

The **BARRED OWL**

Newsletter of the Baton Rouge

Volume XLVII, Number 3

4th Quarter, 2020

SANCTUARY! SANCTUARY!

At long last, Baton Rouge Audubon has a new sanctuary!

In the mid-1980's, BRAS became the owner of property on the Louisiana Gulf Coast in Cameron Parish. This chenier habitat was seen as a historical and valuable resource for migratory songbirds



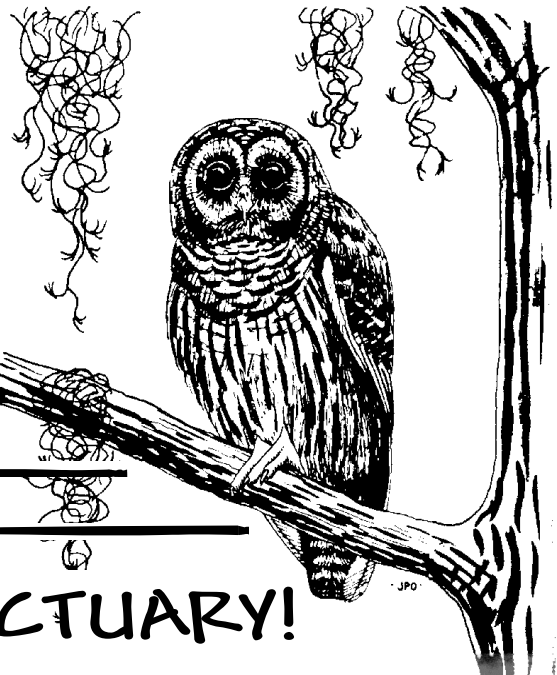
article and photos by Jane Patterson

crossing the Gulf of Mexico. BRAS has managed what is now known as the Peveto Woods Sanctuaries by adding lots and parcels (when prudent) as they became available through donation or purchase. While acknowledging all along that the vulnerability of the property to storms and hurricanes was a significant risk, BRAS managed to piece together 41 acres of protected habitat that is a success story for both the birds that depend upon this area ecologically, and as an opportunity for birders to see migration season in its glory.

Through our work at Peveto Woods, we saw the preservation of sanctuary habitat as an investment for the birds, and an educational resource for humans. Because the location in Cameron parish is three hours or more away from Baton Rouge, our Audubon chapter began to consider how a sanctuary closer to home could also favorably impact bird populations and provide more frequent access to birders in our own region of the state. For the last 20 years or so, BRAS has entertained the pursuit of a sanctuary property within an hours drive from Baton Rouge.

We wanted to get the most bang for our buck - so both ecologically and cost-wise, wetland areas were an obvious choice. Many other parameters were considered in a land search, including contiguous habitat along migratory flyways, and accessibility to a nearby community to provide a source for food, lodging, public restroom facilities, and businesses that could provide maintenance services for sanctuary needs.

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The NEW Louisiana Certified Habitat Program

by Linda Barber Auld, NOLA BugLady

In January 2016, I purchased a new location for my three-generation old family business, Barber Laboratories, at 6444 Jefferson Highway in Harahan. At that time, the front garden consisted of St. Augustine grass, boxwood hedges and non-native azaleas. I knew that a big change must happen! In the last four years, I've planted with a purpose, transforming this space into a wildlife-friendly garden consisting of a combination of native and non-native annuals and perennials. Each side flower bed covers about 120 square feet and is packed with an assortment of caterpillar host plants and butterfly nectar plants mixed with some human eye-candy. This little oasis has attracted a wide variety of butterflies, moths, bees, and wasps. Since I began adding more native plants, I have noticed an influx of more native bees that I've never seen before! "Plant it and they will come" really is true and really does work. The native plants are more disease resistant plus most have a deep tap root and are more drought tolerant. The annuals re-seed and the perennials sprout new leaves after a cold winter. Sometimes I plant native and non-native next to each other just as an experiment to see which plants the pollinators will choose. I also like to show folks that native plants can easily be added and blend-in well with non-natives in existing gardens. Through my last forty-three years of raising butterflies, my plant buying and usage has definitely changed, selecting more native than non-native simply because our native insects recognize these plants as "real food."

