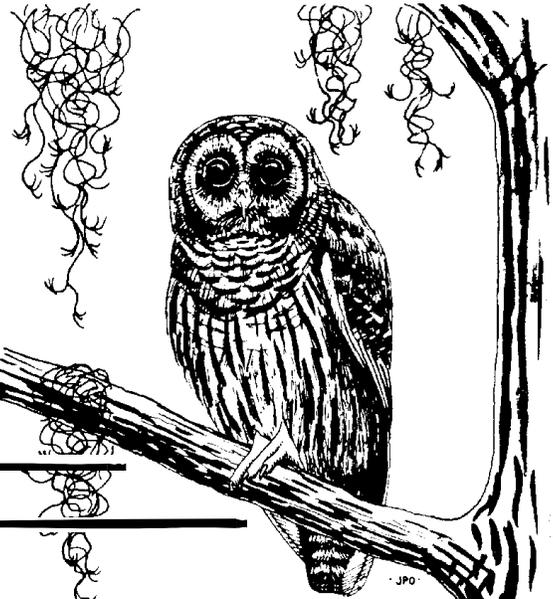


The **BARRED OWL**

Newsletter of the Baton Rouge Audubon Society

Volume XLVI, Number 2

3rd Quarter, 2019



LOOSE BALLOONS KILL

By Richard Condrey – Conservation Chair

I hope you made our May meeting. The presentation on Birds of Cuba and pot-luck gathering was wonderful. A perfect example of what's great about Baton Rouge Audubon: Our interest in what's good for the birds naturally translates into what's good for people and the planet.

I'm doubly glad I made it. As we were leaving, our President, Jane Patterson, asked me to look into what Baton Rouge Audubon could do to eliminate the intentional release of balloons in Louisiana.

I readily agreed. Off and on since the late 70's, I've been involved in efforts to reduce the unintentional mortality humans inflict on sea turtles and dolphin through the release of balloons. Given my narrow focus, Jane quickly made me aware of broader, deadly impacts of 'loose balloons' (defined here as any balloon which is intentionally released without a valid scientific purpose.)

So here's a summary of what I've learned and my suggestion as to what Baton Rouge Audubon should do.

The Balloon Council (TBC), an industry organization, seems to support safe use practices. They ask us not to release any balloons, to always monitor children with balloons, and to properly dispose of used balloons (<http://www.theballooncouncil.org/smart-balloon-practices/>). Moreover, according to an April 2019 Associated Press article, TBC "is not opposing any of the legislative efforts to stop balloon releases" (<https://www.abcactionnews.com/news/national/more-states-to-join-florida-in-aim-to-knock-air-out-of-festive-balloon-launches>).

Yet mass release of loose balloons continue. What could people be thinking? Where is the joy in mass littering events?

Loose balloons kill birds, turtles, wildlife, and farm animals by blocking the digestive track, entanglement, or suffocation (i.e., Jane Patterson's 2013 Barred Owl article *Balloon's Blow: Don't Let Them Go* available at <http://www.braudubon.org/newsletter/BRAS-Owl-2013-Q1.pdf>)

For example, working with data from the biodiverse waters off Australia and New Zealand, Roman et al. (2019, <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-018-30038-z.pdf>) demonstrated a significant relationship between ingested marine debris and death of seabirds-- the world's most threatened group of birds. They found that ingestion of a single item results in a 20% chance of inducing mortality over the lifetime of a seabird, most often from obstruction of the digestive tract. Moreover they find that balloons are the highest-risk debris item in relationship to seabird death. Ingested balloons are 32 times more likely to result in seabird death than ingested hard plastic, despite the greater abundance of hard plastic in marine debris (<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-018-30038-z.pdf>)

Biodegradability is an important issue being used as a 'pro-release smokescreen'.

There is a debate over the biodegradability of balloons composed of latex (i.e., <https://youtu.be/-3aAF2VPd-4>). It seems to center around the argument that latex balloons degrade at a rate similar to that of an oak leaf. Although latex balloons do break down (over a number of years) they degrade into ever smaller pieces of litter that can

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BRAS Annual Election Results

Annual elections were held at our May meeting and potluck event. The current board agreed to serve again and were voted in by the membership. The board consists of:

President - Jane Patterson
Vice President - Debbie Taylor
Secretary - Donna Lafleur
Treasurer - Kimberly Lanka

The other board members are appointed with the approval of the board and are leaders in various areas. These are:

Conservation - Richard Condrey
Education - Jane Patterson
Field Trips - Dan Mooney
Hospitality - Debbie Taylor
Membership - Heather Wilson
Programs - Katie Percy
Sanctuary - Dave Patton

At Large Members:

Erik Johnson
Marie Varnes
Mark Pethke
Casey Wright

Any of these committee leaders would WELCOME assistance from any of our members. Please contact them directly to volunteer!

