

The **BARRED OWL**

Newsletter of the Baton Rouge Audubon Society

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2nd Quarter, 2017



Audubon's Plants for Birds Initiative

The National Audubon Society has a new initiative related to encouraging people to plant native plants in their yards and other living areas (parks, urban landscapes, commercial areas, etc). Their goal is for Audubon members and affiliates to plant 1,000,000 Plants for Birds! National Audubon is featuring its "**Plants for Birds**" website that lets visitors enter their zip code and find resources in their immediate area related to this endeavor. (see www.audubon.org/plantsforbirds) To this end, Baton Rouge Audubon is developing resources that will be available via this link. The National Audubon site offers specific plant suggestions for our area, but the information is very limited. What I'd like to do is create a page that offers visitors more specific information about particular plants in our area and especially sources. I would like to include information from our membership about some of your favorite native plants. If you are interested in participating, please send me information via email (seejanebird@gmail.com) with the following information:

- **Common Name of Plant:**
- **Scientific Name of Plant (if known):**
- **Placement (full sun, understory, partial shade, full shade, etc):**
- **Water requirements:**
- **Cold tolerance:**
- **Heat tolerance:**
- **Value to birds (seeds, flowers/nectar, insect host plant, etc):**
- **Your observations (why are you excited about this plant?)**
- **Did you replace a non-native plant with this one? If so, which one?**
- **And other information you'd like to share...**

I would like to include direct quotes and attribute them to you on our website. I will consider your implied consent if you respond to my request... unless you explicitly ask me not to use your name (no other personal information will be shared).

Thank you in advance for your contributions!

(Continued on page 6)

A plant to love! Mrs. Schiller's Delight!

Reprinted with permission from
Bill Fontenot "the nature dude"

Viburnum obovatum 'Mrs. Schiller's Delight' a dwarf form of the species originally found by Florida plantsman Steve Reifler.

Sometimes called "little-leaf viburnum" or (more often) "Walter's Viburnum" (who's Walter???) *V. obovatum* possesses a fairly tiny native range (AL, GA, FL, SC) tucked in the extreme corner of the southeastern U.S. It is often found in or near wetland situations, yet thrives in drier settings and has proven to be quite drought-tolerant in our black-clay garden, where we've grown both 'Walter's' and 'Mrs. Schiller's' for many years. Btw, *Viburnum obovatum* is commonly known as "small-leaf arrowwood" by the USDA Plants Database, which is confusing as there is another native viburnum species (*Viburnum dentatum*) that everyone commonly knows as "arrowwood"..... soooooo.....

The regular or "standard" Walter's Viburnum grows to 8' and above in the wild. It often suckers, and many if not most wild genetic strains look a tad unattractive -- a tad too rangy, with dull leaves and tiny off-white bloom heads. But then legendary Alabama plantsman Tom Dodd, Jr. found a more compact glossy-leaved big-immaculate-white-bloom specimen -- which he unofficially named 'Lynn Lowery' after his friend and legendary Texas native-plantsman. Perhaps it was Lynn who originally found this fancy specimen in the wild and gave it to Tom to propagate.....

Anyway, the shiny-leaved immaculate-white version began to gain gardening popularity both north and west of its native range back in the 1990s. But then a number of gardeners (especially those with loose rich soils) complained of the plant's rambling ways and it sort of lost favor.

But then 'Mrs. Schiller's Delight' (abbreviated by some as 'Schiller's Dwarf') was introduced. This super-glossy-leaved compact 3' x 4' globular-shaped cultivar is an absolute killer in any landscape -- including the most formal of gardens. It is said that it can be easily trained into a low hedge(!) which could be really useful as a border in old-school/historical/formal gardens.



Down here on the Gulf Coast it blooms as early as February (as late as April up in North Carolina). My full-shot picture does not do any justice whatsoever to the tight globular form of the specimen growing at our place. Form-wise and foliage-wise it's actually as tight as any boxwood. And in our black clay it has (like many plants) grown to larger-than-average 6' x 6' dimensions. Here at our Interstate-10 latitude both 'Walter's' and 'Mrs. Schiller's Delight' are mostly evergreen, losing only a fraction of their foliage resulting from moderately (down to mid-20s) freezing temps.

Viburnum obovatum puts out pretty fruits which morph from red to black over time. Like all native Viburnums they are relished by birds.