I display my live caterpillars and butterflies inside my store to show folks how bugs can be interesting and fun to study. Having the plants growing at the office helps provide flowers for the butterflies and host plant foods for the many caterpillars I tend every day. Folks enjoy looking at the colorful flowers and the array of insects visiting their fuel stop. Two-spotted long-horned bees and honey bees are regularly seen visiting the penstemon, purple coneflowers, stokesia, baptisia, blue lobelia, monarda, mistflower, ironweed, slender mountain mint, garden phlox, red lobelia, rudbeckia, and the big-leaf mountain mint. In the front gardens, partridge pea (for sulphur butterflies) plus both aquatic and swamp milkweeds (for monarchs) are the caterpillar host plants available for the little munchkins.

The backyard was all concreted with a spirea and a lantana at the base of a huge pecan tree. My son constructed a raised bed frame so that I could create the backyard butterfly haven. I used an assortment of trees in pots leftover from previous caterpillar rearing that I wanted to finally get into the ground. Many folks don't know that many types of moth and butterfly caterpillars eat specific tree leaves as their diets. Cooking bay (for Palamedes swallowtail), camphor (for spicebush swallowtail), cherry laurel (for cecropia silk moth), cottonwood (for viceroy), elm (for question mark), hackberry (for 4 butterflies: question mark, hackberry emperor, tawny emperor, and snout), maple (for rosy maple moth), pawpaw (for zebra swallowtail), sassafras (for spicebush swallowtail), tulip poplar (for tiger swallowtail), and willow (for viceroy) are all growing together in harmony. Red lobelia, buttonbush, ironweed, garden phlox, and bee balm make a good nectar smorgasbord alongside the coral honeysuckle curling its way up the back corner fence.

I have enjoyed watching ruby-throated hummingbirds nectaring on penstemon flowers, honey bees gathering pollen from hop tree flowers and giant swallowtail caterpillars eating the leaves. A female great southern white butterfly stopped by to lay a clutch of eggs on the cleome. Painted lady, monarch, gulf fritillary, cloudless sulphur, long-tailed skipper, along with many of the swallowtails--black, giant, spicebush, and tiger--have all found refuge in the BugLady's garden oasis.

Last year I promoted the use of native plants with my "Geaux Grow Natives" project. You can view the list of plants on my website and buy these plants at my store. The announcement of the new Louisiana Certified Habitat Program piqued my curiosity to know just how many native plants are growing here. I checked out the list and am happy to report that my garden has 94 species and is level GOLD!

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← Before:
grass, boxwood and azaleas

After: →
four years of planting the
garden invitation!



In Memoriam - Dr. Leon DeMent

We have received generous contributions In Memoriam to honor one of our long-time members, Dr. Leon DeMent.

The following letter from Dr. McClelland was included with his donation and is shared here with his permission: *"This contribution to the Baton Rouge Audubon Society is in honor of Leon DeMent MD. Leon passed away on July 15, 2020. I had the pleasure to practice gastroenterology with him at the Baton Rouge Clinic for over 25 years. He was a great colleague and friend. Leon was an avid and knowledgeable bird watcher who could identify hundreds of birds based on their sightings or hearing their calls. He was a well respected physician and friend to many as well as a dedicated husband and father. He had many passions including travel but bird watching was one of his greatest passions. He was also an excellent photographer of many birds. He shared this passion with his wife Sylvia and numerous friends all around the country."*

Another donor, Dr. Lionel Head, shared with me how Dr. DeMent started his love of birding and how inspirational his passion was throughout their long friendship. Dr. Head's donation is also dedicated as a gift in honor of Dr. DeMent's surviving and loving wife, Sylvia.



-Kimberly Lanka

Follow the Chickadees!

