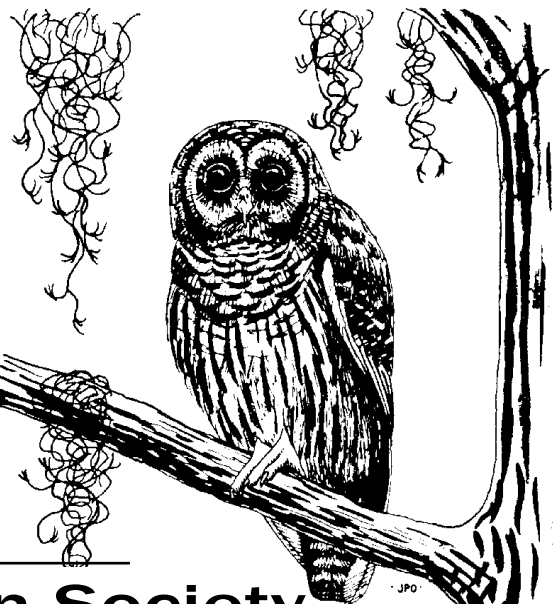


The **BARRED OWL**

Newsletter of the Baton Rouge Audubon Society

Volume L I - Number 3

3rd Quarter, 2024



Baton Rouge Audubon Society Celebrates 50 Years

By Colette Dean

(Reprint by permission of The Advocate)

Our beloved conservation group is celebrating a Golden Jubilee!

For 50 years, the **Baton Rouge Audubon Society** has been protecting the unique biological treasures of Louisiana, with special concern for birds, wildlife, and their habitats. Renowned natural history photographer C.C. Lockwood was a mere 24 years old when he joined forces with a few liked-minded nature enthusiasts to form the Baton Rouge Audubon Society.



The theme of the evening was
of course "gold" for our

- **Golden Anniversary** -

The organization was awarded chapter
status in July 1974.

Lockwood admits the main concern of the group in the early days was advocacy. *"Back then, we were more than a bird watching group. In 1974, we had a lot of environmental problems going on, and one of our main issues was fighting to save the Atchafalaya swamp,"* he explained.

"We had the Sierra Club and the Louisiana Wildlife Federation, but we thought we needed another voice from our area to speak to government, so we formed a local chapter of the National Audubon Society," he said.

Lockwood recalls the group staging sit-ins in kayaks and canoes protesting *"Save Our Swamp."* It was just two years prior, in 1972, when the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency banned the use of the insecticide DDT which caused the brown pelican to be extinct in

(Continued on page 2)

Baton Rouge Audubon Society Celebrates 50 Years

(Continued from page 1)

Louisiana. Due to heroic efforts from the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, the state's bird was re-established years later.

The Endangered Species Act, enacted in 1973, is considered the nation's toughest wildlife law that has protected hundreds of threatened and endangered species. It wasn't until 1994 that a national symbol, the bald eagle, was downlisted from

endangered to threatened. Now, Louisiana celebrates the bald eagle population annually at the Eagle Expo each spring.

As years progressed, The National Audubon Society expanded and provided chapter support with advocacy, diplomacy, and research projects. Local chapters like the Baton Rouge Audubon Society (BRAS), now one of 500 throughout the nation, began to concentrate on community outreach

and education programs encouraging bird conservation.

Lockwood remembers early club outreach efforts of hosting quarterly nature film viewings. Members would sell tickets for a nominal fee and show nature films shot in 16 millimeters in a small LSU auditorium to audiences.

"We had sell-out crowds," he said. "This was before we had access to films or TV

(Continued on page 3)

Board member Debbie Taylor displays some of her bird cookie creations baked especially for the event.



Sanctuary Manager Dave Patton stands in front of a display created to feature the history of Peveto Woods Bird and Butterfly Sanctuary owned by BR Audubon. Dave created a video of the history of Peveto that is available on the BR Audubon YouTube channel. He also put together a fascinating reel of highlights from trail cams at the sanctuary featuring birds and other wildlife visiting the water features.

Baton Rouge Audubon Society Celebrates 50 Years

(Continued from page 2)

shows about nature,” he explained.

Today, BRAS offers a plethora of opportunities to learn about and appreciate the rich natural environment of the state. For years, volunteers have hosted monthly bird walks at BREC’s Bluebonnet Swamp Nature Center, and recently began hosting quarterly bird walks in St. Francisville at Oakley Plantation Historic Site – where John James Audubon spent

a summer collecting and painting birds.

Monthly programs featuring bird-related speakers are held on the last Wednesday of the month at EBRP Goodwood Library. Jane Patterson, BRAS president and education chairman, has been teaching beginning birding classes every spring and fall since 2006 and has “taught” basic birding skills to over 650 budding hobbyists in Baton Rouge, most recently adding classes on

the Northshore. She also started a “Kids Who Bird” club the same year and has had over 100 graduates of that program.

“One of my earliest students went on to become a professional ornithologist,” she said.

Patterson said, “One of my favorite things to hear after someone has taken my class is, ‘Jane, I see birds everywhere now. I had no

(Continued on page 4)



Renowned Louisiana photographer, CC Lockwood, shows some of his artwork at the event. As one of the founding members and first board members of BR Audubon, CC also recounted memories of the early days of the organization.

Baton Rouge Audubon Society Celebrates 50 Years

(Continued from page 3)

idea there were so many before.”

