

The **BARRED OWL**

Newsletter of the Baton Rouge Audubon Society

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Black Birders: An Ode to Our Allies

Today is June 4, 2020. A lot has happened recently, including police brutality against black people, its attempted use as a weapon against Christian Cooper, a long-time Central Park fixture who is a black birder, protests around the world, the establishment of BlackBirders Week, everyone from celebrities to activists to laypeople publicly speaking out against racism, and a host of other things, all in the midst of the continued coronavirus pandemic. I keep getting asked -- and I keep asking myself -- do I know any other black birders? I know tons of allies and supporters, but I know very few birders who are black. I don't even know many black nature-lovers, campers, or hikers. I can only share what it's like to be a black birder. One in the deep south, no less. Keep in mind, what follows is an n of 1. An atypical n of 1, some would argue. There are 10 million ways to react to what has happened recently, but it is my opinion that sharing is one key way to heal from hurt, injustice, and bigotry.

So, for me, this is what it's like to be a black birder. I was born a poor black child in Mississippi. No, literally. I grew up poor. In Mississippi. I always loved nature, including birds, but I never started to learn about birds until I took Jane Patterson's introduction to birding class in spring of 2013. Jane was a passionate teacher who set the bar incredibly high for the rest of us mere mortal educators. She didn't just share what she knew. She personally took me out into the field and taught me how to *be* a birder. I felt chosen. I will never be able to thank her enough. That depth of engagement changes lives.



Now that I fancy myself a birder, I bird in my yard, on trails, at the beach, in traffic, at outdoor weddings, at blues festivals, at red lights... Nowhere is safe. When walking on a trail, I have to watch out for low-hanging branches (or hugs from people wearing velcro straps) because my hair is like carpet. It snags. Many times I have been walking along skulking after birds only to be victimized by the whiplash yank of a branch that got caught in my hair. I do hate to complain because it is also a built-in hat in the winter.

Being a black birder means I don't have to worry about sunburn. It also means that when I skip an event, my absence is noticed, and later I am asked where I was. Being a black birder means I likely embarrass my family when I go chasing a Monk Parakeet in downtown New Orleans. It means I will draw stares from blacks and non-blacks alike. It means I will probably not share your musical taste as we ride to the trailhead. It means I'm more likely to be visible in the birding event photos when they're posted later.

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Black Birders: An Ode to Our Allies

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Another part of what it's like to be a black birder is that I toggle between feeling sore-thumb conspicuous like a single chocolate chip in a bowl of cookie dough and feeling jarred back to reality when I remember I'm the only black person in a birding group. For me, seeing another black person out birding is like seeing an Eastern Screech Owl perched casually in broad daylight in my front yard. It's driving the same street a million times, and stumbling upon this most unexpected creature. I can't stop staring. I don't want to stare too much or squeal or ask too many questions for fear of scaring off this rarity, but I am fighting the urge to join hands and jump up and down and swing around and around in circles like 2 school girls who just got invited to the dance. It is human nature to seek similarities in others and want to belong to a tribe. It is a weird sensation to spend so much time being the only black person that I forget this fact until I see another black person. Thankfully the forgetfulness part is my default because my birder friends are such excellent and supportive allies. It's the non-allies that are the problem.

Which brings me to the other part. Y'all. It is indeed scary. Don't let my toothy grin fool you. I do have to be hyper-vigilant when I'm out birding. I do have to avoid neighborhoods that display confederate flags. I do have to look behind me if I'm out on a trail or kayaking in Louisiana. I do have excellent peripheral vision because I've honed it. I do have to keep my surveillance cameras up because of neighbors who explicitly told me they didn't want me in the neighborhood a few years ago. I do worry that if attacked my allies would be killed just for being my friends. I do put extra energy into my disarming smile when I feel threatened to reduce my chances of being seen as a threat myself.