Our May program featured a very entertaining recap from Joelle Finley and Ken Harris from Orleans Audubon of a recent birding trip to Cuba. If you have a birding experience to share and would like to share it with our members, please let Katie Percy (our programs chair) know!

As is our custom, we have a hiatus from programs & meetings in the summer but will resume in September! Wishing everyone a fun and birdy summer!

- Jane Patterson



A Ruby-throated hummingbird enjoys the nectar of native *Monarda fistulosa* (Wild Bergamot or Beebalm) Photo credit: Mike Glaspell of Lockport, LA

Time To Renew Your WMA Permit!

It's that time of year again! If you visit our LA Wildlife and Fisheries Department managed properties like the Wildlife Management Areas, it may be time to renew your annual hunting, fishing or Wild Louisiana permit. The Wild Louisiana permit is of particular interest to those of us who participate in non-consumptive activities like birding and photography. The proceeds from the sale of this permit go to support the Natural Heritage programs at LDWF, which includes the non-game bird programs. At only \$9.50 a year, it's a no-brainer. If you're under 16 or over 60, you do not need this permit to enter a WMA, but you should carry your license with you.

When you enter a WMA, not only do you need a permit, you also need to comply with the check-in/check-out process. LDWF provides cards at kiosks at all of the WMA's. But now there is another option: there's an app for that! In your app store, search for "LDWF" and you'll see the WMA Check in/Check Out app. You can use it up to 24 hours before you check in to a WMA. When you check out, you indicate what you've been doing at the WMA. Statistics drive government programs...the more birders we have that indicate use of the WMA's, the more likely LDWF is to support us!

Use the new
WMA Check
in/out app!



A screenshot of an app store listing for the "WMA Check In/Check Out" app. The app is developed by the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries. The listing shows a 3.6 star rating based on 23 ratings and is free. The app icon features the Louisiana Wildlife & Fisheries logo, which includes a deer and a bird.



The Titi Tree

by Bill Fontenot aka the nature dude

Goody! It's July again: time to feature an all-time favorite native shrub . . . I hope you like it too . . .

Cyrilla racemiflora, commonly called swamp cyrilla, titi bush, or swamp titi (pron. "tie-tie"), is native to swampy sandy/acidic pinelands within the Atlantic and Gulf Coastal states. Here along the Gulf Coast it is most often associated with wetter longleaf pine habitats where it shares space with sweetbay magnolia, black alder, river birch, and other "black water" (= clear/dark water over sandy/acidic bottoms) swamp denizens.



Fortunately for gardeners, swamp cyrilla happily adapts to pretty much any soil type and moisture regime. It performs best in direct/full sun, but will also get along beneath tall shade tree canopies.



In Louisiana, swamp cyrilla exists mostly as a large shrub (6-8' x 6-8') in the wild, but garden specimens may be gradually limbed-up to produce fine, round-topped, 12' x 8' small trees that can fit into all sorts of spaces. Its delicate features are best appreciated near walkways and entryways where they can be viewed close up. Swamp cyrilla possesses a number of attributes which make it an excellent candidate for even formal style gardens -- especially when trained as a small tree.

Its glossy leaves sparkle under all types of sun exposure. Its delicate petticoat-like bloom spikes appear in June, when (relatively) few other trees and shrubs are blooming. Once the blooms give out, the bloom spikes hang on, transformed into golden-yellow hues as seed gradually matures over the course of the summer months. In winter, its leaves gradually morph through shades of green, yellow, and red, resulting in a festive confetti-like appearance. Its branches are gray, smooth, and serpentine-curved.

As for wildlife, lots of flying insects rely on it for pollen and nectar during its early-summer bloom season.

Loose Balloons Kill

(Continued from page 1)

cause harm to living things throughout the whole process. Before the loose balloons 'bio-disappear' they have still harmed or killed as well as remained unsightly eyesores in our environment.

On the other hand, just because we properly dispose of used balloons doesn't mean that they are now harmless. For example, balloons made of synthetic latex often contain styrene. While the "EPA has not given a formal carcinogen classification to styrene" (<https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2016-09/documents/styrene.pdf>), its known side effects are not minimal.

