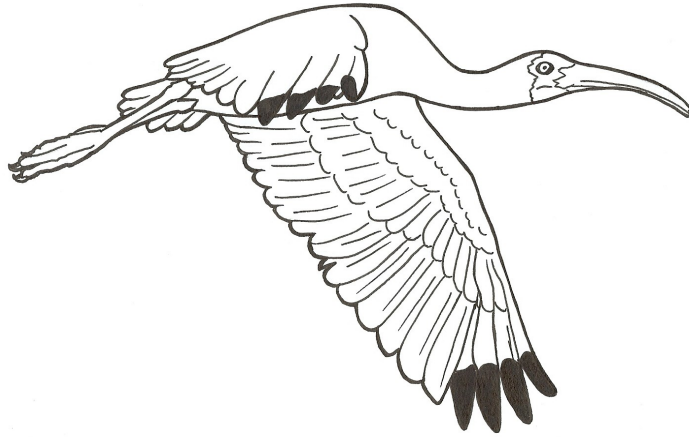


# the IBIS



Newsletter of the Orleans Audubon Society.

A Chapter of the National Audubon Society.

Volume: XXXVIII Issue: 1

October/November 2021

## **OAS ZOOM Presentations**

### **Saving the California Condor: The Importance of Zoos in Conservation of Endangered Species**

Speaker: Mike Houlihan, Assistant Curator of Birds, Audubon Zoo  
Tuesday, October 19, 7:00 PM

Mike Houlihan assisted with the reintroduction of California Condors. He will discuss how zoos have played an active role in the reintroduction of California Condors and tell us about his experiences working with fish and wildlife in the field. In the case of the condor, zoos became a life preserver for the species in the wild. Mike will discuss the struggles still facing condors and the importance of zoos in wildlife conservation of endangered animals.

**Registration:** To register for this Zoom program, send an email message with “**Condors**” as the subject line to: OrleansAudubon@aol.com and include your full name in the body of the email. You will then receive email instructions. If participating by phone, also include your phone number. Please register as soon as possible and at least two hours prior to the start of the meeting.

## **RECORDED OAS PRESENTATION – Watch it any time:**

### **Migratory Birds and the Mississippi River**

Speaker: Dr. Erik Johnson, Director of Conservation Science, Audubon Delta



One of the longest rivers in the world, the Mississippi River has shaped much of North America, including its bird life. But humans have substantially modified the river for navigation and to protect communities from flooding, which has resulted in important and sometimes dire consequences for the region’s wildlife. Join Audubon’s Erik Johnson on a journey into the connections between the Mississippi River and birds and learn about the opportunities and actions underway to recover bird habitat in the region.

Erik Johnson is the Director of Conservation Science for Audubon Delta, a regional field office of the National Audubon Society, servicing Louisiana, Mississippi, and Arkansas. Erik oversees conservation planning and implementation, habitat management initiatives, and applied scientific research focused on species of conservation concern. Before joining Audubon, Erik conducted his graduate research at LSU studying the effects of deforestation on bird communities in Amazonian Brazil and the effects of fire on wintering Henslow’s Sparrows in southeastern Louisiana. A life-long birder, Erik is actively involved in Louisiana’s birding community and beyond, serving as Louisiana’s Regional Editor for the Christmas Bird Count, Director of the Louisiana Bird Observatory, a member of the Louisiana Rare Bird Records Committee, a board member of the Inland Bird Banding Association, and a Certified Trainer with the American Banding Council.

The recording is posted at the Orleans Audubon Society YouTube channel here: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6\\_TDdWOs21M](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6_TDdWOs21M) and OAS’s Facebook page here: <https://www.facebook.com/OrleansAudubon>

# NOLA Butterfly Club

The NOLA Butterfly Club was launched on July 17, 2021. Gina Hoffman and Wendy Rihner joined forces to create a public Facebook page to expand, improve and diversify NOLA area butterfly and moth habitat by sharing information. This informal group places special emphasis on the Louisiana native plants used by butterflies, how to garden with natives, and where to purchase native plants for the home garden. To join, search Facebook for NOLA Butterfly Club. NOLA Butterfly Club is also on Instagram under the same name.

