

# The **BARRED OWL**

Newsletter of the Baton Rouge Audubon Society

Volume L I - Number 1

1st Quarter, 2024



## Amite River Sanctuary Signage Project

In August 2022, Baton Rouge Audubon was awarded a grant by the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area to install interpretive signage for the Amite River Wildlife Sanctuary. The first project we decided to tackle was to identify plants on the property. Approximately 80 species of plants (trees, shrubs, herbaceous perennials, vines) were identified through the efforts of several volunteers using iNaturalist as well as experienced botanists like Dr. Chris Reid from LSU and Chris Doffitt with LA Wildlife and Fisheries. The signs were specified to feature a common name of the plant, the scientific name, and the category of plant, as well as a QR code. The QR

code is used by pointing a smartphone camera at the sign, which provides you an instant link to a web page on the Baton Rouge Audubon website. Each plant's web page will contain information about the plant: photographs, growing preferences, where it's found at the sanctuary, medicinal and other human uses, and considerations for using the plant in a home landscape.



Baton Rouge Audubon appreciates the opportunity from the Louisiana Office of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism and the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area program for this project!



# BRAS Program Schedule

## January 31 - Birdability by Alex Landry

Alex Landry is a Louisiana Master Naturalist of Greater Baton Rouge who has a special love for birds and his home of Southeast Louisiana. A series of health problems kept him indoors and in hospitals for stretch of his 20s that fostered in him an interest in advocating for the accessibility and inclusivity of the great outdoors for all people, regardless of physical or mental access challenges. Through education, outreach and advocacy, Birdability works to ensure the birding community and the outdoors are welcoming, inclusive, safe and accessible for everybody. (see Birdability.org)

## February 28 - Black Rail Project in Louisiana by Jonathan Leuck with Audubon Delta

**March 27 - Restoring Grand Isle**  
by representatives of The Nature Conservancy on Grand Isle

**April 25 -**  
Surprise Guest - stay tuned!

**May 29 -**  
Annual BRAS Officer election and potluck

**PLEASE NOTE: A significant change for our programs for 2024. The programs will be held at the Main/Goodwood library instead of at Bluebonnet Swamp education building. We will be in room 102, which is to the left as you enter the main doors. Refreshments and socializing will start at 6:30 and the programs will start at 7:00pm. We will continue to offer a Zoom option for our programs for those that would prefer not to travel, but we urge folks to come out in person to provide an enthusiastic audience for our guest speakers! We will also continue to post our programs on our YouTube channel after the fact.**



**Many thanks** to Lynda & Pat Williams, and Chris & MaryJo Pohlig who donated and planted over 100 iris plants at the Amite River Wildlife Sanctuary! For best viewing, sit on the white bench on the Iris Trail that overlooks the northwest swamp at the sanctuary.

It should be a beautiful sight in the Spring!

**Big thanks** to Mike Ginn who volunteered to build a cupboard for the Amite River Wildlife Sanctuary, and to Kellerman Kitchen & Bath for providing the materials. The cupboard holds our visitor book, mosquito spray, hand wipes and maybe other goodies for visitors. You'll find it by the picnic table near the trailhead. (kellermankitchenandbath.com)



# Eagle Expo

Eagle Expo will be held February 22-24, 2024 in Morgan City, Louisiana.

**Thursday evening features** a FREE *Wings to Soar* presentation at 6:30pm at the Patterson Civic Center, 116 Cotten Road, Patterson, LA 70392

Jon and Dale Stokes of *Wings to Soar* have worked with birds of prey for a combined 60 years. They are passionate champions for birds of prey (or raptors) of America. You'll enjoy a variety of live birds of prey for a fun and informative presentation. Featured raptors include a Falcon, Hawk, Owl, Black Vulture and a Bald Eagle – many of which are free flying for an unforgettable “close encounter.”

