

The **BARRED OWL**

Newsletter of the Baton Rouge Audubon Society

Volume XLVIII, Number 2

2nd Quarter, 2021

Amite River Wildlife Sanctuary

by Jane Patterson

We are proud to announce a soft opening for our new sanctuary in Ascension parish. We held a work day back in February and made great progress. We marked the parking area with temporary posts and rope. Volunteers also pulled a huge pile of trash out of the property. We have also marked a couple of trails so far. Currently they are marked with some temporary signage and pink and orange tape on trees. Please see the attached photo. We will continue to mark trails and explore. Thanks to our volunteers: Chuck Cantrell, Bob Gallant, Jimmy Lawrence, Sue Broussard, Ann Ingram, Katie Percy, Mark Pethke, Bob & Joy Loudon, Al Troy, Eric Liffmann, Debbie Taylor, Teri Rome, Yi-Pin Johnson, and Philip Legend.

We have made some great discoveries on the property. There is a great old cypress tree that I believe may qualify to be a Legacy tree. If you are not familiar with this project, it is described as a volunteer campaign to identify and landmark cypress trees (the Louisiana State tree) that are at least 200 years old--alive at the time of the Louisiana Purchase in 1803 and Louisiana statehood in 1812. A volunteer from the organization has taken a core sample from our tree and here are the results:

(Continued on page 9)



Monarda and More

(Continued on Page 3)

Attention, Pollinators! Dinner is served!
-Nine fantastic native plants with
nine gardeners' favorite picks-



Wild Bergamot
Monarda fistulosa



Spotted Bee Balm
Monarda punctata



Jacob Cline Bee Balm
Monarda didyma



Clustered Mountain Mint
Pycnanthemum muticum



Slender Mountain Mint
Pycnanthemum tenuifolium



Whiteleaf Mountain Mint
Pycnanthemum albescens



Phlox: Robert Poore
Phlox paniculata



Phlox: John Fanick
Phlox paniculata



Woodland Phlox
Phlox divaricata

Monarda and More

Tammany Baumgarten - Horticulturist and Owner of BaumGardens Landscape & Design, Master Gardener and current President of the Native Plant Initiative of GNO

I have always been terribly fond of *Monarda punctata*, which I learned and grew years ago as one of my first natives. I knew it as Horsemint, another common name for this plant. The leaf-like bracts that form the colorful parts of this plant are just so beautiful and interesting, very different looking. They seem pretty versatile in any well drained, sun to part shade garden, but don't seem to persist more than a few years for me. Of course 'Jacob Cline' is such a rich red color, it's hard not to love and don't even get me started on the Phloxes which bloom for such a long period of time and are such butterfly favorites! Good thing I can have them all!

Mary Biundo - La Master Gardener, Project Chairman, New Orleans Botanic Garden's Butterfly Garden at City Park, Louisiana Certified Habitat Garden in Metairie

I have two favorites on this list, *Pycnanthemum albescens* and *Phlox divaricata*, and if I have to pick one, it would be *Phlox divaricata*. The butterflies like it, as do the hummingbirds and bees. It is attractive, fragrant and makes a nice edging and/or ground cover. *Pycnanthemum albescens*, a close second, is a lovely part shade plant with a silvery leaf and minty aroma, also attractive to pollinators.

There is a lovely one in the Shade Garden at the New Orleans Botanical Garden.

Dionne D'mello - New Orleans Botanical Garden: Pelican Greenhouse Manager

My favorite of these nine native plants is the Louisiana Phlox or *Phlox divaricata*. The lovely blue flowers tell us spring has sprung as they are one of the first to bloom every year. The blooms are slightly fragrant, long lasting for a perennial, and attract butterflies, hooray! This is one of the most carefree plants I have ever grown. Besides perhaps an annual shearing if you like a tight and tidy garden, they require no pruning, pinching, or deadheading. And I have never had to treat LA phlox for any pest or disease at Pelican Greenhouse. Plant this butterfly-friendly, reliable, native ground cover under deciduous trees in the landscape, in a woodland garden, or in any garden bed that gets some shade in the summer. To top it all off, Louisiana Phlox is easy to propagate by division or cuttings taken almost any time of year!

Mary Elliott - Fronderosa Nursery - Owner

I think my favorite is *Monarda fistulosa*. It is one of the first bee balms to bloom, is attractive to pollinators and hummingbirds, easy to grow, and also edible for humans. You can use the blossoms (pull the petals from the heads) for garnishes and salads, the leaves for tea, and the plant as a potheb. Native Americans

used it medicinally. It seems to like full sun and a drier site than some of the other monarda species.