What Baton Rouge Audubon plans to do

There is a growing national movement attempting to outlaw loose balloons. Currently there are at least five states which limit the number and/or type of balloon which can be released and eight additional states which are considering their own restrictions. Baton Rouge Audubon is planning to join this movement and help to spearhead this effort here in Louisiana. We plan to partner with other conservation organizations in the state to investigate current litter laws and to draft legislation if that is deemed the most effective course of action. If there is anyone among our membership that is particularly interested in this topic and would like to work on this effort, please contact me (Conservation@braudubon.org).



BOOK REVIEW

by Colette Dean

Adventures of a Louisiana Birder: 1 Year, 2 Wings, 300 Species

by Marybeth Lima

As an LSU professor of biological and agricultural engineering, Marybeth Lima is no stranger to writing, having authored numerous books on building playgrounds and creating healthy communities for children. But her gift as a storyteller is evident in her latest book, *Adventures of a Louisiana Birder*, published by LSU Press.

Her story chronicles the evolution from her newfound hobby of birding to achieving the status of one of the top birders in the state, culminating a “big year” count of over 300 species in a single year in her adopted home state of Louisiana.

Although birds certainly get top billing, there is more to her story than counting birds. In the setting of Louisiana’s bayous, prairies, Gulf Coast, and Dauphine Island, Alabama, which Lima describes in exquisite detail, bird watching and the big year competition is merely a thread that connects other life events. From the dramatic near-fatal accident of her spouse to the poignant time caring for her mother-in-law at the end of her life, we see how bird watching during these times helped provide a respite and comfort while personal challenges with loved ones were met.

Birding colleagues pinpointing locations of desired birds acted as spiritual guides along her big year journey, providing information, kindness, and support.

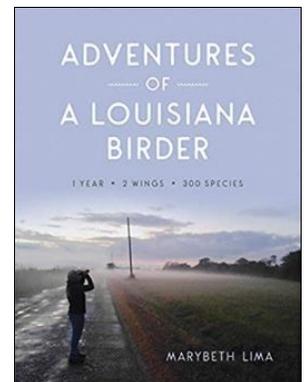
“Somewhere in the rolling confluences of birds, locales, and human personalities, the center of my heart sings with utter abandon,” Lima writes.

Louisiana’s natural beauty is cathartic for Lima and she acknowledges her love and passion for it throughout.

Lima’s personal story alone is memorable, but what leads me to re-read passages are her messages of hope inspiring all of us who love Louisiana and the glorious creatures that inhabit it to continue to strive and preserve it.

She writes, “I thank the great state of Louisiana, this place of compromise and conflict, where I have found my spiritual home. It is my ultimate hope that the book plays a part in helping to keep you alive and healthy so that you can continue your unique dance while providing a dance floor for all those who inhabit your borders.”

Note from Jane Patterson: Be sure to keep an eye on our programs calendar for Fall and Spring 2019/20. Marybeth will be one of our featured speakers!



Expanding Migration Studies to Swainson’s Warbler

Many Barred Owl newsletter readers probably are aware of the Prothonotary Warbler migration research, which was launched by Baton Rouge Audubon Society leaders right here in Baton Rouge at Bluebonnet Swamp. That work expanded through a working group of researchers, which after several years, was published in June 2019 issue of *The Condor: Ornithological Applications* (<https://academic.oup.com/condor/advance-article/doi/10.1093/condor/duz019/5520718>). The results show important connectivity of breeding populations to northern Colombia, which appears to be the primary wintering grounds for this declining species. The geolocators used to track those birds’ migrations have proven to be incredible tools proving

new insights into a species ecology that can be used to inform conservation.

As such, Baton Rouge Audubon Society provided support in part to researchers at Louisiana State University partnering with Audubon Louisiana to begin a migration study focused on the Swainson’s Warbler, one of the rarest and most cryptic warblers of the southeastern United States. Vitek Jirinec, a Ph.D. student in Phil Stouffer’s lab in the School of Renewable Natural Resources, which through support by the Baton Rouge Audubon Society and Friends of Palmetto Island State Park, allowed for the deployment of 10 geolocators on male Swainson’s Warblers in 2018. During the summer of 2019, we have recovered five

of those units, and still hopeful there may be one or two more lurking out there somewhere in the dark understories of Frenchtown Road Conservation Area, Palmetto Island State Park, or Acadiana Park Nature Station, where we deployed the tracking devices last summer.