Sponsored by Barataria Terrebonne National Estuary Program. (BTNEP) Please arrive at least 15 minutes to program start time.

**Activities on Friday** include boat tours to view the American Bald Eagle. Tours include: The Atchafalaya Basin with Captain John Burke (Captain Caviar,) and Bayou Long with Captain Ivy St. Romain. We are also offering a walking tour to the Bayou Techen National Wildlife Refuge and a photography tour with Captain Billy in Bayou Black.

Expect a possible fifty eagle sightings along with other birds including Anhinga, Peregrine Falcon, various species of hawks and ducks, wading birds, some

songbird species, Blue Heron, Snowy Egret, Great Egret, White Ibis, Belted Kingfisher, Red-tailed hawks, Double-crested Cormorant, the American White Pelicans, Red-shouldered Hawks, Yellow-rumped Warblers, Carolina Chickadees, and various species of terns and gulls.

Friday evening's highlight will be a sunset social and dinner at Bay City Bistro featuring:

## Speakers

Delaina LeBlanc –  
*Are Limpkins Becoming an Invasive Species*

Mary Beth Lima –  
*Are You Having A Good Year*

Jane Patterson –  
*Birds of the Atchafalaya*



Clarion Inn/Quality Inn,  
520 Roderick Street, Morgan City

<https://cajuncoast.com/event/eagle-expo-2024>

800-256-2931 info@cajuncoast.com

# KidsWhoBird -

**The KidsWhoBird Club** is a club designed for kids aged 9-16 who are interested in learning about birds. Monthly meetings will be held at the EBRP Fairview Library (12910 Old Hammond Highway, Baton Rouge) on Sunday afternoons from 2:30 to 4pm. Dates may vary due to holidays and scheduling but advance notice will be given via email. Weather permitting, field trips to local birding sites will be offered. Please email me at [education@braudubon.org](mailto:education@braudubon.org) to be added to my mailing list to receive specifics about meetings.

Kids may join by sending me a request telling me why they want to join. (If your kid is younger than 9 but really into birds, I may grant an exception). A handwritten request is preferable. Drawings are encouraged. Email to [education@braudubon.org](mailto:education@braudubon.org). All new members will receive a packet of membership material.

You will be added to the mailing list and emailed information about each meeting directly.

- Jane Patterson



Tyler Soileau holding a ruby-crowned kinglet at a LABO bird banding event with KidsWhoBird Club

## Plants for Birds: Sweetgum

Many people love to hate the **Sweetgum** tree because of the gumballs. The seed pods of the sweetgum are numerous and, as the name implies, round. They cause ankle-rolling hazards on our lawns and driveways and are tough on lawnmowers. But from a wildlife perspective, these seed balls are an important food source. Many of us don't see American Goldfinches at our feeders until December or January, but they are here in our woods much earlier than that, enjoying the bounty that the loaded sweetgum trees provide. Other birds such as Tufted Titmice and Carolina Chickadees will enjoy the seeds on the tree while species such as Dark-eyed Juncos, Pine Warblers, winter sparrows such as the White-throated Sparrow, and several species of dove love to harvest the seeds from pods that have fallen to the ground. The star-shaped leaves of the Sweetgum are reminiscent of a maple tree and it's one of our

consistently colorful trees in the fall. The leaves turn beautiful shades of burgundy and red. This is a great plant to add to your home landscape, just have a plan for corralling the seed pods!

