

Newsletter of the Orleans Audubon Society.

A Chapter of the National Audubon Society.

Volume: XXXVIII Issue: 2

November/December 2019

### **Pot Luck Holiday Party**

*Hosted by:* Kathleen Crago

*Date:* Tuesday, December 10

*Time:* 7:00 p.m.

*Location:* Clubroom, DeLimon Place, 801 Rue Dauphine, Metairie, LA 70005 (Old Metairie) *Directions and Parking:* Enter at 801 Metairie Road, across from PJ'S. This street is Rue St. Ann--stay on Rue St. Ann until you come to the second stop sign. Park in front of the office on St. Ann or at the corners of the condos. The entrance is 801 Rue Dauphine.

**Bring your favorite dish or spirits to share, and join us for some holiday cheer!**

### **Please select Orleans Audubon Society when Shopping with AmazonSmile**

Please select Orleans Audubon Society as your designated charity when shopping with AmazonSmile. The AmazonSmile Foundation will donate 0.5% of eligible purchases to OAS. You can also sign in using OAS's direct charity link: <https://smile.amazon.com/ch/23-7169988>.

Thank you for supporting OAS!

## Participate in the 120<sup>th</sup> Christmas Bird Count

The Christmas Bird Count (CBC) is a long-standing program of the National Audubon Society, with over 100 years of citizen science involvement. It is an early-winter bird census, where thousands of volunteers across the U.S., Canada, and many countries in the Western Hemisphere go out over a 24-hour period on one calendar day to count birds.

Christmas Bird Counts will happen across Louisiana from mid-December through the first week of January. Each count takes place in an established 15-mile wide diameter circle, and is organized by a count compiler. Count volunteers follow specified routes through a designated 15-mile (24-km) diameter circle, counting every bird they see or hear all day. It's not just a species tally--all birds are counted all day, giving an indication of the total number of birds in the circle that day.

Beginning birders will be able to join a group that includes at least one experienced birder. If you live within the boundaries of a CBC circle, you can report the birds that visit your feeder on count day. CBCs begin at dawn and conclude at dusk. Contact the Count Circle compiler to participate in a CBC (list below).

New Orleans CBC – Sat., Dec. 21 - Glenn Ousset, [gousset@bellsouth.net](mailto:gousset@bellsouth.net), (504) 495-4284

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### “Investigating impacts of the protozoan parasite, *Ophryocystis elektroscirrha*, on populations of the monarch butterfly along the northern Gulf Coast”

Speaker: Christen Steele

January 21, 2020

6:30 p.m. social, 7:00 p.m. program

Community Church Unitarian Universalist,

6690 Fleur de Lis (Lakeview).



A pollinator and major food source for dozens of insectivorous bird and insect species, the monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*) is famous for its annual long-distance migration from southern Canada to Michoacán, Mexico, where the species over-winters in reproductive diapause. In roughly the last decade, a small percentage of monarchs along the Gulf Coast have been found to be “dropping-out” of migration in favor of breeding over-winter on the non-native milkweed, *Asclepias curassavica*, which is often planted in urban environments and remains in bloom after native milkweed has senesced. Work by Satterfield et al. 2015 has also shown that the protozoan parasite *Ophryocystis elektroscirrha* (OE), to be up to nine times more abundant in these non-migratory populations than in migratory populations. Currently at Tulane University, a team of researchers have been working to track the population dynamics and disease status of non-migratory monarch butterflies in New Orleans. Join us for a presentation by graduate student Christen Steele as she discusses the latest results of our research.

Christen Steele is a graduate student at Tulane University investigating the impact of *Ophryocystis elektroscirrha* (OE) on monarch butterfly populations. Overall Christen is interested in studying the disease ecology of insects in human dominated landscapes (urban and agricultural systems). For her masters research at the University of Central Florida she investigated how interactions between pasture management and dung beetle activity influence both the rate of dung degradation and the survival of livestock parasites. In addition to research Christen is an advocate for entomological outreach and can often be found in schools throughout the New Orleans area teaching grade schoolers about insect conservation.

