to share the image they struggled to capture or to share the plumage details they worked so hard to record in their field notebook. For others, it might seem like a burden. We want to clarify the process to ease the stress and uncertainty, but also to let you know why it's important. For a thorough treatment of bird record documentation, Donna Dittmann and Greg



Lasley have an excellent article at the LOS website (<http://losbird.org>). OK, It's time to triage your Green-tailed Towhee observation.

First step: How rare is this bird? For this information, you can check a couple of resources. The first is the bar chart from Lowery's *Louisiana Birds*. Although dated, most of the species are still fairly accurate and provide a good starting point. A copy of the chart can be found at the Louisiana Bird Resource Office website (<http://birdoffice.lsu.edu/>) and then look under the Resources tab for a PDF of the chart.

You can also check the eBird (<http://ebird.org>) bar chart for Louisiana to get an idea of the relative rarity of your observation. The thin green line in the bar chart for Green-tailed Towhee suggests this is a rare observation. The Louisiana Bird Resource Office, a unit of the LSU Museum of Natural Science, has kept rare bird records for more than 50 years. One can still visit the mu-

(Continued on page 5)

National Audubon Society co-hosts meeting October 9-10, 2012 at LSU

### "Answering 10 Fundamental Questions About Mississippi River Delta Restoration"

The final meeting of the Mississippi River Delta Science and Engineering Special Team (SEST), a network of eminent scientists and engineers convened by the National Audubon Society, the Environmental Defense Fund, and the National Wildlife Federation to provide objective and independent analysis pertaining to Mississippi River Delta restoration, will be held October 9-10, 2012 at LSU's Dalton J. Woods Auditorium in the rotunda of the Energy, Coast and Environment Building on Nicholson Drive Extension.

G. Paul Kemp, past Chair of BRAS's Conservation Committee, has played a prominent role in this effort and is co-author of three of the presentations. Other presenters include avid birder David Muth and novice BRAS birder Richard Condrey. The meeting is free and open to the interested public.

For more information, please visit <http://www.mississippiriverdelta.org/registration-sest-conference-2012/>

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Submissions should be emailed to  
newsletter@braudubon.org

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

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P.O. Box 67016  
Baton Rouge, LA 70896

An Update on . . .

## Dr. Jay Huner's Big Louisiana Year

On January 1st, Dr. Jay Huner set out on a remarkable quest. It is not one of speed or might, but is instead a feat of endurance: a 365-day slog to find as many species as possible within the state boundaries of Louisiana. Enduring mosquitos, horse flies, chiggers, sand flies, heat, cold, rain, and gas prices, Dr. Huner has pushed on for nine full months. It requires jumping in your car to drive 3 or more hours on a moment's notice, lots of time in the field searching for rare birds, and it doesn't hurt to have a little luck.

Dr. Huner started birding in 1998 and his birding mentor, Mike Musumeche, encouraged him to keep a life list. It wasn't long until that he started keeping year lists. This soon became a personal competition to better each of his previous years. At the time of his retirement in 2009, Dr. Huner had managed to reach a top year list in the 290's, but the landmark of 300 was in his sights... and he achieved this the following year.

To find 300 species in a calendar year in Louisiana is nothing to shake a stick at. It requires luck, patience, and probably more than a little obsession. As of September 15th, 2012, Dr. Huner stands proudly at a remarkable 335 species, already among the largest year lists in Louisiana ornithological history. And this is no ordinary list. It contains birds that many Louisiana birders have never seen: Band-rumped Storm-Petrel, Ruff, White-tailed Hawk, and Yellow-green Vireo just to name a few. In fact, he has seen 21 species that are on the Louisiana Bird Record Committee's "Review List" – these are among the rarest of birds that have been found in LA.



So why does one do a Big Year? Craziness? Perhaps (I hope you saw the movie, "The Big Year"?). Dedication? Certainly. Generosity? In Dr. Huner's case, absolutely. In fact, he is humbly doing this Big Louisiana Year, traveling around the state largely on his own dime, to selflessly promote Baton Rouge Audubon Society's annual fundraising campaign that will help the Society advance its mission to protect land for Louisiana's birds.