Amy Graham - Longue Vue house & Garden - Director of Horticulture - www.Longuevue.com

Monarda fistulosa, or bee balm, is a dramatic, aromatic, dependable addition to your pollinator garden! Multiple light purple crown-shaped bloom clusters of this plant open throughout the day, providing a cycle of nectar for butterflies, many species of bees, hummingbirds and even sphinx moths. Look for tiny holes in the side of the flowers which were made by short-tongued bees, to allow themselves and other small insects access the nectar, amazing! *Monarda* will thrive in various well-drained soils and full sun. Give your bee balm space to breathe to prevent powdery mildew from forming and leave the spent flowers to go to seed for the little sparrows. Please visit Longue Vue House and Gardens to see this plant in action.

Lees Hopkins - Delta Flora Nursery - Owner

Pycnanthemum tenuifolium. I'm a big fan of Slender Mountain Mint for use in urban landscapes. It's a hardy, low-growing shrub with a lovely texture and scent. The abundant, long-lasting little blooms entice many insect pollinators.

(Continued on page 7)

Polar Vortex and Purple Martins

by Katherine Gividen

This story has so many layers and players I am not really sure where to start... I guess the logical place would be South America. The Purple Martin is a long-distance migrant. Perhaps the PUMA (not the cougar or tennis shoes, but the bird) started its journey in Brazil. It then migrated over 4,000 miles to return to the same park in Denham Springs, Louisiana that it has visited for the last six years. Their landlord, Krista Adams and her family, made sure their apartments were cleaned and had fresh bedding in anticipation of their arrival. The adult PUMAs began arriving in January, as they always have, but something happened they were not anticipating. Where the low temperature on February 16 last year was 55°, in 2021 on the same day, the temperature had dropped to 20°, well below freezing.

Not only has this unusual weather event affected the PUMA, but other bird species as well. Jane Patterson, President of the Baton Rouge Audubon Society, explains, "This polar vortex has caused a number of bird sightings that are unusual for our location for this time of year...or in some cases, ever. Fox Sparrows, which are notoriously skulky were reported almost simultaneously in many locations across the state on Monday. Suddenly Wilson's Snipe and American Woodcocks were being seen everywhere. Shorebirds dropped out in great numbers in the River Road area south of Baton Rouge. Unprecedented numbers of Long-billed Dowitchers, Dunlin and Least Sandpipers were feeding in the grassy areas on Wednesday. Amazingly, a large flock of Lapland Longspurs, a truly arctic species that sometimes

winters in southwest LA showed up with the shorebirds.

Unfortunately, this extreme cold has caused the demise of many birds and will likely cause more. It's especially hard on the insectivorous birds like Purple Martins, Tree Swallows and such."

As Jane mentioned, PUMAs are insectivores. They are aerial feeders that catch insects in flight – only



there are no insects flying because of the cold weather. The PUMA were starving and some even froze to death. Krista and her family sprung into action. They opened the houses and removed 60 PUMA and took them to Wings of Hope Wildlife Sanctuary to try to give them a fighting chance. Leslie Lattimore, the owner of Wings of Hope, took them in an already full house. I went there today to help feed the refugees and saw firsthand what a day in the life of a

wildlife rehabilitator is like. She is a machine. She picks up a bird, pries open its bill and shoves mealworms down its throat with the skill of a surgeon. Think Operation. She shows me how to use my nail to gently pry open its mouth and feed it the worms, but I am scared. What if I hurt it? I feel relief when I get a bird or two that will eat the worms out of my hand.

We have a system. We take a bird out of one cage, feed it, and then return it to another. When all the birds are fed we do it all over again. I think for every bird I fed, Leslie probably fed 3 – 5. I wondered if I was any help at all. She continually assured me I was doing fine. At one point I reached in and grabbed a bird and noticed it was colder than the others and seemed listless. When I held it to my chest it closed its eyes. "Please bird don't die! I don't think I will be able to take it!" The inside of its mouth was white, a sign of dehydration. Leslie takes the bird and gives it a shot of sodium chloride between its wings. She told me to take it back and continue to try to feed it. As I am holding it, it suddenly gets a burst of energy - but I am afraid. I ask Leslie to feed it instead. She does, and puts it in an incubator.