## BIRDING FIELD TRIPS



OAS birding field trips are co-hosted with the Crescent Bird Club. Bring binoculars, field guides, bug spray, rain gear, sunscreen and refreshments. Boots and cell phones may be useful. We ask that audio playback be used at the discretion of the field trip leader. Snacks and drinks are recommended. For trip information, contact the leader.

### **Bayou Sauvage National Wildlife Refuge**

SUNDAY, November 3

Time: 8:00 a.m., Half-day Trip

Meet at the Bayou Ridge Trail entrance located on US 90 (Chef Menteur Highway) across from Recovery Road in New Orleans East. Exit I-510; go left on Hwy 90, about 4 miles to parking area on the left.

Leader: Peter Yaukey (504) 400-3286

### **Diamond/Venice**

Saturday, November 9

Time: 8:00 a.m., Full Day Trip

Cross the Crescent City Connection, On Westbank Exp. exit Hwy 23 (Lafayette St/Bell Chase Hwy), drive 5 miles and meet in Balestra's Associated Grocery parking lot, on the right just past the Intersection with Hwy 406 (Woodland Hwy)

Leaders: Joelle Finley and Ken Harris (504) 715-2647

### **St. Bernard**

Saturday, November 16

Time: 8:00 a.m., Half-day Trip

Meet at Walgreen's on the corner of Paris Rd. and Judge Perez in Chalmette.

Leader: Glenn Ousset (504) 495-4284

### **Bonnet Carré Spillway**

Time: 8:00 a.m., Half-day Trip

Saturday, December 7

Meet at the Norco Boat Launch. Take Airline Hwy (US 61) west, turn right onto the east Spillway levee, and turn left down to the boat launch. May need rubber boots

Leader: Chris Brantley (985) 237-5399

### **Fontainebleau State Park**

Saturday, December 14

Time: 8:00 a.m., Half-day Trip

Fontainebleau State Park is east of Mandeville on Hwy 190. Meet at the large parking lot closest to the lake. \$2.00 entrance fee required.

Leader: Glenn Ousset (504) 495-4284

### **Audubon Park**

Saturday, January 4

Time: 8:00 a.m., Half-day Trip

Meet in the parking lot off Magazine St. (St. Charles side of Magazine) near the golf club house.

Leader: Mary Joe Krieger (504) 866-3396 (H), 504-258-3396 (C)

### **In Search of the Henslow's Sparrow**

Saturday, January 11

North Shore, specific location TBA

Leader: Donata Henry (504) 432-6650

### **New Orleans East-Joe Brown Park and the LA Nature Center**

Saturday, January 18

Time: 8:00 a.m., Half-day Trip

Meet just inside Joe Brown Park. Exit I-10 at Read Blvd. and turn right on Read. Turn left into Joe Brown Park at the stop light past Lake Forest Blvd. Do not pass the fire station!

Leaders: Joelle Finley and Ken Harris (504) 715-2647

# Highlights of 2019

## *And Please Remember OAS in Your Year-End Giving*

2019 has been a busy year for OAS with efforts focused on land acquisition for national parks and refuges, environmental conservation and advocacy, and migratory bird conservation and monitoring. Two land acquisition milestones were achieved working with the Trust for Public Land. OAS has advocated for the acquisition of the 3,455-acre Fleming Plantation tract for Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve for over a decade, and this finally happened! In addition, the 250-acre Elliot Slough with a rookery was acquired for the Bogue Chitto National Wildlife Refuge in February. David Muth led OAS's land acquisition efforts focused on the Little Pine Island tract which, if acquired, would add 3,000+ acres to the Bayou Sauvage National Wildlife Refuge.

OAS also had an active year of environmental conservation and advocacy. In July Jennifer Coulson stepped down as Conservation Chair, passing the torch to the very capable Andrew Wilson. Some of our advocacy focused on opposing the development of a hotel and conference center in Fontainebleau State Park: *The Advocate* published an Op-Ed written by Elise Read, *The Lens* published an OAS opinion letter, Fox 8 News interviewed Jennifer, and Andrew Wilson met with the Concerned Citizens of St. Tammany Parish.