The assumption that a 911 call would automatically lead to Christian Cooper's death via police brutality is terrifying. I remember the sense of wonder I felt at seeing this guy a few years back in the documentary, *Birders: The Central Park Effect*. He was so passionate and unashamed. It was incredibly inspiring. He looked like me! Growing up in south MS I always thought things were better up north. Boy was I wrong. I'd like to think that having a cell phone will protect me, but at this point I can't afford to make any assumptions. Idiots are feeling empowered and showing their true colors right now. Which does help me know who to avoid, at least.

But, listen. Do you remember learning about the immune system in high school? Do you remember that when a germ enters the body, the troops rally around to deal with it? White blood cells, macrophages, antibodies, and such? That is what this past week has felt like. The outpouring of support, the non-violent protests (geaux, Louisiana!), the essays, the text messages, and the posts have all warmed my heart. The old phrase, the solution to pollution is dilution, is so true. People's collective outrage at recent events, even when expressed mildly or silently, has reminded me that most people are not idiots, racists, or bigots. Not surprisingly, support has been especially high in the birding community.

If you have said hello, if you've texted to say you're horrified by recent events, if you've helped us with our groceries, if you've donated to a charity that benefits blacks, if you've spoken out, if you've given us 6 feet of personal space to minimize our risk of covid, if you've waved or smiled at a black person and meant it, if you've let us in traffic, if you've gone out of your way to make me feel welcome at an LOS or MCAS or BRAS meeting, if you've sent me facemask patterns in the midst of this pandemic, if you have helped me, my

loved ones, or my students, if you've welcomed me at your sparrow workshop, if you are a black trailblazer whose sacrifices make my life safer today, e.g., Rue Mapp or J. Drew Lanham, if you've changed your facebook profile picture, if you've taken the time to explain why my "rare bird" is really just a boring old House Sparrow, if you've taught me how to do a Barred Owl call, if you've allowed me to crash your Gulf Coast Bird Club event, if you've let me look through your scope, if you've taken me kayaking, if you've helped me find my nemesis bird, if you've helped me attract winter hummingbirds, if you've liked any of my silly write-ups, or even if you've just asked me how I'm doing, then I thank you. Mr. Rogers said find the helpers. Well, the birding community is saturated with helpers. Don't believe me, just whisper, in the dark, in a soundproof room, that you've never seen an owl before. These folks will move mountains to help you see that owl. Thank you for pulling out the chair and making sure we feel like we have a seat at the table.

I was raised largely by my grandmother, who is in her 90's now. In recent years I have asked what she thought about certain events and why she was not outraged or shocked. To shamelessly borrow from Marybeth Lima, I think grandma's insight gives me the 10,000-foot view because she has so many decades on me and has seen so much in her lifetime. Sadly, although recent events are infuriating, I don't have the luxury of being shocked. It is not a new story. Only now it is being recorded by higher-resolution cell phone cameras.

But I do have the benefit of having some experience in moving forward from tragedy, and making sure their suffering was not in vain. All this fear, dread, and outrage? It's flat exhausting some days. What would cheer me up and reduce my angry insomnia and dread at checking the news

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"DOWNTOWN BUTTERFLIES"

A Visit to Tulane River and Coastal Center

by Linda Barber Auld, NOLA BugLady

On Sunday, April 19 I visited the Tulane River and Coastal Center garden where the Native Plant Initiative met back in June of 2019. I wanted to see this oasis nestled next to Mardi Gras World and the Mississippi River to see how the plants were liking their home in the downtown concrete jungle.

This native plant smorgasbord garden was sponsored by Tulane Bywater Institute and was planted by Tulane folks assisted by Susan Norris-Davis. She told me, " My connection here is that Mark Davis, my husband, is the current director of the Bywater Institute and he asked me to help install the garden." Here's a link: bywater.tulane.edu

Once a week Susan has been volunteering her time to tend this garden and her tender loving care has created a spot for nature's creatures to thrive. Seeing green plants and flowers in an area totally surrounded by buildings and paved streets not only provides sustenance for butterflies and pollinators but also brings smiles to human faces!