A portion of the funds raised through Dr. Huner's Big Louisiana Year will support the Yellow Rails and Rice Festival, which takes place each year in late October. The majority of the donations will be used to establish a land acquisition fund that will be used to purchase, restore, and protect important bird habitat near Baton Rouge that will be accessible to bird watchers and nature enthusiasts.

Please help support Dr. Jay Huner build his list by immediately reporting unusual bird sightings to Baton Rouge Audubon leaders, LABird, or directly to Dr. Huner. One can visit <http://braudubon.org/jays-big-year.php> to keep up with his progress and to pledge a donation for every bird that he finds in 2012 to support Baton Rouge Audubon Society's mission to protect important bird habitat.

Anyone who is reading this probably wants to see more birds in this world. If this can be achieved by the good will of a single birder and the support of their community, than we have all had a Big Year.

**Erik I. Johnson, Vice President**  
**Baton Rouge Audubon Society**

Baton Rouge Audubon Society



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**One of my very favorite things**

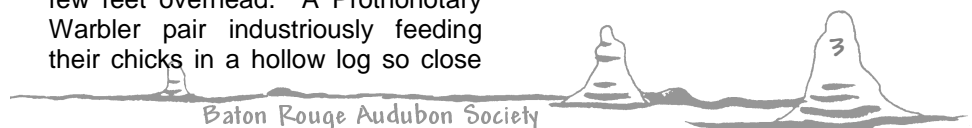
about birding is that it has taken me places that I never would have otherwise traveled. Places in Louisiana, to be sure, but now also to other countries. Here in Louisiana, I can remember asking my husband what a Wildlife Management Area is for and can just anyone go to a National Wildlife Refuge? Getting to know more about this natural state we live

in has been a joy. But in addition to adventuring to places I've never been, birding has also taken me there in new ways. Our family had a canoe as I was growing up, and I paddled the mighty Tittabawasee river near Midland MI with my family quite a bit. But I was always leery of kayaks. They looked so unstable. Frankly, learning to roll in a kayak has never been on my list of skills to master! I was intrigued by the boats, but too nervous. However, I was given a chance to try out kayaking while on a birding trip to Jekyll Island Georgia. It only took one try to get me hooked. The water was calm so I didn't feel like I was going to tip over, and we could literally glide within feet of water birds. There was no sound except the dripping of the paddles. What a way to experience nature! My next hurdle was to figure

out how to handle a boat by myself. Hoisting a 50 pound boat over my head to the top of my car was just out of the question. But I had to buy a rack to carry the boat on my car, and lo and behold, the Yakima rack people had a solution for this! They offer a "boat-loader" that extends a bar out to the side of your car so you can lever the boat up without having to lift the full weight. With that I was in business! I found my first boat on sale on Black Friday; got a really good deal! I first put in at Black Lake near Natchitoches at my in-laws house. What a thrill to glide along in just a few inches of water, over flats of hyacinth, right under the bluebirds and nuthatches and kinglets! I also felt a poignant regret that I had waited so long to do this, and that I hadn't bought a kayak years ago when my kids were little.

I've been kayaking, and birding by kayak, in several areas of the state now. I find I prefer the cover of the cypress-tupelo forest most of all. One of my favorite spots is Lake Martin near Breaux Bridge. Now, most of the south end of the lake is off-limits for a good portion of the year because of the rookery there -- they don't want anyone disturbing the birds. But that leaves a good size area along the edges of the lake that can be explored and most of it's shaded by the cypress and tupelo canopy. Imagine gliding along and looking up to see a Barred Owl just a few feet overhead. A Prothonotary Warbler pair industriously feeding their chicks in a hollow log so close

you could touch it. A pair of Pileated Woodpeckers wrestling with a snake just a few feet over the water. A thousand swallows swirling around the boat in a feeding frenzy. The alien eye and silent bubbles of an alligator that silently submerges as you approach. It's a wonderful way to experience nature in Louisiana. I can't recommend it highly enough.