David Muth provided an expert Impact Statement to the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality concerning illegal dumping activities in wetlands in New Orleans East near Almonaster Road. OAS submitted a comment letter to the Office of Coastal Management opposing the Coastal Use Permit application for the proposed Queen Bess Subdivision development on Grand Isle. The proposed development would be north of and adjacent to the Grand Isle Migratory Bird Sanctuary (a.k.a. Grilletta Tract). Charlie Pfeifer and Joan Garvey represented OAS at the Lafayette arraignment for the shooter of the Whooping Crane and met with the Assistant D.A. Andrew also provided legal advice to the International Crane Foundation regarding this trial. OAS signed on to a number of non-profit organization letters such as letters advocating for increased funding for Endangered Species Act, Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act,

Migratory Bird Joint Ventures, State and Tribal Wildlife Grants, North American Wetlands Conservation Act, and the control of invasive species. OAS discovered numerous feral cats and cat feeding stations and shelters being maintained on the DOTD land around the Chevron boardwalk on the Pearl River Wildlife Management Area and reported this to Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries.

Avian research, monitoring and conservation accomplishments included monitoring breeding Swallow-tailed Kites and Bald Eagles, citizen science programs, and wild bird rescue. OAS monitored 33 Swallow-tailed Kite nests (19 in Louisiana, 11 in Mississippi and 3 in Texas), deploying one GPS-satellite transmitter on an adult kite and monitoring 4 tagged adults. Jennifer conducted landowner outreach, mailing kite brochures to all landowners with kite nests. Highlights of the Bald Eagle nest monitoring project included a pair nesting on the nest platform at OAS's Marguerite Moffett Audubon Sanctuary. OAS worked with the New Orleans City Council and the Louisiana Public Service Commission (LPSC) on the implementation of electric distribution and transmission network avian protection measures by the electric utility companies regulated by the Council and LPSC. Mike Tift and Jennifer and Tom Coulson worked with Entergy to retrofit power infrastructures around the Cleveland-Kawane eagle nest in Metairie, making the area safer for the adults and young eaglets. This event was featured on local news stations. Jennifer investigated mercury poisoning of an adult Bald Eagle from St. Martin Parish and reported the incident to the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality.

Citizen Science activities included numerous Swallow-tailed Kite sighting reports and reports on Bald Eagle nesting activities. A number of OAS volunteers participated in the Great Backyard Bird Count in February. In October, Joan Garvey and Wendy Rihner organized OAS's first "Big Easy Sit" in the Wisner Tract of New Orleans City Park while David Muth and Peter Yaukey led a Big Sit at South Point levee on the Bayou Sauvage National Wildlife Refuge. In December, Glenn Ousset will once again serve as the New Orleans Christmas Bird Count compiler this December.

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OAS has also made advances in statewide wild bird rescue by developing a wild bird rescue transportation network. John Nelson traveled to Livingston to modify one of Wings of Hope's flight chambers so that it can now be used not only for rehabilitation but also for a gradual release process termed hacking. John, Sherry DeFrancesch and other volunteers provided temporary care for and transported Red-shouldered Hawks, Barred Owls, and other species to rehabilitators.

In 2019, OAS offered a variety of first rate programs, birding field trips and workshops, environmental education outreach, and environmental publications. Thanks to Joelle Finley, Chair of OAS's Program and Field Trip committees, OAS hosted 9 membership meetings open to the public, with programs ranging from Dr. Peter Yaukey's presentation on the bird richness of southeast Louisiana to Dr. David White's conservation biology lecture about global and local issues, including the Dusky Gopher Frog controversy. Other programs highlighted exotic birding destinations such as Dr. Bob Thomas's travel log on the Pantanal and its incredible biodiversity to Joelle and Ken's trip to Cuba with its island endemics. A welcome perk of attending the membership meetings held at the Community Church Unitarian Universalist is the delicious food and warm hospitality provided by Membership Chair, Joan Garvey. OAS, in conjunction with the Crescent Bird Club, offered 18 birding field trips to local birding hot spots and Important Bird Areas such as Fontainebleau State Park, Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve, and Bayou Sauvage National Wildlife Refuge.