This garden is another perfect example of the saying, "*Plant it and they will come!*" During her weekly visits, Susan has enjoyed seeing Long-tailed Skippers collecting nectar from flowers plus she found a clutch of eggs on the Wisteria vine and a fat Black Swallowtail caterpillar! During my visit even though the weather was cloudy and windy, I saw a trio of insects: Lady bugs, Groundsel Bugs, and some Honey Bees. However what really caught my attention was the sea of native Aquatic milkweed sticks with twenty-two fat Monarchs chewing every last leaf. Insects have found this oasis and are benefiting from its bounty! When adding native plants to your garden, you will be successful growing them if you can replicate the growing conditions these plants use in nature's varying habitats. Seeing these plants in action displayed in public locations also helps gardeners to determine which ones they would like to add to their own gardens as an invitation to enhance their butterfly and pollinator activity. Thank you, Susan Norris-Davis, for your dedication and excellent work!

The impressive current plant list at this garden:

- American Wisteria *Wisteria frutescens*
- Aquatic Milkweed *Asclepias perennis*
- Azure Sage *Salvia azurea*
- Blue-Eyed Grass *Sisyrinchium spp.*
- Blue False Indigo *Baptisia australis*
- Blue Mistflower *Conoclinium coelestinum*
- Blue Violet *Viola sororia*
- Buttonbush *Cephaelanthus occidentalis*
- Crimson-eyed Rosemallow *Hibiscus moscheutos*
- Common Rush *Juncus effuses*
- Crinum Lilies *Crinum americanum*



- Dwarf Palmetto *Sabal minor*
- Dwarf Wax Myrtle *Morella cerifera*
- Dwarf Yaupon *Ilex vomitoria*
- Eastern Redbud *Cercis Canadensis*
- Elliot's Lovegrass *Eragrostis elliottii*
- False Indigo *Amorpha fruticosa*
- Gaura *Oenothera lindheimeri*
- Giant Ironweed *Vernonia gigantean*
- Golden Tickseed *Coreopsis tinctoria*
- Gulf Beardtongue *Penstemon tenuis*
- Halberdleaf Hibiscus *Hibiscus laevis*
- Hibiscus *Hibiscus coccineus*
- Indian Blanket *Gaillardia pulchella*
- Lanceleaf tickseed *Coreopsis lanceolata*
- Louisiana Iris *Iris species* donated
- Lyreleaf Sage *Salvia lyrata*
- Narrowleaf Mountainmint *Pycnanthemum tenuifolia*
- Partridge Pea *Chamaecrista fasciculata*
- Purple Echinacea *Echinacea purpurea*
- Scarlet Star Hibiscus *Hibiscus coccineus*
- Seaside Goldenrod *Solidago sempervirens*
- Slender Rosinweed *Silphium gracile*
- Southern Lady Fern *Athyrium filix-femina*
- Swamp Milkweed *Asclepias perennis*
- Switchgrass *Panicum virgatum*
- Purple Echinacea *Echinacea purpurea*
- Scarlet Star Hibiscus *Hibiscus coccineus*
- Seaside Goldenrod *Solidago sempervirens*
- Slender Rosinweed *Silphium gracile*
- Southern Lady Fern *Athyrium filix-femina*
- Swamp Milkweed *Asclepias perennis*
- Switchgrass *Panicum virgatum*
- Virginia Sweetspire *Itea virginica*
- Weeping Yaupon *Ilex vomitoria*
- White Penstemon *Penstemon digitalis*
- White-top Sedge *Rynchospora colorata*
- Winecup *Callirhoe involucrate*
- Yellow Wild Indigo *Baptisia sphaerocarpa*



Photos by Linda Barber Auld. For more information regarding butterfly native plants check out my websites: www.nolabuglady.com also visit my Facebook page: www.barberlaboratories.com

Linda Barber Auld, better known as NOLA BugLady, owns and operates Barber Laboratories, a three generation "You Buy it, You Apply it" pest control supply store located in Harahan. She has also raised butterflies for over 40 years and last year self-published her first book, "BugLady's Butterfly Summer" which is available at the store or on the website. You can also purchase native butterfly nectar and caterpillar host plants at her store. Website will post the available plant list each month. Linda's mission statement is "I sell death for pests and promote life for the rest!"