Photos also by Bill Fontenot



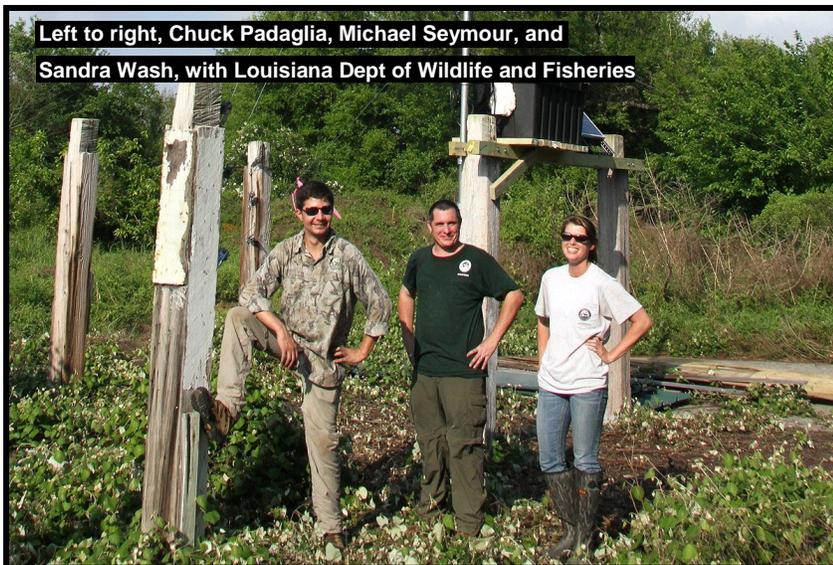
Peveto Woods VHF Migratory Bird Receiver Station

by Dave Patton
Sanctuary Committee

Peveto Woods Sanctuary in Cameron Parish now has a VHS radio telemetry receiver station and tower (Motus Network, Bird Studies Canada). Louisiana Dept of Wildlife and Fisheries crew, Michael Seymour, Chuck Padaglia, and Sandra Wash, installed the station using the

pillings of the old beach house. LDWF has partnered with BTNEP, Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Foundation and others to establish a network of stations along the Louisiana gulf coast. They will pick up signals emitted from nanotags attached to neotropical migrants as well as other possible birds and animals being studied. Tech-

nology has reduced the size of the small nanotag transmitter with battery allowing use on animals as small as dragonflies. Under good conditions, a land station can pick up signals from as far as 15 miles. The stations are visited several times a month and data is downloaded to check for signals received from passing migrants. There are currently 11 receiver stations along the Louisiana coast and more are being added. A network of receivers is being developed along the gulf coast from Texas to Florida, and up the east coast. There are also inland sites in the US and Canada as well as a few in South America. More information and results can be found at the Motus Wildlife Tracking Systems web site, motus.org



Left to right, Chuck Padaglia, Michael Seymour, and Sandra Wash, with Louisiana Dept of Wildlife and Fisheries

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! Simply send a request to president@braudubon.org and ask to be added to the e-list!

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



Bluebonnet Swamp Banding Summary: 2016

by Dan Mooney

Bluebonnet Swamp Primary Bander, Louisiana Bird Observatory
Field Trip Coordinator, Baton Rouge Audubon Society

The Bluebonnet Bird Monitoring Project completed its seventh year of operation at the end of February 2017. The project was started by several dedicated graduate students in the LSU School of Renewal Resources, led by Jared Wolfe. Now known as the Louisiana Bird Observatory, a project of Baton Rouge Audubon, we operate four year-round banding stations across southern Louisiana, and we participate in several birding festivals and educational outreach programs.

Since our first banding session in March of 2010 we have captured 5076 birds of 101 species at Bluebonnet Swamp in 218 banding sessions. That represents well over 5000 hours of volunteer time!

In 2016 we processed 776 birds of 43 species. Highlights for 2016 included capturing a returning Ovenbird for the third winter in a row, one of the few ever U.S. wintering records of Gray-cheeked Thrush (in January), and the oldest female Carolina Wren ever recorded.