The geocator data has already providing insights into when the Swainson’s Warblers crossed the Gulf of Mexico this past spring. Because the journey is so long (about 500-600 miles), it takes the better part of a day to make the journey as a small songbird. This means that although they left Mexico or the Caribbean at sundown, the birds would still be flying at sunrise. And because geolocators measure light,

(Continued on page 6)

Fall Birding Classes

Fall Birding Basics Classes - OLLI

Mondays - September 9, 16, 23, and 30 from 8am to 11 am at White Oak Estate and Gardens, 17660 George Oneal Rd, Baton Rouge, LA 70817

This class is designed for the beginning bird watcher. It will consist of 4 weekly sessions. In the first session, you will be introduced to binoculars and field guides and basic information about birdwatching. The following three weeks, we will go on bird walks around the property and identify as many birds as possible. Bird walks may last up to 2 hours (at a very leisurely pace) so mobility is required. After the bird walks, we will review what we've seen and discuss tips and tricks for identifying birds by sight and sound. During the last class, I will offer resources and information on where and how to use your new birding skills. Binoculars and field guides will be provided during the class sessions.

This class will be offered through the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI). Must be a member of OLLI. Fee will be charged.

Please see the OLLI class registration page to register: <https://tinyurl.com/y2et2rye>

DATE: Sept 9, 16, 23, and 30 (series of 4 classes -- runs for 4 consecutive Mondays)

TIME: 8:00 - 11:00AM

LOCATION: White Oak Estate and Gardens, 17660 George Oneal Rd, Baton Rouge, LA 70817

Fall Birding Basics Classes - Hilltop Arboretum

Mondays - September 9, 16, 23, and 30 from 7pm to 9pm. 4 Field Trips - Saturdays - Sept 14, 21, 28, and Oct 6 (Sunday).

The fee is \$50 (Plus \$3.08 Eventbrite registration fee) and covers all 4 classes as well as field trips.

This series of 4 classes is designed for the person who is interested in birds but hasn't a clue what they're looking at. We will start with the basics: binoculars and field guides. Then we'll move on to tips and advice on bird identification. Finally, we'll finish up with resources you can use to find great birds all across the state of Louisiana (and beyond). But the real value from the class comes from the field trips that will be offered with each class. We'll see birds in the wild and learn to identify them.

Binoculars and field guides will be provided for participants. Class is limited to 15 people.

DATE: Mondays - September 9, 16, 23, and 30. Field Trips: Saturdays - Sept 14, 21, 28, and Oct 6 (Sunday).

TIME: 7:00 - 9:00PM for class. 7:30 to 10:30 am for Field Trips

LOCATION: Hilltop Arboretum, 11855 Highland Rd, Baton Rouge, LA 70810

FEE & REGISTRATION: Fee is \$50 plus Eventbrite surcharge. Register here: <https://tinyurl.com/y6gk5sfv>

Fall Birding Basics Classes - Ponchatoula

Dates - Sept 11, 18, 25 and Oct 2. Wednesday morning 8am to 11am. at PARD gym on N. Hoover Rd., Ponchatoula

This class is designed for the beginning bird watcher. It will consist of 4 weekly sessions. In the first session, you will be introduced to binoculars and field guides and basic information about birdwatching. The following three weeks, we will go on bird walks around the property and identify as many birds as possible. Bird walks may last up to 2 hours (at a very leisurely pace) so mobility is required. After the bird walks, we will review what we've seen and discuss tips and tricks for identifying birds by sight and sound. During the last class, I will offer resources and information on where and how to use your new birding skills. Binoculars and field guides will be provided during the class sessions. Class is limited to 15 people.

DATE: Sept 11, 18, 25, and Oct 2

TIME: 8am to 11 am

LOCATION: Ponchatoula Area Recreation District 1 - Hoover Rd, Ponchatoula

Fee and Registration: Fee is \$23.00 plus Eventbrite surcharge - total \$24.86.

Register here: <https://tinyurl.com/y5evc3ow>

(Please note: if you are particularly interested in the class, but unable to pay the fee, please contact me directly: seejanebird@gmail.com)



Hummingbird Summer



Summer and fall are prime hummingbird seasons in Louisiana! If you've been neglecting your feeders because you haven't seen birds in a while, now is the time to clean them up and keep them filled (1/4c sugar to 1 c. water (NO RED DYE) in a CLEAN feeder). The birds are coming!