Caroline Dormon, the Louisiana Pioneer Woman

by Linda Barber Auld

Born in 1888, Caroline Dormon was a prolific writer, multimedia artist, an accomplished botanist, noteworthy archeologist, an esteemed forester, school teacher, and tireless conservationist. I think to myself, is there anything this woman can't do?



Well, yes. She couldn't drive a car; however, she could handle a mule team that carried her to a teaching job and back home every day. Women living in that era were expected to marry, raise children and do the housework. Yet, from sunrise to sundown her feisty determination drove her to share her deep knowledge of nature's ecosystem of plants, insects, and birds. In her world of the early 1900's simple pleasures of picnicking and strolling through a garden were entertainment and forms of communications were very limited. Letter writing, newspapers, magazines, plus word of mouth at garden club meetings and church socials spread the news. I find it amazing that this woman from the little town of Saline, Louisiana, was able to amaze master gardeners from all over the world with her talents and wealth of wisdom presented in her many interesting articles

and fabulous books of her exquisite artwork.

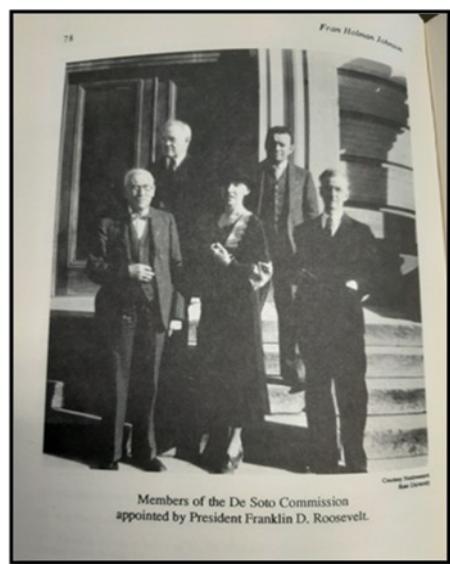
One of five children, Caroline spent her childhood years at Briarwood, their family's vacation home. Her father was a lawyer by trade but avid naturalist by hobby. Her family enjoyed nature walks together which helped her to develop a life-long interest in plants and wildlife.

There have been many articles written about Caroline. She has been described as "the Audubon of wild flowers", "A female Thoreau", "a wild goose", "the Prima Donna of the Plant World", "A woman of many interests", "One of Louisiana's foremost educators", "Queen of the Forest Kingdom", and (my favorite) "A tiny doll-like woman of granite will". Pretty impressive!

In the April 13, 1997 Times Picayune article, Jeanette Hardy writes..."There would be a cocklebur caught on the hem of her skirt, bits of leaves and pine needles or wisps of cobwebs and cocoons stuck to her shoulders. Fair complexion. Her hair braided into a crown or pulled back severely into a bun. Straw colored. Eyes green as chlorophyll conditioned to detect the barest flicker of movement..."

Unheard of that a woman of that day and age would pursue a formal education, Caroline was educated at Judson College in Marion, Alabama with a Bachelor's degree in Literature and Art. She taught for several years in Louisiana schools and then re-established her home at Briarwood in 1918 where she began to collect, catalog and preserve native trees and shrubs.