SUMMARY OF 2016 CAPTURES AT BLUEBONNET SWAMP

Species Name	Total Captures	Changed Bands	New Bands	Recaptures	Same Day Recaptures	Released Unbanded
NORTHERN CARDINAL	194	2	68	123	1	
PROTHONOTARY WARBLER	161		97	27		37*
CAROLINA WREN	103		28	70	4	1
RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD	65		58	5		2
BROWN THRASHER	28		16	11	1	
WHITE-THROATED SPARROW	25		13	12		
HERMIT THRUSH	21		10	11		
HOUSE SPARROW	17		13	4		
DOWNY WOODPECKER	16		11	5		
BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD	15		12	3		
RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET	14		8	5		1
WHITE-EYED VIREO	14	1	5	7	1	
CAROLINA CHICKADEE	13		10	3		
WOOD THRUSH	10		9	1		



Bluebonnet Swamp Banding Summary: 2016

Species Name	Total Captures	Changed Bands	New Bands	Recaptures	Same Day Recaptures	Released Unbanded
GRAY CATBIRD	8		8			
TUFTED TITMOUSE	7		5	2		
BLUE-HEADED VIREO	6		5	1		
BLUE JAY	5		5			
COMMON GRACKLE	5		5			
INDIGO BUNTING	5		5			
MYRTLE WARBLER	5		5			
RUBY-THROATED	5					5
RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER	4		1	3		
MOURNING DOVE	3		3			
ACADIAN FLYCATCHER	2		2			
AMERICAN ROBIN	2		2			
COMMON YELLOWTHROAT	2		2			
EASTERN TOWHEE	2		1	1		
GRAY-CHEEKED THRUSH	2		2			
HOUSE FINCH	2		2			
NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD	2		2			
SWAINSON'S THRUSH	2		2			
AMERICAN GOLDFINCH	1		1			
EASTERN WOOD-PEWEE	1		1			
GREAT CRESTED FLYCATCHER	1		1			
HOODED WARBLER	1		1			
KENTUCKY WARBLER	1		1			
MAGNOLIA WARBLER	1		1			
ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER	1		1			
ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK	1		1			
TENNESSEE WARBLER	1		1			
WILSON'S WARBLER	1		1			
YELLOW-SHAFTED FLICKER	1		1			
TOTALS	776	3	426	294	7	46

*Chicks weighed and measured while still in the nest that were under 6 days old.



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2016 - 2017 BRAS Speaker Series Recap

The 2016-2017 Baton Rouge Audubon Society Speaker Series has proven to be very interesting. We started the year with a talk by Phillip Vasseur, who provided an uplifting status report on Whooping Cranes in the state of Louisiana, particularly exciting since 2016 marked the first year in which the species had nested in the natural environment in LA for the first time in over 75 years.

In November we were delighted when graduate student Lisa Elizondo guided us along with her as she "tracked timberdoodles" using GPS units that allowed her to determine the migration routes and foraging habits of American Woodcocks in LA, a very important component of her graduate research.

In January, Scott Duke-Sylvester presented an exciting talk on his work exploring avian malaria in Northern Cardinals, many of whom were captured and banded at the Bluebonnet Swamp Nature Center in Baton Rouge, LA.

In February, Will Selman surprised many of us with a report on the shockingly high numbers of shorebirds on Rabbit Island in Cameron Parish, a finding that was so exciting it left several attendees wondering about the possibility of kayaking to the island themselves.

In March, we were treated to a riveting and energy-filled double feature as Delaina LeBlanc and Jed Pitre shared their findings about the migratory habits of Red Knots, research made possible by nanotags and geolocators, which have become progressively smaller and lighter over the years, and which made it possible to track some of LA's Red Knots as far away as Chile.

In April, we rounded out the 2016 - 2017 BRAS Speaker Series with Leslie Lattimore, who runs the Wings of Hope wildlife sanctuary in Livingston, LA. This charismatic, inspiring, and engaging speaker educated attendees on the appropriate action to take when finding injured wildlife and even brought live animals including a Barn Owl (pictured).



Plants for Birds

(Continued from page 1)

In addition to this resource, we are also planning to provide information regarding sources of native plants in our area (basically all of southeast Louisiana). We are also hoping to be able to provide suggestions for replacing non-native landscaping plants. For example, if you want to pull out that Nandina, what can you plant in the same area that

provides similar color and interest, with the added benefit of being a resource for birds in our area.

For those of you who are not familiar with landscaping with native plants, please be on the lookout for workshops in the near future!