Sherry DeFrancesch, OAS Secretary and Editor of *The Ibis*, produced four issues of our quarterly newsletter. Content included Linda Auld's articles on native plants and monarch butterflies, Mike Tiffit's article on avian friendly power, and Inga Clough Faltermann's article about the St. Tammany Art Association's Pippin Frisbie-Calder art exhibit focused on local bird conservation.

OAS really stepped up its outreach program in 2019. OAS Education Chair, Wendy Rihner and Ariel Kay formed the Community Outreach Committee and investigated ways to engage people in Audubon and the environment. Wendy taught a two-part bird watching seminar for beginners at the East Bank Regional Jefferson Parish Library in Metairie. She also represented OAS in the Native Plant Initiative. Wendy also presented a number of programs focused on wildlife gardening, including talks at the Louisiana Nature Center, John Folse's White Oak Plantation, Metairie Academy, and Rayne UMC. Other outreach included presentations to Tulane's Ornithology class. OAS also assisted with several festivals and earth day events. For example, Glenn Ousset led trips for the St. Bernard Bird Festival.

Jennifer served on an ornithological-environmental discussion panel with Donata Henry and artist Pippin Frisbie-Calder for the St. Tammany Art Association.

And last but not least, OAS is very excited to welcome two of its youngest members into the world! OAS board members Ariel Kay gave birth to Aeowyn Kay and Chieko Hunter gave birth to Hunter Hikaru Barton.

Help us to conserve birds, other wildlife, and wild places by making a year-end contribution. Because OAS is a 100% volunteer organization, without any offices, it has almost no overhead expenses. This means that your donation will have a big impact for local conservation and environmental education.



To donate, make the check payable to "Orleans Audubon Society" and mail it to: Mary Joe Krieger, OAS Treasurer, 3623 Nashville Avenue, New Orleans, LA 70125-4341, or visit [www.jjaudubon.net](http://www.jjaudubon.net) to donate using PayPal (credit cards accepted) or a Donor Advised Fund. Orleans Audubon Society is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, charitable organization, and as such, your gift may be tax deductible if you itemize.

### **Adopt-a-Kite Donations**

OAS thanks Rosemary Seidler and Barbara and Fred Mattingly for their generous donations to the Adopt-a-Kite fund. This fund helps to pay for data costs for the Swallow-tailed Kite GPS-satellite tracking project. To donate specifically to this project, include "Adopt-a-Kite" in the memo line of your check or as a note when using PayPal.

Adam and Ariel Kay with baby Aeowyn at a recent OAS function.

# Feed the Birds!

By Wendy Rihner

Standing under a late-July Wisconsin sun, scanning the wide-open vista of a carefully restored prairie, I hear Kenn Kaufman suddenly report, “There, on the Canada Goldenrod! American Goldfinches in bright yellow summer plumage!” For the birders on a post-National Audubon Society convention field trip, hiking with Kaufman - the renowned ornithologist, author and all-around great guy - was already a highlight. For that one morning, watching Dicksissels and Henslow’s Sparrows flit and duck in native grasses like Switchgrass and Indian Grass transported me back to the era of pre-European settlement when these birds had free reign in this prairie ecosystem. And the wildlife gardeners on the field trip, standing quietly in waist high Bluestem, watching butterflies bounce from purple Prairie Sweet Clover to Compass Plant to Hoary Vervain, well, they too, had reached their Nirvana.

Isn’t that what wildlife gardening is all about, the great joy that comes from watching nature live freely as it has for eons? For me, I can think of no greater accomplishment than to know that my efforts at “restoring habitat” in my backyard offer food and a safe haven for birds, butterflies, and countless species of bees and other pollinators.

My neighbor was puzzled last spring as to why I emerged from the backyard with binoculars around my neck. I simply pointed to her beautifully expansive Live Oak that we “share.” Now, fall migration is upon us in Southeastern Louisiana, and the greatest native plant in all in my estimation, the Live Oak, is hard at work feeding the abundant Yellow Warblers that are migrating through on their way to their wintering grounds in Mexico and Central America. Live Oaks host a good number of caterpillars, spiders and insect larvae that these migrating warblers need to replenish the fat reserves under their breasts and under their wings. Imagine flying across the Gulf of Mexico and not having enough protein!