Her diversified career was filled with fascinating jobs that led her throughout the state. In 1922 she persuaded the U.S. Forestry Service to establish a national forest in Louisiana. She also developed forestry education materials for schools and promoted forestry conservation that was supported by civic leaders. In 1930 during the administration of President Herbert Hoover, U.S. Representative James B. Aswell worked with Caroline to establish the Kisatchie National Forest. In 1941 she was hired as Beautification Consultant for the Louisiana Highway Department. Also in 1941 the board of Public Welfare employed her landscaping consulting talents to nature-scape the Huey P. Long Charity Hospital grounds in Pineville. In 1961 the 301 acre Louisiana State Arboretum that she had proposed was dedicated. In 1964 Caroline was consultant for the popular Hodges Gardens State Park and nearby Chicot State Park. The Caroline Dormon Lodge opened in 1965 at the arboretum which serves as visitor center, library, and native plants herbarium.



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You need a Hawthorn in your life!

by Bill Fontenot, the nature dude

No matter where you live, the wild hawthorns (*Crataegus*) deserve a closer look by gardeners and wildlife enthusiasts alike. There are dozens of species, most all of which are smallish trees (10-



30'), occupying many if not most woodland habitats throughout North America. We've got more than ten native hawthorns in Louisiana. Of these, parsley hawthorn (*C. marshallii*) is the most celebrated by wild plant gardeners. Just about everybody's got one somewhere in their garden. It has proven to be very adaptable to different soils/pHs across the state.

Aptly named, parsley haw is a fairly common inhabitant in mixed pine/hardwood forests of the southeastern U.S. Its blooms and foliage alike possess a delicate beauty that is best appreciated up close, so placing specimens at the very edges of frequently-used paths, decks, patios, porches, and windows is best. Try to position this plant where it receives morning sun only -- or better, under the bright filtered light of tall shade trees. Its leaves are very thin, and plants tend to defoliate by mid-summer under harsher sun exposures. When the plant is totally, happy you can even expect red/yellow fall foliage color! Fruit/foliage pic courtesy of Annette Parker. The bloom pic is from my tree, currently blooming its pretty little head off!

From Friends of LA State Arboretum:

Parsley Hawthorn
(*Crataegus marshallii*)
The Rose Family (Rosaceae)

Shrub to small tree with irregular, open crown; alternate, deciduous lacy leaves; greenish-tan, exfoliating bark and twigs with sharp spines.

Habitat:

Sandy, alluvial woods and low pastures.

Interesting Facts:

Common name refers to the deeply cut foliage that looks similar to parsley. Flowers have a very conspicuous fishy or rotten scent. Fruit made into jellies, jams, or eaten raw. Tonics and teas from leaves used to treat heart diseases and high blood pressure.

Fruit:

.375" long, bright red, oblong drupe containing 1 to 3 seeds, maturing in fall.

Flower:

Five white petals, red and white stamens, .625" wide, in clusters during early spring.



Wildlife value:

Valuable nectar source for bees, butterflies, and other pollinators; foliage eaten by white-tailed deer; in fall/winter fruit consumed by songbirds and small mammals; serves as cover for insects and birds.

Caroline Dormon, the Louisiana Pioneer Woman

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One of her assignments that piqued my curiosity was her involvement with the DeSoto Expedition Commission. It was established to study and provide a report to Congress that determined DeSoto's actual route discovering America along with recommendations for a celebration of the expedition's 400th anniversary. Caroline was the only woman selected to join this team of prominent men. After publication of the Commission's 349 page final report which included 11 maps, controversy regarding the DeSoto route subsided for a number of years.



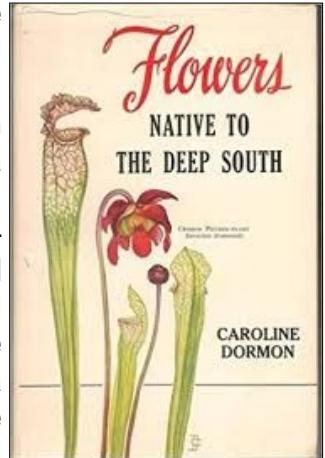
a visitor center

The collection of Caroline's letters attest to professional correspondence with notable national figures including the President's wife Lady Bird Johnson, inventor Thomas Edison, garden writer Elizabeth Lawrence, famed botanist Dr. J. K. Small, and Landscape architect Ellen Biddle Shipman.