There's a saying *"To find warblers in the fall, listen for the chickadees' call"*. Chickadees are a chatty bunch. They are almost constantly calling to each other. And where many song birds call with a single soft chip note, chickadees call with the familiar "chickadee-dee-dee" which is longer and easier to hear. And it's not only us who are paying attention to the chickadees. Other birds listen for the chickadees for a couple of reasons. Chickadees can sound the alarm when there's danger. If you hear the chickadees adding extra "dees" to their call, they are trying to alert each other to the fact there's danger around, usually in the form of a predator...an owl, a snake, a cat, etc

But in the fall, the chickadees' chatter provides a great service to birders. Migrating songbirds have to travel thousands of miles to their wintering grounds in Mexico, Central America or South America. Most travel at night, but need to eat and rest along their arduous journey. One of the strategies that these traveling songbirds employ is listening for other birds along the way. Presence of other birds indicates that the place might be safe and also offer food and cover, which is what they need to replenish their stores for their trip. So these travelers listen for the chickadees which are advertising all of these things. Therefore, a good strategy that you can employ is to capitalize on this. Listen for the chickadees. Find them and

you may just find a mixed flock of warblers and other songbirds. This can also apply to winter flocks. Winter birds may not be as familiar with surroundings, so they may hang out with the locals to find good food sources.

Also be patient! It may be frustrating as you review the flock to keep looking at the same bird over and over, but keep checking out each little movement and you may find new birds. Stick with the flock!



Hurricane Laura and Peveto Woods Sanctuary

Dave Patton
BRAS Sanctuary Committee



Hurricane Laura made landfall in Cameron Parish on August 27th, about 15 miles east of Peveto Woods Sanctuary. Cameron Parish was devastated. Because we were west of the landfall we received very strong northerly winds that broke or uprooted many trees in the sanctuary. However, unlike with Hurricanes Rita and Ike, we did not receive a serious storm surge. The salt water did not cover the sanctuary and the vegetation was not killed as happened with Rita and Ike. Trees were stripped of leaves, but everything was sprouting new growth by the time I visited 3 weeks later. Many large trees were lost and others badly broken, but most of the habitat will recover quickly for migratory birds. The dunes along the beach were reduced, but the grasses are coming back as the rebuilding process begins. The dunes did help protect the chenier and there was no serious loss of the sanctuary coast line. The weather shelter with the interpretation panels survived as did the registration kiosk. One roadside sign is missing, but the other can be salvaged.

Holly Beach is 7 miles to the east and recorded gusts of 153 mph. All of the power poles from Holly Beach to Peveto Woods were broken, and the water tower in Holly Beach was blown down. Some houses were destroyed and most suffered roof damage. New poles are being erected and crews are working along all the highways. The old poles and lines have been shoved to the sides of the roads while they concentrate on restoring power. The residents of Little Florida were told not to expect power before December 1st. The Cameron ferry has been taken out of service and the only way in is from Sulphur. All roads are congested with work crews and residents returning to damaged property. People that do not need to be there should give the area time to recover before returning for recreational activities. Once things settle down, we will announce a work day for volunteers to help clear trails and clean storm debris from the sanctuary. Cooler temperatures may also help with the mosquitoes and deer flies, and bring in some good birds to keep us company.

Sanctuary! Sanctuary!

(Continued from page 1)

The search for an appropriate sanctuary property has intensified over the last 10 years, and multiple locations have been considered and pursued. We have had some false starts and dead ends, but at last, we are very excited to announce that BRAS has acquired another sanctuary property that we look forward to sharing with our members and the public.



The 36 acre tract is located in Ascension parish near the Amite River near the junction of highway 431 and Manny Guitreau roads. It features lovely mature hardwoods on the higher ground as well as beautiful old cypress and tupelo in the lower areas. We will have to install signage and a parking area so that people know exactly where to go. There are primitive trails cut, but we'll probably add a few more. There is some maintenance to do, as the understory is rife with coral ardisia, but thankfully not too much in the way of other invasive plants. Eventually, we'd like to add some seating and interpretive signage. There are not many birding spots in Ascension parish, so we're happy to add a new hotspot! We will be creating a working committee focused on this new property, so if you are interested in volun-

teering, please contact president@braudubon.org. And please stay tuned to our web page and facebook page as we make progress on the site and announce our grand opening!