### More information from [Wildflower.org](http://Wildflower.org):

*A large, open-crowned tree, sweetgum grows 75 ft. tall in cultivation and up to 130 ft. in the wild. Large, aromatic tree with straight trunk and conical crown that becomes round and spreading. Young trees are distinctly conical in form. The long, straight trunk is occasionally buttressed and bears strong, ascending branches. Glossy green, deciduous leaves have five deep lobes making a star shape. Fall foliage is purple and red, and will become colorful even without cold temperatures. The fruit is a globular, horny, woody ball, 1 in. in diameter, which hangs on a long stem and persists through January.*

*An important timber tree, Sweetgum is second in production only to oaks among hardwoods. It is a leading furniture wood, used for cabinetwork, veneer, plywood, pulpwood, barrels, and boxes. In pioneer days, a gum was obtained from the trunks by peeling the bark and scraping off the resinlike solid. This gum was used medicinally as well as for chewing gum. Commercial storax, a fragrant resin used in perfumes and medicines, is from the related Oriental Sweetgum (*Liquidambar orientalis* Mill.) of western Asia.*



# BRAS CBC RECAP

I'd like to provide everyone with a brief summary of the Baton Rouge Christmas Bird Count (CBC), which was held on Saturday, December 30th, 2023. Over 50 people participated(!), and we were graced with clear skies all day. Temperatures started in the mid-30s and rose to approximately 60 F.

A total of 131 species were recorded, which does not include Count Week (CW) only species, and is slightly below the long-term average (range 114 to 150).

We added no new species to the circle this year, but rarities (with exact count in parentheses) included: Greater Scaup (1; CW only), Krider's Red-tailed Hawk (1), Limpkin (3), Western Sandpiper (1; awaiting documentation), Broad-tailed Hummingbird (1), Calliope Hummingbird (1), Vermillion Flycatcher (1), White-breasted Nuthatch (1), Yellow-throated Warbler (1), Indigo Bunting (3), Painted Bunting (2), Bullock's Oriole (1; CW only) and Baltimore Oriole (2).

Additionally, we had one high count record, which was Black-bellied Whistling Duck (3,869).

Low counts included Forster's Tern (4), Eurasian Collared-Dove (6), Rufous Hummingbird (4), Belted Kingfisher (7), Field Sparrow (1), Dark-eyed Junco (4), White-crowned Sparrow (5), Eastern Towhee (7), Red-winged Blackbird (2,937) and Rusty Blackbird (0).

With so many participating in the Baton Rouge count, I will refrain from listing everyone by name. But please know that every contribution, whether in the field or watching feeders, is greatly appreciated!

If you have any questions or would like additional information about the count this year, please email me directly.

Also, a reminder that historical CBC records for all count circles and species can be accessed at

<https://www.audubon.org/conservation/science/christmas-bird-count>

- Katie Percy  
[katiepercy@gmail.com](mailto:katiepercy@gmail.com)

## ***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](mailto: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](mailto:membership@braudubon.org)

**Also please follow us on Facebook at**  
[www.facebook.com/BRAudubon](http://www.facebook.com/BRAudubon)

## **Baton Rouge Audubon Officers**

### **President**

Jane Patterson  
[president@braudubon.org](mailto:president@braudubon.org)

### **Vice-President**

Katherine Gividen  
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### **Treasurer**

Mark Pethke  
[treasurer@braudubon.org](mailto:treasurer@braudubon.org)

### **Secretary**

Donna LaFleur  
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## **Committee Chairs**

### **Conservation**

Richard Condrey  
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### **Education**

Jane Patterson  
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### **Fieldtrips**

Daniel Mooney  
[fieldtrips@braudubon.org](mailto:fieldtrips@braudubon.org)

### **Hospitality**

Debbie Taylor

### **Membership**

Heather Wilson 985/768-9285  
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### **Newsletter**

Steve Mumford  
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### **Programs**

Collette Dean, Katie Percy,  
& Marie Varnes  
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### **Sanctuaries**

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[sanctuary@braudubon.org](mailto:sanctuary@braudubon.org)

### **Webmaster**

Daniel Patterson  
[webmaster@braudubon.org](mailto:webmaster@braudubon.org)

## **At Large Members...**

Erik Johnson  
Casey Wright

## **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



Baton Rouge Chapter of the National Audubon Society

**Baton Rouge Audubon Society**

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Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70896

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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](http://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](http://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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