Edith Stern, creator of Longue Vue Gardens of New Orleans, befriended Caroline through a Garden Club of America roadside wildflower project. Their working relationship grew as did their friendship to the point where Edith was inspired in 1934 to finance the publishing of Caroline's first book, "*Wildflowers of Louisiana--Most of the Herbaceous Wild Flowers of the Gulf States with the Exception of Mountainous Regions, and the Sub-Tropical Ports of Florida and Texas*". The first edition was 172

pages accompanied by 26 color plates plus 38 black and white text illustrations all drawn by the author. Subsequently, Edith commissioned Caroline as a consultant for Longue Vue, to suggest and supply native plant selections, and place them in Longue Vue's Wild Garden. This relationship continued from 1947 until her death in 1971.

By the 1950's Caroline became good friends with Frank and Sara Gladney of Baton Rouge. In 1956 Frank and Sara, both avid gardeners, purchased a 360-acre land parcel in Gloster, Mississippi. They began enhancing the already beautiful landscape of rolling hills and deep ravines by adding a wide variety of native plants. Sara was deeply involved with the Garden Club Federation and was so intrigued by Caroline's fountain of plant knowledge and artistic talents that she financed Caroline's next book, "*Flowers Native to the Deep South*". The first edition, containing 176 pages accompanied by 33 color plates and 102 text illustrations, was printed in April of 1958. Caroline's words taken from the foreword: "...it is hoped that this book will help to arouse renewed interest in the preservation of our rapidly vanishing wild flowers. From too frequent picking, misdirected efforts to move them to gardens, forest fires and onslaughts of rabbits and insects, some species are becoming very rare...". Some of her best gardening advice was "...if one attempts to grow native plants, their natural environment, soil, etc., must be studied and imitated..."



By 1965 Caroline published "*Natives Preferred*" containing 217 pages accompanied by 12 garden pictures plus 44 text illustrations. Her words taken from the foreword say it all "...The question may be asked, why use native plants? The logical answer to this is, why not? This book is not written for those who still cling to the Old World style of formal gardening, with stiff clipped hedges and beds of flowers in geometrical designs. It is for those who love the informality of Nature, with softly rounded masses of foliage and flowers scattered freely by her hand."

Migrating Monarchs

by Linda Barber Auld

In early March, Monarch butterflies begin leaving their Mexican forest over-wintering grounds and head north. Folks from all over Louisiana have been watching weathered migrant Monarchs visiting their flowers. In my gardens, male Monarchs are patrolling their "space" as they wait for females to stop by for a nectar snack and to lay eggs. The presence of stripped milkweed stalks and fat caterpillars make it pretty obvious that females have accepted my invitation to dine when I wasn't looking.

In 2013 **Monarch Watch**, the national organization that monitors the Monarch populations in their over-wintering grounds in Mexico, reported the lowest number in recorded history. Since then, scientists in all the major universities have been working on this issue to determine the cause. Through their scientific studies, several major breakthroughs have been discovered to help us understand how to proceed as folks who garden specifically for Monarchs. Knowing the facts, each of us will react to this issue on our own time and situation.

First, Monarch caterpillars that eat tropical milkweed will develop smaller wings. This means those butterflies, in the fall, will have less ability to fly to Mexico and so will likely join and

become part of the resident population that overwinters in our area. The fact that the tropical milkweed plants grow vigorously and regenerate leaves very quickly helps the Monarch caterpillars eat from the same plants one life cycle to the next. The repeated use of these plants allows the protozoan spore parasite, "O.E." (*Ophryocystic elektroscirrha*) to spiral out of control. South Louisiana has the greatest problem with this issue. The horrible effects of O.E. has been witnessed and reported throughout the metro New Orleans area; only spotty areas have been infected in Baton Rouge. Google "What is O.E.?" by Linda Barber Auld to read my explanatory article or visit my website: www.nolabuglady.com for more information. Second, when the late Spring temperature exceeds 80 degrees, it may be too hot for the Monarchs to sustain long-distance flying (migrate). Therefore, they reproduce in place as non-migrants, using the same milkweed plants over and over, which brings us back to the same scenario I just described.