It takes a village to run a wildlife rehabilitation facility and Leslie is the mayor of this village. I am grateful for the other Louisiana Master Naturalists who helped with the rescue operation today. Of course Krista, Cathy Hansen, Betty Prindle, and Tracey Allen. Wings of Hope had three of its volunteers come in for a short time as well. It is important to point out the 60 PUMA were not the only residents today. Among the

(Continued on page 5)



Polar Vortex and Purple Martins

(Continued from page 4)

MANY other animals were an American White Pelican, a Brown Pelican (which snapped a my butt every time I walked by it), Red Bats, a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, an American Crow (who at one point thought my head was a walnut and tried to crack it!), a Screech Owl, two River Otters (who stole my shoes), and a flight cage with Great Horned Owls, an Eagle, Pelicans and both Turkey and Black Vultures. (I am not even sure I am scratching the surface here!) Oh and add to an already hectic day a peacock that is an escape artist (I ended up on a tin roof), me chasing it with a net, and two otters that thought my running around was playtime and were continually underfoot! It added levity to the situation.

To be quite honest I really wasn't that interested in Purple Martins before today. I think this whole experience may have changed that. Holding one up close and personal I noticed the dark glossy blue-black color of the males, the more subdued colors of the females, their long angular wings, their forked tail... They are beautiful birds and I am rooting for them. If all goes well, they will be released on Sunday when the weather improves.

https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Purple_Martin/overview

I think I should mention that Leslie does not get paid for her efforts. She runs the center on donations alone. If you would like to help, here is the link to donate supplies or make a monetary contribution. Every little bit helps!

<https://www.wingsofhoperehab.org/donate.html>



(Note: Katherine has taken up author Ted Floyd's challenge to watch birds every day and to write something about a Bird a Day. You can find these daily posts on the Louisiana Birds facebook page.)

Email List Change Update from Jane Patterson

Baton Rouge Audubon Society is converting from Mailchimp as our email management platform to groups.io. If you are a member of our email list, you should have received an email about this conversion. We have found Mailchimp a bit unwieldy and I personally have found that gmail which I use for personal email tends to stick Mailchimp messages into a Promotions folder no matter what I do so I don't see the messages. Hopefully using groups.io will change that and people will miss fewer messages from us!

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

If you have any questions, please email me at president@braudubon.org

BRAS Now Has A YouTube Channel!

It is our plan to record and publish all of our future programs on this channel so that you can enjoy them whenever you wish. All of our recent programs are already out there! To find it, simply search for "Baton Rouge Audubon Society" in the youtube search bar. Once you're there you can Subscribe to our channel to find it more easily! We hope you enjoy it!



Baton Rouge Christmas Bird Count Sees Outstanding Human And Avian Participation

by Katie Percy

The Baton Rouge Christmas Bird Count (CBC) was held on Saturday, January 2, 2021. Despite (or perhaps because of) the COVID-19 pandemic, we had outstanding participation yet again, with over 60 people either submitting a checklist from their yard or helping to cover larger areas within the Baton Rouge circle. Weather conditions stayed dry, but on the chilly side as the temperature never rose above the mid-50s F and cloud cover remained constant throughout the day.

A total of 147 species were documented during the Baton Rouge count this year, which falls just four species short of the highest count ever documented for the Baton Rouge CBC – 151 species were reported in 1998 and 150 species were reported in both 2003 and 2013.

Rare birds included (with exact count in parentheses): Greater Scaup (1), Brown Pelican (5; new high count), Common Gallinule (8; new high count), Vaux's Swift (24; new high count), Broad-tailed Hummingbird (1), Calliope Hummingbird (3), Broad-billed Hummingbird (1), Vermillion Flycatcher (4; new high count), Ash-throated Flycatcher (3; new high count), Western Kingbird (1), Sprague's Pipit (3), Black-and-white Warbler (1), American Redstart (3; new high count), Yellow Warbler (1), Yellow-throated Warbler (1), Lark Sparrow (1), Summer Tanager (1), Western Tanager (1), Black-headed Grosbeak (1; count week), Indigo Bunting (3; new high count), Painted Bunting (1), and Baltimore Oriole (1).