Patterson was named the 2022 Louisiana Wildlife Federation’s “Volunteer Conservationist of the Year,” acknowledging her education and outreach efforts.

BRAS crown jewels are two sanctuaries: Peveto Woods Sanctuary and the Amite River Wildlife Sanctuary. Through donations, both

properties were purchased and maintained for the protection of diminishing habitat for birds, butterflies, and other wildlife with special emphasis on non-game birds. Peveto Woods encompasses approximately 40 acres and is located along the Louisiana coast in Cameron Parish. This site was the first chenier sanctuary for migratory birds established in Louisiana, and birders and other nature lovers have visited the area from all

50 states and 20 foreign countries. Peveto Woods lies in the center of the flight path of migratory birds crossing the Gulf of Mexico, and as many as two million birds use the sanctuary each spring and fall.

The Amite River Wildlife Sanctuary, established in 2020, is a 36-acre parcel located near the Amite River between Prairieville and Port Vincent, Louisiana. The

(Continued on page 5)



Butterfly enthusiasts Gary Noel Ross and Linda Barber Auld aka "NOLA Bug Lady" visit at the event. Gary served as President of BR Audubon in the early years and is responsible for adding "and Butterfly" to the official name of the Peveto Woods Bird and Butterfly Sanctuary.



Treasurer Mark Pethke displays a collection of sanctuary patches from 1995 to the present year. All of the patch designs since 2007 have been created by artist Donna Dittman.

At one time, the patches were supposed to be your entry ticket to Peveto Woods but now they are mostly collectible.

Baton Rouge Audubon Society Celebrates 50 Years

(Continued from page 4)

sanctuary features mostly cypress-tupelo swamp with palmetto and some areas of pine and other hardwoods. BRAS volunteers, along with members of the local community, have helped clear trails and post trail markers.

Through a grant awarded by the Atchafalaya Natural Heritage Area, interpretive signage identifying native plants has been placed on the property with QR codes explaining the plant's habitat, landscape, and medici-

nal uses. A cypress tree on site is estimated to be between 400 to 600 years old. Wood ducks and wading birds are often seen on the pond located on the site, and current bird checklists are available on the BRAS website.

The BRAS website offers vast information on Louisiana birding, including good places to bird within an hour's drive of the city limits. In coordination with the National Audubon Society, the chapter offers a Native

Plants Guide which include retail and wholesale nurseries that carry native plants, mail order sources, and links to other websites and resources encouraging homeowners to grow more native plants that are good for birds.

The Louisiana Bird Observatory (LABO) is a grassroots program of the Baton Rouge Audubon Society focused on avian research, conservation, and education. The Bird Monitoring Project, held at

(Continued on page 6)



Artist Mary Ann Caffery displays her creations. Mary Ann was one of five artists who featured their work at the event. We also had Krista Roche, Lee Randall, Margaret Blades, and Donna Dittmann. CC Lockwood also brought some of his work as well as several books to sign and sell.

We were very excited to welcome Nancy Newfield to the event. Nancy and her husband Skip were instrumental in the acquisition of the first pieces of property in 1984 that would eventually become Peveto Woods sanctuary.

Baton Rouge Audubon Society Celebrates 50 Years

(Continued from page 5)

BREC's Bluebonnet Swamp Nature Center, is conducted with volunteers who support and help collect data through year-round censuses and bird banding, supporting conservation and management decisions. LABO also provides training for students and outreach for visitors of all ages in hopes of building a more bird-friendly Louisiana. Citizen science programs, such as The Christmas Bird Count

and Great Backyard Bird Count, are BRAS-sponsored annual events that also help with bird research.

Thirty-year BRAS member and current secretary, Donna Lafleur, reminisced why she and others remain devoted members: *"Some of us were talking recently about how much we enjoyed the field trips and learning from birders better than us who are always encouraging and supportive. We love*

making new friendships and being with other decent citizens who are also interested in keeping land areas fruitful for animals, as well as humans."



Current BR Audubon President, Jane Patterson, acknowledges the volunteers who helped make the event a success, gives a nod of appreciation to special members and donors, and leads the group in a toast to the next 50 years!



The Eastern Purple Coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*) is a perennial herb that grows to be 0.5-2 feet tall. It produces very distinctive flowers with reddish-purple petals that can also be pink or white in rare instances. In our area they generally bloom from June to August. The genus is named after the Greek word for hedgehog, echinos, because of its cone-like center, which attracts butterflies and bees. Leave the seed heads after bloom, and you'll also attract songbirds such as goldfinches in the winter. This plant is also known for having great medical properties for both animals and people. It was and is still used as a painkiller and to treat coughs, colds, sore throats, and snake bites, among other things.

The Coneflower prefers plenty of sun but has very low tolerance for drought conditions and water logging. However, there are many soil textures it will grow in. The optimal soil pH for the Eastern Purple Coneflower is between 6.5 and 7.2. The Coneflower is cold and heat resistant, easy to grow if happy with its site. It also works well as a container plant because of its affinity for well-drained soil.

This is not an aggressive plant, but it will naturally self-seed and spread, which you can encourage if you wait to cut back until late winter (or prohibit self-seeding if you deadhead the flowers right after they fade). Hybrids will not self-sow; most are sterile (they do not produce viable seeds). Hybrids aren't of much interest to birds, either.

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is published quarterly by the
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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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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 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: _____

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