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# Baton Rouge Christmas Bird Count

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When Kimberly Lanka asked her soon-to-be-8-years-old son Gavin what he wanted for his birthday, his answer was a bit unusual. He asked that the friends he would invite to his birthday party contribute to the Audubon Society rather than bring him presents. Last week, Gavin proudly handed over two crisp \$100 bills to Jane Patterson as a contribution to the Baton Rouge Audubon Society. We're so proud to have Gavin as a friend!

## BRAS Programs

### Another Season of Exciting BRAS Speakers

This season's BRAS monthly speaker series represents an exciting line-up of local and international experts in their respective fields. In September we learned about **Dr. Sabrina Taylor's** work in Peru on Humboldt Penguins and in New Zealand on Saddlebacks. Participants learned about unique Southern Hemispheric ecological systems and the beautiful birds that inhabit them.

Coming-up on 25-October LSU PhD Candidate, **Cesar Sanchez-Morales**, an expert on tropical birds, will present on the natural history of birds from his home country of Costa Rica. On 29-November Hummingbird expert, **Nancy Newfield**, will present "*Confessions of an Obsessed Hummingbirder*" where audiences will follow the fun and adventures of Nancy as she 'discovered' hummingbirds in Louisiana and elsewhere.

Later in the winter and spring we will hear from **Karl Mokross** about the fascinating behavior of mixed species flocks, **Dr. Sammy King** about the hidden lives of Louisiana's marsh birds and **Dr. Jay Huner** will detail highlights of his big year fundraiser.

Finally, in May 2013, renowned bird watcher and bird artist, **David Sibley**, has agreed to present a public talk and conduct a 1-day advanced bird watching course in and around Baton Rouge. More details about David Sibley's visit will be available shortly on the Baton Rouge Audubon website: <http://www.braudubon.org/>.

**Jared Wolfe**  
**BRAS Programs Chair**





# Storm Tossed . . .

by Jane Patterson

For many of us, birders and non-birders alike, a trip to New Orleans on I-10 included a quest. As we approached the intersection of the I-10 & I-310, we would search quickly to see if we could find the Bald Eagle nest in the cypress. If we were lucky, we'd see the eagles themselves. If we were \*really\* lucky we'd catch a quick glimpse of the chicks on the nest in the spring of the year. Hard to birdwatch while whizzing by at 60 miles an hour! That nest has been used by that pair of eagles for several successful years in a row. But no more. Alas, the nest came down during Hurricane Isaac. Although the eagles will very likely nest again in the area, it's doubtful they'll choose a spot that is accessible to so many people. Likewise with the nest near Ramah-Maringuoin that I've been watching for several years (pictured).



This nest was in a large water oak tree in the middle of a farmer's field. It was in a remote area, but just a short jaunt from the interstate. It was far enough from the road that the eagles were not harassed by folks watching from the road. And best of all, the nest and its inhabitants were not blocked by foliage when the tree leafed out. For 3 years, we watched this eagle pair raise its chicks from tiny wobbly fuzzy babies to robust, magnificent young birds. I took all my bird classes to this spot, and for many people these were the first Bald Eagles they had seen in real life. They are a fierce and wonderful species. It saddens me that this nest, too, has fallen from the tree. I know the birds are resilient and they will find another spot, and I can only hope they find a place that works for them but that also lets us watch them raise their young; it's such a thrill! The other nest in the Baton Rouge area at Farr Park south of LSU, appears to be intact, and eagles have been seen in the area. Let's all hope for nest success this year! If you hear about or know of another Bald Eagle nest in the area, I'd love to hear about it!