New high count records, in addition to the ones pointed out in parentheses with rare birds, included: Black-bellied Whistling Ducks (1,269) – nearly triple what was recorded last year; Hooded Merganser (199) – which has seen counts above 100 just two previous years (143 in 2014 and 146 in 2017); White-winged Dove (488) – the second highest count occurred in 2009 with 339 recorded (since 2009, the range for White-winged Dove has been 34 to 202); Downy Woodpecker (236) – which has topped 200 only two other times (205 in 1992 and 202 in 1997); House Wren (129) – the last two times Baton Rouge recorded over 100 House Wrens was in 1992 with 115 and 1988 with 102; Blue-gray Gnatcatcher (176) – just topping the previous high of 174 re-

corded in 2017; Purple Finch (157) – technically not the highest, which occurred in 1984 with 201 recorded, but nearly all other counts have been in the single- and double-digits; Pine Siskin (161) – the second highest count occurred back in 1977 with 103 recorded and all subsequent records have been in just single- and double-digits; and lastly, Scaly-breasted Munia (6) – although this species is not on the official state checklist, and therefore does not count towards the species total, it is nevertheless a high count for the Baton Rouge CBC.

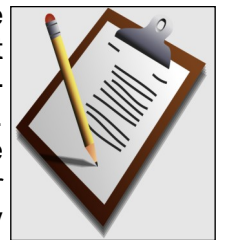
Also notable, Rufous Hummingbird (21) was back in the double digits. Although this is not an all-time high (that occurred in 2013 with 113 recorded), it is up from the single-digits reported for the last four years.

Low counts included: Neotropic Cormorant (22) – which is back to double-digits after peaking at 1,029 two years ago; Eastern Towhee (6) – this is the first time the species count drop into the single-digits since it was first reported on a Baton Rouge count in 1986; and Common Grackle (228) – which is lower than most previous years, including last year when we recorded 3,104.

Altogether misses (i.e., no individuals documented) included: Hairy Woodpeckers – although numbers are never very high, Baton Rouge usually records at least one Hairy Woodpecker; and Brewer's Blackbird – this species was last recorded on the Baton Rouge count four years ago.

If you would like to know more, CBC historic records can be accessed at: netapp.audubon.org/cbcobservation/

Counts from this year will not be available with the historic data set until the data are reviewed and confirmed by all of the regional editors. If you would like the results from the Baton Rouge count for this year please contact Katie Percy (katie.percy@audubon.org).



Monarda and More

(Continued from page 3)

Nell Howard - Current Vice-President of the Native Plant Initiative of GNO, Louisiana Master Gardener, MGGNO Urban Natives Project Leader and native plant grower, LA Certified 'Gold level' Habitat Garden in New Orleans

Phlox divaricata is a favorite because I'm always looking for ways to put color in the shade of a live oak or a gathering of magnolias. Anything with the name 'woodland' evokes a serene, cool feeling, and this dainty perennial never fails to perform. Spring has sprung when these little blue flowers erupt, lightly scented, and the more the merrier – which happens every year when they send out more shoots. They make a nice ground cover under an adjacent *Chionanthus virginicus*, (Native fringe, an understory tree), surrounded by *Tradescantia bracteata* (spiderwort) and *Phyla nodiflora* (frogfruit). Swallowtail butterflies and bees are constantly hovering over the springtime blooms. I'm glad I used my own front yard as a test garden for these years ago!

Jim Russell - LA Certified Habitat Garden in Mandeville - "Gold" level, LA Master Naturalist, LA Master Gardener

Pycnanthemum muticum and *P. albescens*.

They take care of themselves, smell great, have culinary and medical uses, and attract huge

numbers of solitary, native pollinators. I've seen *P. albescens* in the wild in Northlake Nature Center and off Hwy 190 in southern Covington area.

Last but not least! **Linda Auld - Owner Barber Laboratories Pest Control Supplies store, LA Certified Habitat Garden "Gold" level and Monarch WayStation in Harahan, plus NOLA BugLady Books, LLC**

Not sure which is my favorite because I love them all! Years ago during a butterfly survey at Honey Island Swamp, I cast my eyes on *Monarda punctata* for the first time and instantly fell in love with its beauty. Last year, Ken Bosso and Charles Allen each gave me some plants from their gardens. They are fantastic "*Passalong Plants*" (as author Felder Rushing would say). It's amazing how large they grew. I was delighted watching four different species of bees collecting nectar, including a new one to me, the Two-spotted Longhorn Bee. This helps prove the theory of "*Plant it and they will come!*" All three mountain mints will draw a wide variety of pollinators. Observing the activity of bees, wasps and butterflies on the buffet stand of *Pycnanthemum muticum* at Charles Allen's Allen Acres Bed & Breakfast is always exciting and enjoyable. When planting the Clustered Mountain mint in my office garden and before I could even spread the dirt over the roots, I was surprised by a hungry Horace Duskywing butterfly that