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## John James Audubon:

## Highlights from Birds of America



Fifteen double elephant folio engravings from John James Audubon's Birds of America, published to great acclaim between 1827 and 1838, are on exhibit at the Wedell-Williams Aviation and Cypress Sawmill Museum. Audubon, who painted more birds in Louisiana than anywhere else, lived for a time in New Orleans and at Oakley Plantation, now the Audubon State Historic Site in St. Francisville. The hand-colored aquatint engravings, part of the Louisiana State Museum's nearly complete set of Birds of America purchased by Governor André Roman in the 1830s, are on display infrequently to conserve them.

Don't miss your chance to see these stunning works. Free activity handouts are available for children. Free admission. Open Tues.-Sat., 9:30 a.m.-4:00 p.m. Wedell-Williams Aviation and Cypress Sawmill, 118 Cotten Road, Patterson.

Information on the Image: Brown Pelican. Plate 171, John James Audubon's Birds of America, 1833. Louisiana State Museum 01770.171.



## OAS Officers, Board and Committee Chairs

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John Nelson, *Wild Bird Rescue*

## In Memoriam: Remembering Lawrence P. (“Larry”) O’Meallie

By Dan Purrington



Lawrence P. (“Larry”) O’Meallie passed away on June 26 at age 89, after a brief illness exacerbated by a fall. Larry birded Louisiana from the late 1940s onward. He often birded in the company of Don Bradburn, who grew up birding with Tom Howell, curator of the Dickey bird collection at UCLA in the 1950s. Bradburn began birding with Howell in the late 30s, and Larry joined fellow physician Bradburn in the field in the early 1950s. Larry was one of the last of the generation who knew those giants of Louisiana and American ornithology, George Lowery and Bob Newman, in their prime. Larry succeeded me as president of the Louisiana Ornithological Society in 1971-73, and I recall him showing his photography at the November 1970 LOS meeting when he shared his photographs from southeast Arizona.

Larry made many trips to Central and South America, photographing most of the hummingbird species in the American tropics. He had only a few remaining to photograph at his death, and still hoped to get the last few he had missed. All OAS members are familiar with his spectacular photography which he often presented at OAS banquets. In recent years Larry made regular trips to High Island to photograph spring migrants.

Larry made many overnight excursions to Curlew Island in the Chandeleurs, especially with the late Horace Jeter, but also with the author, documenting the tern colonies on Curlew and other islands. He and I discovered the first Kelp Gull for Louisiana (and probably the northern hemisphere) on a trip there in the summer of 1989 (though it fell to Donna Dittmann to make the identification).

Several of us have fond memories of birding with Larry in the 80s and 90s, including myself, Mac Myers, and David Muth. Although Larry was an expert photographer, he not one to waste film on a distant bird, even for documentation purposes. I recall an incident when we were sneaking up on a first-year Glaucous Gull at the east end of Grand Isle. When we finally got too close and the bird flew, we turned to Larry too see what he had taken. Unfortunately, he was still waiting for the perfect shot and had not tripped his shutter once! He was also famous for losing vehicles on the sandy beaches of Cameron Parish, having actually watched his wife’s Audi disappear into the muck at West Jetty. Another vehicle was barely rescued in the nick of time.

Larry was a renowned cardiologist and headed cardiology at Tulane Medical School until he retired. He loved music and was a member of the board of the Louisiana Philharmonic before it morphed into the LPO.

### OAS Birding Field Trips

As of this writing, OAS is uncertain as to whether it will resume birding field trips this fall due to a resurgence of COVID-19. To receive program and field trip email notices and updates, please sign up using our OAS MailChimp landing page:

<https://mailchi.mp/faf69a03b4e9/orleansaudubon>

or visit the Events page of our website:

<https://jjaudubon.net/events/>



## The Kite Chronicles – 2021 Field Season Highlights

By Jennifer Coulson

One of the miracles of modern technology is the ability to peer into the lives of individual kites using GPS-satellite technology. I'll start by relating stories about the two adult kites wearing transmitters OAS deployed: the Ponchitolawa and Bogue Falaya males.