If you want to learn more about hummingbirds, come join Jane Patterson at Hilltop Arboretum on August 27, 2019 at 6:30pm to hear all about these fascinating tiny miracles. We will talk about our beloved Ruby-throated Hummingbirds as well as the many other species of hummingbirds that visit Louisiana in the fall and winter. In particular, Jane will offer recommendations for plants that you can use in your garden to support these amazing birds.

This program is offered through a partnership with Hilltop Arboretum, the Capital Area Native Plant Society (CANPS) and the Louisiana Master Naturalist of Greater Baton Rouge (LMNGBR). The "Discover Nature" programs featuring local experts that are in touch with nature and are eager to share their experiences. All programs will begin at 6:30pm in the Imo Brown Complex in the Beverly Brown Coates Auditorium. For members of Hilltop, CANPS and LMNGBR the fee is \$5 per program, \$10 for non-members, pay at the door (cash, checks, and credit cards are accepted).

Expanding Migration Studies to Swainson's Warbler

(Continued from page 4)

that signal of "day flying" is very different from when a bird is in the understory of a forest. We found this evidence of the five birds arriving on the northern Gulf Coast on 24 March, 30 March (two birds), 4 April, and 13 April.

Meanwhile, in Jamaica, Smithsonian Institute Researchers Alicia Brunner and Peter Marra have deployed geolocators from Jamaica, one of the wintering grounds for

Swainson's Warbler. Through this burgeoning collaboration, we hope to be able to answer for the first time whether Louisiana's population is wintering in mainland Central America, on Caribbean Islands, or both.

Erik I. Johnson
BRAS Board Member-at-Large
Director of Bird Conservation,
Audubon Louisiana

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The Barred Owl

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P.O. Box 67016
Baton Rouge, LA 70896

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:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$25 | Individual Membership |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$30 | Family Membership |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$50 | Wood Thrush Membership |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 | Rose-breasted Grosbeak Membership |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$250 | Louisiana Waterthrush Membership |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$500 | Painted Bunting Membership |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$1000 | Cerulean Warbler Membership |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$ _____ | Additional Contribution |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$ _____ | 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:
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PO Box 67016
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 www.facebook.com/BRAudubon

Baton Rouge Chapter of the National Audubon Society

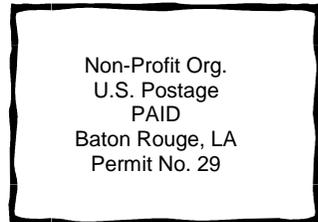
Baton Rouge Audubon Society

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



Baton Rouge Audubon Fall Presentation Schedule

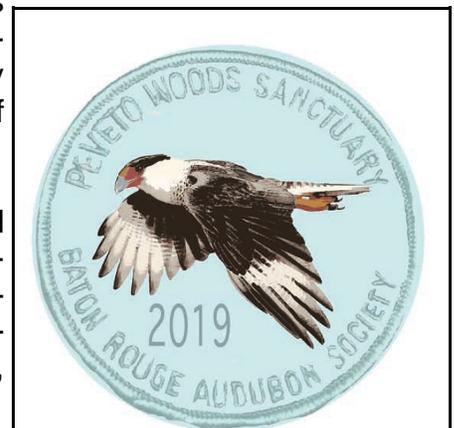
Sept 12th: Marybeth Lima, Professor of biological and agricultural engineering at LSU, will join us to discuss her recently published book *Adventures of a Louisiana Birder: One Year, Two Wings, Three Hundred Species*.

Oct 17th: Katie Percy, Avian Biologist with Audubon Louisiana, will present the most recent results from a study of migratory connectivity in the Prothonotary Warbler. This research was initiated by the Baton Rouge Audubon Society and the Louisiana Bird Observatory, and has grown to include collaborators from across the species breeding range. Such large-scale collaboration has resulted in remarkable insights into migratory routes, stopover locations and duration, and the location of over-wintering grounds.

Nov 14th: Krista Adams is a Purple Martin enthusiast and dedicated landlord to many bird house condominiums. Her conservation efforts extend far beyond her own backyard and include community and youth education projects. Join us in November to learn about the biology, identification, attraction, management, and protection of our Purple Martin population.

Presentations will be held BREC's Bluebonnet Swamp Nature Center's *Education Building* 10533 N. Glenstone Place, Baton Rouge, LA 70810

Attendance is free for all BRAS Members, \$3 at the door for non-BRAS Members and \$2.50 for non-BRAS seniors.



Have you renewed your membership for 2019? Do it now and receive our 2019 collectible patch featuring one of the coolest birds ever: the Crested Caracara

Visit www.braudubon.org/join to renew your membership