swooped down and landed on a blossom about a foot from my eyes! The best place to see the Slender Mountain Mint (*Pycnanthemum tenuifolium*) in action is in the Gloster Arboretum's wildflower patches. The American Painted Lady, Common Buckeye and an array of skipper butterflies can be found enjoying the nectar banquet. The beautiful flowers of Whiteleaf Mountain Mint (*Pycnanthemum albescens*) also serve up an excellent enticement. My Phlox obsession was spawned by my good friend, Diane Lafferty. As soon as I discovered this scrumptious plant, I became obsessed with planting it all over my garden. That's why they call me "Phloxy Lady". Every time I walk up my front steps, I can smell its delicious fragrance. From my bedroom window I see hummingbirds and butterflies taking turns fueling up on the blossoms. In Springtime stands of Woodland Phlox can transform a landscape into a fairyland of Nature's beauty. Then, Robert Poore Phlox begins showing its pink splash in the garden followed later by the two-toned pink John Fanick which can provide a long bloom season through the end of October! Each year these plants will grow bigger and more beautiful. Remember Doug Tallamy's words, "*Native insects recognize native plants as "real food"*". Pollinators need our help all year long and adding any of these will assist in enhancing your botanical invitation for Nature's pollinators to accept. Geaux Grow Natives!



Harvey Stern takes
core samples of a
(probable)
Legacy Cypress



Amite
River
Wildlife
Sanctuary



Work Day
Volunteers



the Old Live Oak



**Our 2021 Baton Rouge Audubon
collectible patches are in!**

Please send an email to our
membership chair Heather at
membership@braudubon.org
if you would like to claim your patch!

Amite River Wildlife Sanctuary

(Continued from page 1)

1st Boring—2.75” Rings counted: approx. 98

2.75” boring length / 18” radius = 98 rings counted / X

X = approx. 644 projected years

2nd Boring—3” Rings counted: approx 84

3” / 18’ = 84 / X

X = approx. 504 projected years

To account for likely faster growth early in its life (i.e. the hollow center of the tree), I'd conservatively estimate this cypress at a minimum of 400 years old. Needless to say, the rings are very closely spaced on both borings—indicating very slow growth. There is a section on one boring where the rings appear to be barely a hair's width apart, which would reflect the very old age for a relatively small circumference old growth cypress.

There is also quite a phenomenal live oak tree on the property. Since the property is mostly swamp and palmetto, it's actually remarkable to find a live oak here at all. It's not in great shape, but oh, the stories it could tell! I am sure its circumference is at least 15 feet.



Bob Gallant and work day volunteers marking property boundaries

If you do visit, you will need your knee-high boots. Step carefully as there are many cypress knees hidden under the grasses. There probably are snakes as well. Please record your bird sightings to ebird so we can keep track of the species present there!

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

Debbie Taylor
vice-president@braudubon.org

Treasurer

Mark Pethke
treasurer@braudubon.org

Secretary

Donna LaFleur
secretary@braudubon.org

Committee Chairs

Conservation

Richard Condrey
conservation@braudubon.org

Education

Jane Patterson
education@braudubon.org

Fieldtrips

Daniel Mooney
fieldtrips@braudubon.org

Hospitality

Debbie Taylor (see VP above)

Membership

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

Newsletter

Steve Mumford
newsletter@braudubon.org

Programs

Katie Percy
programs@braudubon.org

Sanctuaries

Dave Patton
sanctuary@braudubon.org

Webmaster

Daniel Patterson
webmaster@braudubon.org

At Large Members...

Erik Johnson
Marie Varnes
Casey Wright

The Barred Owl

is published quarterly by the Baton Rouge chapter of the NAS. Submissions should be emailed to 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

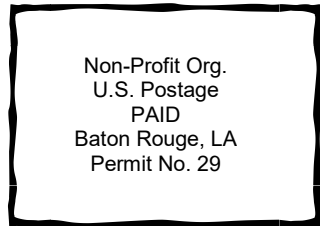
Baton Rouge Audubon Society

P.O. Box 67016

Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70896

"Address Service Requested"

Join online at www.braudubon.org/join.php



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: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

E-mail: _____

MAIL COMPLETE FORM TO:
Baton Rouge Audubon Society
PO Box 67016
Baton Rouge, LA 70896