## How to report your rare bird . . .

(Continued from page 1)

seum (by appointment) and check historical records submitted by Louisiana birder's of yesteryear. To keep this tradition and valuable resource alive, an Important Bird Record submission is requested. You can enter this information through the online data entry portal at the Bird Office's Important Record Database (<http://birdoffice.lsu.edu>). The rule of thumb for these records is that if it is flagged in eBird as an outlier, it's worth a submission to the database. Hopefully one day soon there will be connectivity between these two databases. Thank you for your record! Recent Important Bird

Records can be seen at [birdoffice.lsu.edu](http://birdoffice.lsu.edu). This portal can also be searched for all records that have been entered.

Now you have one more question to ask, is Green-tailed Towhee on the Louisiana Review List? To find out, check the Louisiana Ornithological Society website for the list at [losbird.org](http://losbird.org). In this case, Green-tailed Towhee is on the Review List. If it's on the list, a dedicated group of Louisiana bird experts and archivists would like to add your observation to the historical record of Louisiana Ornithology. This is called the Long

Form and it can also be found at [losbird.org](http://losbird.org). Most of us don't get to fill this out very often, so consider it a badge of honor and history will smile on your efforts.



# Louisiana Ornithological Society (LOS) 2012 Fall Meeting



**Friday and Saturday, October 26-27  
Cameron**

Please pre-register by October 15th

## FRIDAY

**Friday Evening: First Baptist Church in Cameron, 110 School Street off of Marshall Street (the main street)**

**6 P.M.-7 P.M. Registration:** Light snacks will be provided by the Cameron Parish Tourist Commission.

**7 P.M.-8 P.M. Meeting and Evening Program  
Colombian Specialties**

**Jane Patterson** is current President of Baton Rouge Audubon Society, as well as the Education chair. She is still fairly new to birding, with just 7 years under her belt, but has gotten into it in a big way. Jane has started a bird club for kids in Baton Rouge, and also teaches beginning bird classes for adults through the LSU Leisure Class system. During the day, she's a geek. She's Assistant Director for the State Office of Telecommunication Management and is in charge of network operations. She's found that birding is a wonderful counterpoint to her technical work, and has combined the two to become a pretty geeky birder.

Come follow the adventures of Harriett, Jane, Carol, Linda, and Eva as these 5 "ladies of a certain age" traipse into the jungles and traverse the highland paramo of Colombia with their accommodating guide Diego Calderon. Diego's company specializes in bird species that are endemic to the central and western Andes in particular. The tour included the gamut of experiences, from laid back feeder watching from the comfort of a porch chair, to strenuous hiking up steep and rocky mountain trails at altitudes guaranteed to make flatlanders gasp for breath. We racked up over 300 species of birds on the trip, with only about 6 days of active birding...including getting very good looks at rarely seen antpittas! Come live vicariously or perhaps be inspired to book your own neotropical birding tour!

## SATURDAY

**7:00 A.M. Field Trip** Meet in the parking lot of the Cameron Motel. Ed Wallace and Linda Stewart-Knight will lead a field trip to the Cameron Parish hot spots. **Bring lunch, drinks, bug spray and walkie talkies if you have them. Have your car filled up with gas! There are two stations open in Johnson's Bayou.**

**Saturday Evening: First Baptist Church in Cameron, 110 School Street off of Marshall Street (the main street)**

**6:00 P.M.-6:30 P.M. Registration**

**6:30 P.M.-7:30 P.M. Dinner- chicken/sausage gumbo dinner**

**7:30 P.M. Meeting and Evening Program  
Election of officers:**

Nominating committee's slate of candidates:

Ed Wallace, President

Marty Floyd, Vice-president

Joelle Finley, Secretary

Judith O'Neale, Treasurer

Jay Huner, South-west Board Member

**Program: I'm with the Band: Tales of Honey Island Songbirds**

**Donata Henry** is a Professor of the Practice at Tulane University, where she also completed her dissertation research on the breeding biology and habitat selection of Swainson's warblers. She teaches a wide range of courses, from introductory biology labs to senior seminars, and continually explores new pedagogies and approaches to enhance student engagement. Luckily she has many opportunities to bring students out into the field where much of the best learning takes place. Through a serendipitous collaboration with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries she established a bird banding station in the Pearl River Wildlife Management Area in 2005, where she continues to receive invaluable assistance from local birders, banders, and university students. She will be reporting on the latest discoveries from those Honey Island Swamp mist-netting efforts, including the station's oldest capture records, how birds have fared post-Katrina, and how the community has changed over eight banding seasons.