The Ponchitolawa male's 2021 spring migration included a trans-Gulf crossing. There's pressure on breeders to arrive early to the breeding grounds to secure a mate and territory, and the over-water route is the shorter but more dangerous of several possible migration routes. Ponchitolawa launched off from the Yucatan at about 3:00 PM on March 17, and he flew for at least 740 miles over water, averaging about 31 mph. He made landfall 24 hours later in Dixie County, Florida. He reached the breeding grounds in St. Tammany Parish on March 22 at 1:00 PM.

Tom and I suspected for some time now that the Ponchitolawa male might be infertile, so when he returned to the breeding grounds, I wanted to monitor his 2021 breeding activity particularly closely. In 2019 and 2020 his nest failed because the eggs failed to hatch, and I wondered if the same thing would happen in 2021. Unfortunately, he moved his nest to a remote area of Abita Springs and the landowner, an *exceptionally* unpleasant fellow, would not allow me access.

Unable to obtain permission, I resolved myself to studying Ponchitolawa's breeding activities virtually. According to his transmitter, Ponchitolawa took the first incubation shift on April 3rd. He took at least one shift on the nest most days throughout the incubation period. The egg(s), if fertile and viable, should have hatched around May 4th. He continued to spend shifts on the nest at least once daily until his behavior changed dramatically on May 18th. I felt certain the nest failed on May 18th when the female either abandoned the nest or died because Ponchitolawa was detected uncharacteristically on the nest at 9:00 AM, 11:00 AM, 1:00 PM, 3:00 PM and 5:00 PM. And after this time, he did not return to the nest.

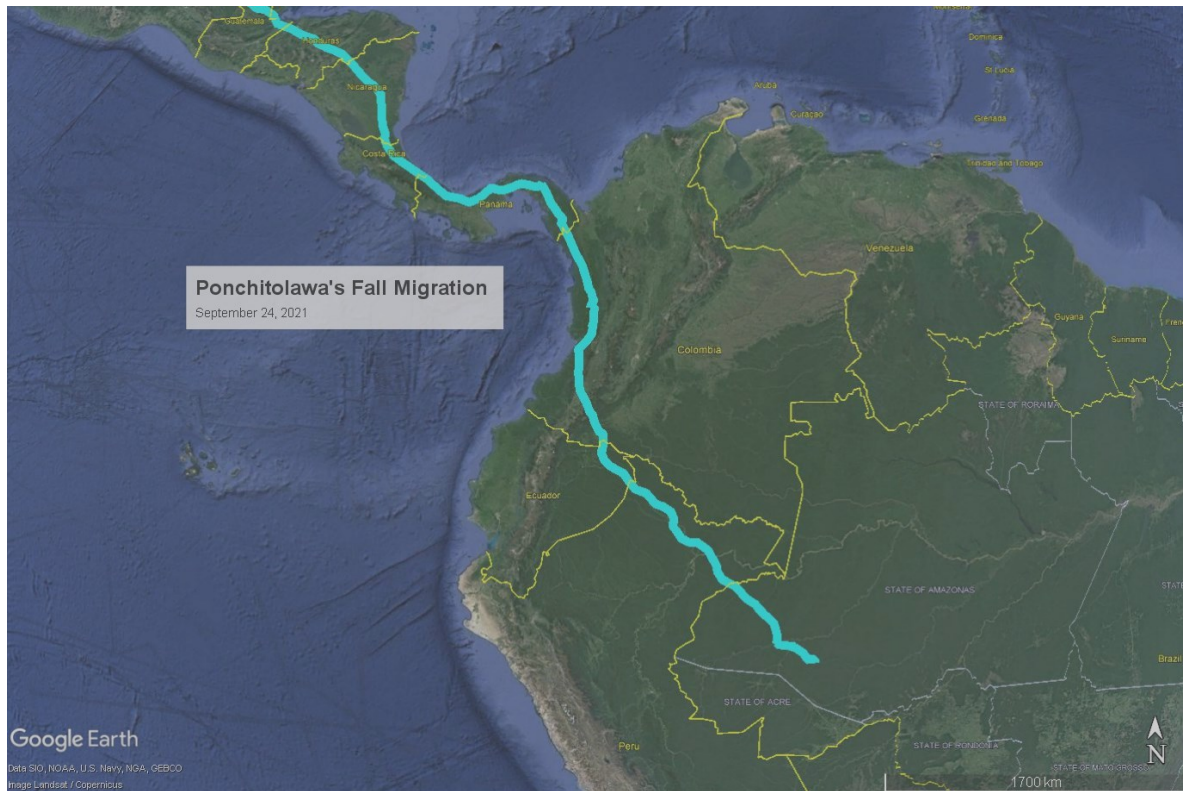
I really needed to confirm that the nest had failed, so I tried reaching out to the landowner again, with dismal results. Then I turned to Donata Henry for help because she lives in Abita Springs and has a lot of contacts there. She put me in touch with the owner of the neighboring tract, Amadee Frederick, a.k.a. The Creole Man, a blues singer-songwriter from Abita Springs. Amadee's calm and soothing voice put me immediately at ease. He cocked his head back and closed those big eyelids almost shut to reminisce about days gone by. "I was an expert at owl calling when I was a boy. I could call up any number of owls. There was only one fellow who could match me, and he might even have been better." He happily granted us permission to look for Ponchitolawa's nest from his property and that of his relatives.