In this electronically connected age in which we live, I am amazed that many butterfly gardeners have still never heard of O.E. and its connection to tropical milkweed. Tropical milkweed plants originated in Mexico and since the 1950's have been sold at garden centers everywhere be-

cause it's an attractive plant, the caterpillars love it, it is very easy to grow, and it regenerates its leaves quickly. For years we caterpillar Mamas have depended on it to feed our babies. However, when hiking Louisiana woods, you will not see tropical milkweed growing because it is not native. Because it has been growing in our gardens where we planted it for so long, we think it has become naturalized. Not so. Native milkweeds are very slow growing and once they have been chewed down by caterpillars, the plants take awhile to re-sprout.

There is, as far as I know, only one native milkweed in the historical record for our New Orleans area and that is Aquatic milkweed, *Asclepias perennis*. A Tulane University herbarium specimen documents it growing here since 1890. The Aquatic milkweed can be grown in the shade or sun, in a pot or the ground, even in standing water! (see photos)

Christen Steele, a Tulane University researcher who is currently working on her fourth year of studying this issue, has been monitoring tropical milkweed in over forty gardens in the Uptown/Carrollton area. Her work has uncovered some shocking statistics of the current high O.E. levels. If you have tropical milkweed in your gardens and want to be a part of her very important study program as a Citizen Scientist, you can contact Christen at csteele3@tulane.edu for more information.

Blackened failed chrysalises, failed hatching and deformed wings are signs of serious O.E. infection. For those gardeners who have seen these, it is recommended to cut down your tropical milkweed several times during the months of May through November to attempt slowing down the O.E. outbreak. Continue to offer hungry adult butterflies blooming nectar plants.

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"Silky Gold"

Asclepias curassavica

NOT NATIVE



"Scarlet"

Asclepias curassavica

NOT NATIVE



"Aquatic"

Asclepias perennis

NATIVE



Caroline Dormon, the Louisiana Pioneer Woman

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Caroline advocated for education and support for the Choctaw and Chitimacha tribes of Louisiana. In 1967, "**Southern Indian Boy**" was produced with 52 pages and 8 text illustrations. Red Boots and Deer-Runner, the story of Deer-Runner's People, the Chitimacha and Hi-Chah, a Caddo Indian Boy: The Story of Hi-Chah's People are Caroline's two stories describing the local Indian life.

"**Bird Talk**" was printed in 1969 containing 122 pages plus 42 text illustrations... "From the first, birds fascinated me, and my father--a very good naturalist--taught me their



common names. Around my home at Arcadia, in the hills of North Louisiana, there were trees, shrubs, and vines; so the bird life was varied and delightful. The term "bird-watcher" had not been invented then but nevertheless I became one as soon as I could walk about the yard." "...This book has little chats telling the things that I have learned by living intimately with birds throughout a long life."

"The Gift of the Wild Things--The Life of Caroline Dormon" was written by Fran Holman Johnson and containing 166 pages was published in 1990. In 1942 Caroline wrote "I was born with something--I call it 'the gift of the wild things'--and because I am simple myself, and have a sympathetic heart, I can understand animals and simple people to an unusual degree. I see, too, so much that others miss. When I know so many lovely things, I feel greedy in keeping them all to myself." Taken from the book jacket: "The fascinating and many-faceted career of this unconventional woman is outlined for the first time by Fran Holman Johnson, who examines Dormon's childhood environment; her love of nature; her education; her brief career as a teacher, her relationship with numerous scholars, writers and artists, and her success as a naturalist. The text is complemented by numerous photographs."