Native trees like Live Oaks may not be in everyone’s personal garden scheme or budget, but many other native trees and shrubs provide much needed bird food during this critical time of year. Parsley Hawthorn with its bright red fall berries makes a nice, understory tree in any yard and Arrowwood Viburnum is just the type of thick shrub that provides great cover and protection for birds as well as nutritious dark purple fruits late in the year. Many bird species aside from warblers are migrating through our area in October and desperately need our help. Bird habitat is disappearing at a rapid pace, and in suburban areas like Metairie, where I live, concrete, grass lawns and exotic trees do not provide food or respite for wildlife.

Ruby-throated Hummingbirds arrive in mid-to-late August and any native that sports a tubular bloom from red to purple will bring these flight masters into your yard. Certainly, Cardinal Flower and its blue relative, Great Blue Lobelia have the color and the nectar source to appeal to hummingbirds. Salvia coccinea also attracts hummers, along with bees. Though its height might make it an unlikely attractant, a fantastic plant is Gulf Coast Penstemon. I watched one early April morning a Ruby-throated Hummingbird flit to the pretty violet blooms, dodging bees all the while. Finally, if space is no issue, then go for Red Buckeye, a hummingbird magnet, or any of the native vines like Crossvine or Trumpet Creeper.

In the last few decades, ornithologists have marveled at how Southern Louisiana hosts wintering western species of hummingbirds. Last year, I had two Black-chinned Hummingbirds in the yard! Rufous, Calliope (and that is pronounced as it is intended to be), and Buff-bellied are a few other species that have been reported regularly to the LA hummingbird network, HUMNET. I supplement the nectar sources in my garden with tropicals like Firespike and Porterweed in addition to hanging feeders to satisfy the wintering hummers, for few of my natives bloom into mid-December and January.

# WE'RE GARDENING FOR BIRDS AND POLLINATORS WITH NATIVE PLANTS



## EVEN THE SMALLEST YARDS CAN HELP!

[pollinator friendly yards on facebook](#)

Seed and fruit-eating birds are also making their way down south, and like the wintering western hummingbirds, many species stay the winter until instinct once again calls them back up north. Evolution programmed many species to alternate diets during migration when fruit sources are no longer available. Many species like Tanagers, Robins, and Red-winged Blackbirds will eat insects also. Indeed, even hummingbirds will eat spiders, aphids and other insects for the protein.

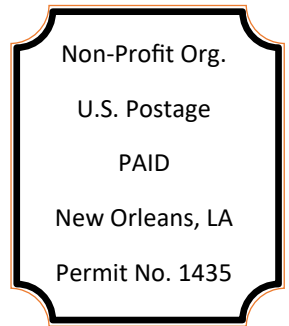
One of the most difficult bird groups to identify easily, the sparrows, have several representatives arriving here in late fall and staying through winter. Song and White-throated Sparrows love tangles of blackberry and native grasses like Bluestem, Grama Grass, and perhaps the best seed-producing grass for birds, Switchgrass.

Finally, as native plant advocates, we don't trim off our dead blooms to neaten our gardens but leave them on the plant and the American Goldfinch, the House and Purple Finches benefit! Nothing attracts seed eaters like finches than the dried seedheads of coneflowers, goldenrods, or sunflowers. Birds' bones are hollow, so it is no miracle that they can alight on a stalk without too much give on the part of the stalk! Certainly, birdseed feeders can supplement a bird's diet, but the birds clearly need the plants they have co-evolved with over eons.

While marveling at the work Madison Audubon has done to turn old farmlands into native Wisconsin prairies, a few of us conventioners chuckled at how true that cinematic cliché really is: "If you build it, they will come." We can all restore habitat in our backyards, no matter how small.

The SE Louisiana Chapter of the  
**National Audubon Society**

Orleans Audubon Society  
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New Orleans, LA 70125



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and Committee Chairs**

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