Many thanks to our realtor Erin King for her diligence in helping us find this suitable piece of property!

Elections for Baton Rouge Audubon Board

To our membership:

The by-laws of Baton Rouge Audubon Society require that annual elections are held for the executive board on an annual basis. We generally hold these elections at our May program / meeting for our fiscal year which runs from July 1 - June 30. However, due to Covid19 concerns we were not able to meet so we have not held those elections. Since we are not sure when we will be able to meet, we have decided to take these elections online instead.

Active Baton Rouge Audubon members will receive an email with a link to a Google ballot form. You may complete and submit your ballot online. All of the results will be anonymous. We appreciate your prompt attention to the ballot so that we can compile the results as soon as possible.



The Value of Vines

by Jane Patterson

Some people have the impression that vines are not good for our landscapes. But our native vines evolved with our native trees and those trees are very well suited to supporting the vigorous growth. Fruiting vines tend to grow as high as they can to seek the sun for flower and fruit production. Many live for years or even decades.



virginia creeper

In the fall, there are several fruiting vines that are plentiful in Louisiana that provide essential food resources to both our resident and migrating populations of birds. Some we can cultivate in our yards. Others are better left for wilder places, but knowing what they are and where they are can help you find birds.

One of these is Virginia Creeper. Not only is it a food source, but also provides wonderful fall color.. Here's a tip from Dr. Van Remsen, written during the last week of September: Birding tip -- Virginia Creeper is a favorite fruit of many migrants. The blackish fruit is hard to spot because it is typically up high in canopy near the trunk or large branches of the supporting tree. But if you find a viney canopy tree with a lot of VC fruit, watch it carefully -- if there are any thrushes, tanagers, grosbeaks, catbirds, or RE Vireos in the area, they will cycle into the tree off and on. For example, yesterday at Tickfaw SP, I saw what looked like a thrush fly from the trunk area of a very tall isolated pine. Hmmm. Sure enough, the pine was loaded with Virginia Creeper fruit. No birds at first, but I sat back and watched.

After 45 minutes, the tally was 2 Veeries, 1 Swainson's Thrush, several *Catharus* sp., a Catbird, 2 Scarlet Tanagers, as many as 5 Red-eyed Vireos at once, a fruit-eating Pileated, plus a dozen or more unidentified medium-sized passerines that I just couldn't see well. The height of the tree and the bad light made for tough ID conditions. Catbirds and RB Grosbeaks are still scarce, but within the next week, they will be more prominently represented.

Bill Fontenot noted that Virginia Creeper was the number one most observation in his avian frugivory report. He replied to Van's report "*Pileated Woodpecker is a new one for Va. creeper on the LA frugivory list.....it's the 5th woodpecker species and the 27th bird species we've observed/reported for this exceedingly important (esp. for migrants) plant.....fruit fat content re: this grape family member is around 25%!*" You can find a copy of Bill's avian frugivory report on the **Plants for Birds in Louisiana** facebook group under [Files](#).

Another that provides excellent food value (and fall color) is poison ivy. Obviously this is one best grown where people can avoid it. But pay attention to the mature trees in the forest and notice the vines climbing it. Mature poison ivy has wood stems and angles out horizontally from the trunk of the tree. The small ivory-colored fruit are also extremely lipid-rich making them very attractive for migrating birds that need slow-burning fuel for their long migratory journeys.



poison ivy berries and fall color

Baton Rouge Audubon is proud to announce that we will have a new poster available to members and public once we can finally meet again in person. This new work of art features many of the more common wading birds that can be found around Baton Rouge and indeed in most of Louisiana. The incomparable art work was again provided by Dan Lane, LSU research associate, professional field guide, and bird artist. Graphic art was provided by Nora Patterson Larsen. We thank both of them for sharing their talents with us!

Posters will be printed soon and available at our next in-person meeting.



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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
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Baton Rouge, LA 70896

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 e-list, simply send a request to president@braudubon.org and ask!

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
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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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