### **Cameron Accommodations:**

The phone number for the Cameron Motel is 337-775-5442. The Cameron Motel also has sites available for RV campers. Several eating places (in trailers) are open in Cameron. Other accommodations can be found in Sulphur or Lake Charles. East Jetty also has camper spaces with hook-ups.

Please pre-register by October 15th!

For complete information visit <http://losbird.org/>



# Wild Birds Unlimited - now open in Baton Rouge!

By: Gina Periou, Partner / Manager

A good friend of mine was looking for a business opportunity and learned about Wild Birds Unlimited. I grew up in a birding family and believed that Baton Rouge was a perfect location for a WBU store. I am so happy to partner in this venture. We visited many WBU stores and spoke to many owners, and found that everyone spoke highly of the Franchise and thoroughly enjoyed the business. We visited the corporate office in Indianapolis in July 2011 and met with key individuals in the company including founder and owner, Jim Carpenter. We observed a corporate culture of integrity and dedication to quality, education, and service at every level. We were granted a franchise and began the process of getting the store opened. Eleven months later we opened for business in

Panache Plaza, 8342 Perkins Road, Baton Rouge, LA 70810.  
Phone: 225-408-0600. Email: [wbutatonrouge@gmail.com](mailto:wbutatonrouge@gmail.com)

Everything we heard from other owners is 100% true. The business is fun, the customers are wonderful and teach us so much by sharing their bird stories and pictures. I grew up in Baton Rouge and enjoy re-connecting with people that I knew years earlier. I truly enjoy every day and can't think of anything else I'd rather be doing. We invite you to visit us at the store and introduce yourself. We look forward to partnering with BRAS as opportunities present. To introduce BRAS members to our custom seed blends we are offering \$10. off a 20# bag of your choice. See coupon below!

To those who have already visited the store, we thank you for making us feel so very welcome in our new business.

[www.wbu.com/batonrouge](http://www.wbu.com/batonrouge)



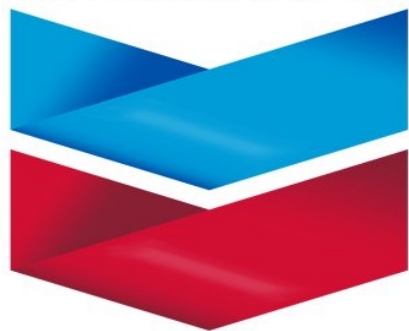
## \$10.00 Off for BRAS Members

Show proof of your BRAS membership to receive \$10 Off a 20# bag of Seed Blend of your choice. Includes: Deluxe, Supreme, Choice, No-Mess, or Tree Nutty Plus.

Expires 10/31/12

Baton Rouge Audubon thanks

# Chevron



for their sponsorship of our education programs!

## What Our Friends Are Doing

### LSU Hilltop Arboretum

Sat, Oct 6 - Sun, Oct 7  
PlantFest!

Sun, Oct 28, 1-5pm  
Fall Garden Tour  
"What's Cookin' in the Hilltop Garden"

Mon, Nov 12  
Discovering Pointe Coupee  
Fall Garden Trip

Mon, Nov 19 - Tues, Nov 20  
Junior Master Gardener  
Fall Camp

Baton Rouge Chapter of the National Audubon Society

**Baton Rouge Audubon Society**

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## Keep Your Membership Current!

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*.

### 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.

**If you would prefer to receive the newsletter in electronic form only rather than a printed version, please email our Membership chair and let her know! [Membership@braudubon.org](mailto:Membership@braudubon.org)**

**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.)
- Electronic version **only** of newsletter (do not mail)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Ph: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

MAIL COMPLETE FORM TO:

Baton Rouge Audubon Society; PO Box 67016; Baton Rouge, LA 70896