Tom found a view to Ponchitolawa's nest! It was in a champion sweetgum, about as big as the species ever gets, and the nest was nearly to the end of a long, stout branch that stretched out northward to the heavens. We could at least determine from our viewpoint that the nest had indeed failed.

Ponchitolawa did not renest, and he remained on the breeding grounds later than most adults. On many nights in July and August, including the night of August 18th, he roosted at one of his favorite haunts on the Bogue Chitto National Wildlife Refuge, along the Bogue Chitto River, west of Page Lake. His meandering daytime excursions in July and August sometimes found him as far as 21 miles from this roost site. His transmitter indicated that he hunted over the Beau Chene golf course in Mandeville, the nearby Covington Country Club green, and the Money Hill Golf Course and subdivision east of Abita Springs. During this post-breeding period, he held a large home range, encompassing 151 square miles.

Ponchitolawa finally embarked upon his southbound migration on August 19th. He headed west, overland, roosting in the basin, 6 miles north of Pierre Part, in Iberville Parish that night. From here he continued westward, to roost on the night of August 20 just west of Sulphur in Calcasieu Parish. He then took the western circum-Gulf route over land on his southbound migration. He stayed over the Central American land bridge and when he reached South America, he crossed the Andes Mountains in Colombia in the Cauca Department. At one point he probably flew a peak that was 12,762 feet high. On September 24 the transmitter found him in an extremely remote part of Brazil, in the State of Amazonas, south of the indigenous territory known as Kanamari do Rio Juruá.





His most recent location was 15 miles south of the Rio Pauini, 17 miles east of the Rio Moaco and 5 miles north of the Atucatiquini River, which looks from Google Earth satellite imagery to be a nice place for a kite. Ponchitolawa is still holding a southeast trajectory, continuing his fall migration.

2021 provided some interesting data for the Bogue Falaya male as well. We had captured him in May of 2017 in Covington, but his transmitter stopped working in March of 2018. We were able to find where he nested in 2018 and 2019, but we were not able to find him in 2020. On the morning of July 7th, I was waiting in the parking lot for Tom to finish up his medical appointment. I was on the phone with Sherry DeFrancesch when three kites appeared. Grabbing my binoculars, I jumped out of the truck to find the Bogue Falaya male flying over the medical facility with his fledgling and mate. I clearly saw his transmitter. The three circled overhead for a couple of minutes while the baby begged to its parents. It was heartening to know that he was not only still alive but was also successful in raising one youngster. I have a hunch about where he might have nested and plan to search this area in the spring of 2022.

During the 2021 breeding season we located and monitored 8 nests in Louisiana and 10 nests in central Mississippi. Of the 8 Louisiana nests, 37.5% were successful, producing 5 young. The remaining Louisiana nests failed due to predation and unknown causes. Of the 10 nests in central MS, 40% were successful, producing 5 young. Sixty percent of Mississippi nests failed, mostly due to weather. The “Creekside Nest” along the north bank of Little Bahala Creek, in Lincoln County, Mississippi, failed when the bank caved in and the nest tree uprooted and fell into the creek.