When I began reading this book, I didn't want to put it down. Wondering what she was going to do next held me intrigued and spellbound. Personally, I find her country sayings to be descriptive and endearing. Some of my favorites are: "Trees are donning their green uniform", "Fall brings a riot of color", "Leafminers are villainous rabbits", "willynilly", "hybridizing = meddling with God's business", "humbly thankful", and "My fingers are tingling for the brush."

In 2010 Fran Holman published "**Adventures in Wild Flowers: The Timeless Writings of Caroline Dormon**" containing 227 pages. Words from the preface: "Caroline Coroneos Dormon (1888-1971) published horticultural and gardening books and articles more than 75 years ago, yet her writings are still timely, still potent. This work is a collection of fifty of those articles first published in botanical and gardening magazines, including *The American Home*, *Hollands's Magazine*, *Home Gardening for the South*, *Flower Grower*, and *The Bulletin for the American Iris Society*.

I am hoping that this article will inspire you to read her books and to visit her beloved Briarwood Nature Preserve. Experience the beautiful rambling trails filled with new blooming surprises with each season and then you will know how nature inspired her to draw its splendor and preserve it for generations to come.

<http://www.briarwood.org>

Black Birders

(Continued from page 2)

every morning? Action. For example, taking the focus off the xenophobes and putting the spotlight of appreciation on the helpers, the trailblazers, the allies, the supporters, and encouraging them to stay the course. Continue to say hello. Continue to be kind. Continue to listen. Keep trying, even if you are afflicted by the unfortunate curse of tone deafness.

Mentor like Jane (see above): each one teach one. Add field safety to courses being taught. Gift a used pair of binoculars or a field guide to that little black girl down the street. And then show her how to use it. Write your legislators. Hold the door open. Establish a scholarship. Join me in encouraging more black people to come outdoors next spring. Vote. Share your dashcam footage if you see something. Get to know a black person. Take us birding with you.

Seriously, any small or big thing. If the solution to pollution is dilution, then every drop is appreciated. Kenn Kaufman says if you enjoy watching birds, then you're already a good birder. I think, if you enjoy helping people, then you're already a good helper. Just. Please. Keep standing with us. You are appreciated beyond words.

Crystal N. Johnson
Baton Rouge, LA

Postscript by Jane Patterson....

On May 25, 2020, in Central Park in New York City, Christian Cooper was birding...looking for migrant warblers and other interesting birds. He came across Amy Cooper (no relation) in the park who was allowing her dog to run off leash in an area that is clearly marked otherwise. Fearing for the birds, he asked Amy to leash her dog. She responded by calling the cops saying she was "being threatened by an African American man in the park."

This incident sparked an idea with young Black birders across the country. The group who use the hashtag #BlackAFinStem had virtual meetings and quickly formed a weeklong event (#BlackBirdersWeek) that would feature Black birders from around the country and beyond. They would tell their stories and help to encourage other Black birders and wannabe birders, and also to educate the rest of us. National Audubon featured a couple of Q&A events with these folks; you can find the recordings online through their website. A common thread with all of them was that they all have to watch their backs while also watching birds. Birding is largely a White, male pursuit (although certainly women have made significant inroads). As a whole, the idea and the actuality of Black birders is still an unfamiliar one. Indeed, the idea of Black and People of Color enjoying nature in any pursuit is still novel. It is beyond time for this to change.

My friend Crystal Johnson is a Black birder in Louisiana. Indeed, she is the only Black birder I know. Crystal took the time to write this lovely essay and I wanted to share it here. I'm honored to be mentioned here, but I'm much more excited about the advice she has to offer. I hope you have read and will take her message to heart. You can find more stories and recordings from #BlackBirdersWeek by searching Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram for this hashtag.

As in any healthy ecosystem, diversity is life.

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