-- Jane Patterson

A BRAS Biosketch: Dr. Jay Huner

by Crystal Johnson

Beginning with the current edition, *The Barred Owl* will now periodically feature birders, biologists, environmental scientists, Audubon supporters, novices, and other contributors. The aim is to spotlight individuals whose activities align with those included in the Baton Rouge Audubon Society mission to protect the unique biological treasures of Louisiana, with special concern for birds, wildlife, and their habitats, and to offer opportunities to learn about and appreciate the rich natural environment of our home state. The BRAS Biosketches series will feature professionals, enthusiasts, amateurs, and others who might have a story to share. It is hoped that the series will provide a look at the person behind the activities that interest the readers of *The Barred Owl*. The following is the product of an interview with Jay Huner (pictured) that was conducted in April 2017. Huner was born and raised in the University Hills subdivision about a mile south of the south gates of Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, LA. After military service, he earned his Ph.D. in Marine Science at LSU, joined the faculty at Southern University, and enjoyed a career examining bird predation in crawfish ponds and its impact on production. More recently, in 2012, he participated in a Big Year (an effort to see and/or hear as many bird species as possible, often restricted by time or location) in Louisiana and saw 346 species of birds. He is a frequent contributor to LABIRD, the statewide listserv featuring communications relevant to birds in the state of Louisiana.

Q: Can you describe 1 way that birding has changed for the better since you started birding?

A: Birding has improved for the better through the availability of modern digital technology allowing individuals to easily access bird descriptions and songs/calls, take decent images with inexpensive cameras, and share information almost instantaneously.

Q: Can describe 1 way that birding has changed for the worse since you started birding?

A: I believe that birding has changed for the worse since I began birding through a decline in mentorship for beginning birders.

Q: How do you think social media and the internet have impacted birding (for better or worse)?

A: Social media and the internet have made it possible for birders to easily locate new life birds and identify good birding venues. Social media and the internet have, however, permitted the invariable bullies – present in any community – to unfairly harass birders who mean well but whose expertise has not yet reached higher levels. To be fair, listserv and Facebook monitors generally address bullies quickly but damage can be extreme to sensitive individuals who are being bullied.

Q: Can you provide a couple of tips for birders who are just starting out?

A: (A) Secure the best binocular and digital camera you can afford. (B) Bird as often as you can, in good conscience, without terribly interrupting your life. (C) Bird with others of differing skill levels to enhance your skills. Remember two sets of eyes and ears are far superior to one set in finding birds. (D) Join birding organizations. (E) Secure several different field guides so you can compare descriptions and images. Use internet resources when possible. (F) Establish an eBird account and use it. Huner also credits mentors including Donna Dittmann, Steve Cardiff, Bill Fontenot, Mike Musumeche, Dave Patton, and Van Remsen.

Q: If you were a bird, what bird would you be, and why?

A: I would likely be a Northern Mockingbird, not so much for any vocal abilities, but because I tend to be like a mocker – highly excitable, reactive, and always on the move. I am also an unrepentant omnivore.

Q: Is the Northern Mockingbird your favorite bird?

A: Well, I am always pleased to see Prothonotary Warblers because you can hear them even if you're hard of hearing, they're easy to push up, and they are beautiful birds. I also like Double-crested Cormorants, which are extremely attractive birds and efficient predators of fish.

Q: Where is your favorite place to bird?

A: Locally, it is the Kincaid Lake Dam area, since I live nearby, but statewide it is Peveto Woods in Cameron, LA.

Q: What is one your most memorable stories from birding in the field?

A: Bill Fontenot and I did a project that involved birding resources for the Atchafalaya Basin, and we developed the Neotropical Songbird Tour. During the very first one, a rain storm came through the Sherburne Wildlife Management Area where the tours were being held, raising questions about whether the tour should carry on or be postponed. Eventually ~15 people showed up, including two ladies in an SUV. I was about 1 foot away from the driver's side window talking to the driver, who was standing next to the vehicle. The SUV had an antenna on the driver's side, and the antenna had a red pompom on top. Suddenly a male Ruby-throated Hummingbird flew in, circling the red pompom, going around and around, and eventually the bird flew through the narrow space between the vehicle and me in front of the thoroughly amazed lady in the passenger seat.



Baton Rouge Chapter of the National Audubon Society

Baton Rouge Audubon Society

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