We documented the first known nests for Franklin and Leake counties in Mississippi, and the first known roosts for Wayne County, Mississippi. John Nelson conducted the final aerial survey of the Pearl River in central Mississippi on August 4th when he and pilot, Wayne Wilson, counted 60 Swallow-tailed Kites.

OAS thanks the following project personnel and volunteers: Donna Bush, Moise Collins, Jennifer and Tom Coulson, Sherry DeFrancesch, Nancy Goldman, Stephanie Green, Donata Henry, Andy and Jeanne Licausi, Carla Lizana, Becky Lloyd, Bill and Karen Magee, John Nelson, Glenn Ousset, Jim Randolph, Charlie Reeves, Kevin Ritter, Wesley and Rebecca Smith, Susan Stine, Barry Tillman, Wayne Wilson, Nick Winstead, landowners and managers, and everyone who provided sighting reports.

# "Nectar Profusion" by Linda Barber Auld

## TOPIC: Twelve native nectar plants, twelve native plant gardeners, twelve favorite picks and why.

There so many native plants that can be planted to attract a variety of pollinators! I asked twelve of my friends and colleagues who are knowledgeable about growing native plants for their selection suggestions.

### **Alford, Mac H., Ph.D., - Professor and Curator of the Herbarium, School of Biological, Environmental, and Earth Sciences @ University of Southern Mississippi:**

I have two favorites on this list (*Rudbeckia laciniata* and *Helianthus angustifolius*). I'm going to vote for....*Helianthus angustifolius* (narrowleaf sunflower)--I like it because it's messy and surprising! If you plant it tightly among other tall wildflowers (blazing stars, Joe Pye weeds, ironweed, hibiscus), it too will grow tall and pile all over the other plants, but in such a subtle way, since its leaves are so narrow and widely spaced out. Then, when it comes into flower, which is usually later than many other species, it really bursts onto the scene with its many sunflower heads. So, it can go from almost invisible to being the primary show in a short time. Best yet, it's quite tough once established and can even be pruned.

### **Allen, Charles -Allen Acres Bed & Breakfast - speaker, author of 'Louisiana Wildflower Guide':**

*Helianthus mollis*; easy to grow, rhizomatous and thus spreads, leaves are blue green and thus attractive.

### **Barnes, Anne - LA Master Gardener, first Louisiana Certified Habitat Program garden in New Orleans area:**

I admit it is hard to decide but I think I'll have to go with *Dracopis amplexicaulis*. It's a plant I've known and admired all my life. It filled the field next to my home when I was a child. As an adult I acquired it from a neighbor who acquired his from his mother. It's a most cheerful bloom, makes a great cut flowers over its long bloom period, attracts lots of pollinators, and then feeds the birds. And it repeats itself the next year with no work from me. It's even easy to pull the extras. A perfect plant in my opinion.

### **Fontenot, Bill -Ecological consultant, speaker, landscape planner, author 'Native Gardening in the South':**

*Echinacea purpurea*...longevity of bloom season, soil/light adaptability, diversity of pollinators, modest re-seeder.

### **Mayronne, John - landscape architect:**

*Rudbeckia fulgida* Goldstrum , (it can bloom twice some years) or *Helianthus mollis* as I think they bloom longer.

### **Miley, Betty - Maypop Hill Nursery- speaker, author of 'Putting Nature First on Your Southern Land':**

Unfair! Like picking your favorite kid. Like, who doesn't love Echinacea? *Rudbeckia hirta* is indispensable. etc. I guess *Helianthus angustifolius*. It's too tall, can be floppy, but. It's so doggoned cheerful and tough and dependable.

### **Seidenberg, Charlotte - Naturalist, author of 'The New Orleans Garden: Gardening in the Gulf South'**

*Helianthus angustifolius* is my favorite. Perennial profusion! It's starting to bloom now. Long bloom season and attracts tons of insects. It's a little invasive, but so what. Masses of the flowers make such a dramatic statement. Very easy to grow. I have the gold and mellow yellow. The contrast between the intense golden and the light yellow is beautiful. John Mayronne found one last year that was almost white. All 3 shades in one bed would be really gorgeous. I love *Dracopis amplexicaulis*, too, but it's an annual. I bought a plant at LNPS, put it in a wet spot in my prairie. We'll see if it comes up and blooms. Early spring profusion would be nice.

### **Tallamy, Doug - Professor University of Delaware, speaker, author of 'Bringing Nature Home' :**

I pick any of the *helianthus* species because that genus hosts so many specialist bees. They can only rear their young on the pollen of *Helianthus*.

### **Taylor, Emily - Dixielandscape Co. 1120 Erato St NOLA:**

It's tough to pick a favorite native nectar plant when I'm not in the garden. They are all my favorite when I'm in the landscape and a butterfly lands on a bloom right in front of me. Echinacea is one of my favorite flowers to photograph. Bees will settle on the purple coneflower and take their sweet time extracting nectar from each individual floret. It's fascinating to watch.

### **Webb, Rick - Louisiana Growers- Speaker:**

Sorry don't do a favorite. Have grown and like 8 of those. Mixes are what we suggest.

**Timmerman, Anna Elizabeth** - Assistant Extension Agent- Horticulture LSU AgCenter- Greater NO Area Jefferson, Orleans, St. Bernard, St. Charles, & Plaquemines Parishes, LA Landscape Horticulturalist, Certified Nursery & Landscape Professional (CNLP) :

*Helianthus angustifolius* is one of the most cheerful wildflowers in my pollinator garden during the fall season. It blooms until frost, and in those years we do not get a freeze, it provides color and pollen all winter long in New Orleans. I'm sure it is a welcome source of pollen and nectar for insects during the cooler weather. The height of *H. angustifolius* makes it easy to work into existing flowerbeds, it makes a colorful, airy backdrop to any of the cool season annual flowers most gardeners would be familiar with. It returns reliably each fall and seeds are very easy to collect and share. I love sharing natives with others and encouraging them to be celebrated in our gardens. I have not observed any major pest or disease issues on this flower also, making it a good choice for beginners and native connoisseurs alike!

**Vidrine, Malcolm** - Speaker, author, '*The Cajun Prairie*' ([www.cajunprairiegarden.wordpress.com](http://www.cajunprairiegarden.wordpress.com)):

I like them all--great for pollinators. My favorite is *Rudbeckia subtomentosa*. It is:

1. lightly scented
2. blooms for 3 months--fantastic companion plants for *Liatris spicata* & *L. pycnostachya*
3. builds a fantastic root system and soil (biosequester of carbon) (anti-climate-changer)
4. can be cut to a desired height and still blooms
5. roots with ease from cuttings
6. seeds are superviable
7. a long-lived perennial that blooms the first year from seed
8. fantastic food for pollinators
9. native to my area and thrives here and common in my yard.

Last but not least, **BugLady's personal pick** is Cutleaf coneflower, *Rudbeckia laciniata*. The large leaves are very attractive all year long then these tall stalks burst into bright buttery yellow flowers that bloom after most of the other coneflower species have finished. My plants grew as tall as I am! The flowers command your attention when you are strolling through your garden. They make me smile!

		
Perennial Coneflower <i>Rudbeckia fulgida</i>	Black-eyed Susan <i>Rudbeckia hirta</i>	Cut-leaf Coneflower <i>Rudbeckia laciniata</i>
		
The Giant Coneflower <i>Rudbeckia maxima</i>	Sweet Coneflower <i>Rudbeckia subtomentosa</i>	Brown-eyed Susan <i>Rudbeckia triloba</i>
		
Purple Coneflower <i>Echinacea purpurea</i>	Clasping coneflower <i>Dracopis amplexicaulis</i>	Common Bitterweed <i>Hymenoxys odorata</i>
		
Swamp Sunflower <i>Helianthus angustifolius</i>	Maximilian Sunflower <i>Helianthus maximiliani</i>	Ashy or Downy Sunflower <i>Helianthus mollis</i>

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