

PROGRAMS

The ecology of sexual selection in a Neotropical lekking manakin

Speaker: Luke Anderson, Tulane University

Tuesday, January 17

6:30 PM social, 7:00 PM program

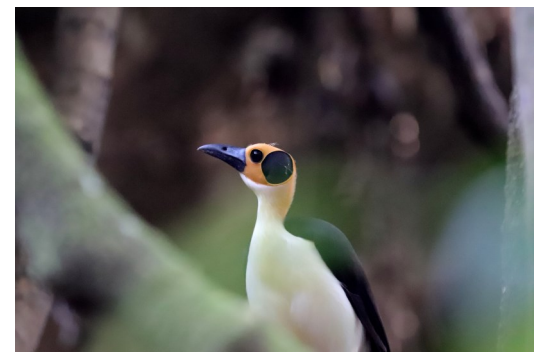
Location: Community Church Unitarian Universalist, 6690 Fleur De Lis Drive, New Orleans, LA 70124 (Lakeview).

Luke will discuss how genes and the environment interact to shape male mating success in lek mating systems, where males aggregate to perform elaborate courtship displays for females. In these systems, females conduct all parental care alone and exhibit stringent mating preferences; as a result, a small number of males achieves the vast majority of the mating success. His research in the White-bearded Manakin suggests that the distribution of fruit resources plays an important role in shaping the observed variation in male display performance and reproductive success at leks. The talk will feature videos of manakin courtship displays obtained by motion-activated camera trapping efforts at lek sites in northwest Ecuador.

Luke is a PhD candidate in Ecology & Evolutionary Biology at Tulane University. His research primarily focuses on the ecological context and genomic consequences of sexual selection in manakins, an iconic family (Pipridae) of Neotropical lekking birds renowned for their extravagant displays and plumage. Luke conducts fieldwork in the Chocó rainforests of northwest Ecuador in close collaboration with members of the local community and the non-profit organization FCAT (Fundación para la Conservación de los Andes Tropicales).



Photo: White-bearded Manakin



Birding Ghana--from Hot to Hottest

Speakers: Ken Harris and Joelle Finley
Tuesday, February 28

6:30 PM social, 7:00 PM program

Location: Community Church Unitarian Universalist, 6690 Fleur De Lis Dr, New Orleans, LA 70124 (Lakeview).

Join Ken and Joelle on a trip from the humid and hot tropical south (think New Orleans in August) to the arid and hotter north of Ghana (think Las Vegas in August) experiencing a wide range of habitats, birds and people. Visit one of the saddest places on Earth, The Cape Coast Castle.

Photo: White-necked Rockfowl

OAS Birding Field Trips

Fontainebleau State Park – half-day trip

Date: Saturday, January 14

Time: 8:00 a.m.

Location: east of Mandeville on Hwy 190, meet at the large parking lot closest to the lake. \$2.00 entrance fee required.

Leader: Holly Morales (985) 264-4406, holly@moralesmusic.com

Bayou Sauvage National Wildlife Refuge – half-day trip

Date: Saturday, January 21

Time: 8:00 a.m.

Location: Meet at the Bayou Ridge Trail entrance located on the left side of U.S. 90 (Chef Menteur Highway). Take the I-510 Exit off of I-10, turn left on Chef Hwy and proceed about 4 miles.

Leader: Peter Yaukey (504) 400-3286, pyaukey@uhcno.edu

Joe Brown Park – half-day trip

Date: Saturday, February 4

Time: 8:00 a.m.

Location: Meet just inside Joe Brown Park. Exit I-10 at Read Blvd. and turn right on Read. Joe Brown Park will be on the left about ½ mile down Read.

Leaders: Joelle Finley and Ken Harris (504) 715-2647, jjf1946@gmail.com

Winter in City Park-Couturie – half-day trip

Date: Saturday, February 11

Time: 8:00 a.m.

Location: Meet in the Couturie shell parking lot on Harrison Ave. between Marconi and the traffic circle in the park.

Leader: Claire Thomas (985) 630-3793, claire@clairedthomas.com

Audubon Park and the Fly – half-day trip

Date: Saturday, March 4

Time: 8:00 a.m.

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

Leader: Peter Yaukey (504) 400-3286, pyaukey@uhcno.edu

Grand Isle – all day trip

Date: Saturday, April 1

Time: 8:00 a.m.

Location: Meet at defunct Moran's grocery/gas station on the corner of Hwy. 1 and Hwy 3090 (Fourchon Rd.) right where you come off of the new bridge. Note: The new bridge across the Intracoastal Waterway is a toll bridge.

Leaders: Ken Harris and Joelle Finley, (504) 715-2647, jjf1946@gmail.com

Nominating Committee Announcement

OAS will elect officers in the spring of 2023. The Nominating Committee is currently accepting nominations for its offices. Please contact a member of the committee if you wish to nominate a candidate for the office of President, Vice-President, Secretary or Treasurer:

Glenn Ousset, Chair – 504-495-4284, gousset@bellsouth.net

Joan Garvey – joanmgarvey1@gmail.com

Byron Almquist – byron@canoeandtrail.com

The 123rd Christmas Bird Count

Christmas Bird Counts are happening from December 14th through January 5th. Contact the CBC compiler to participate in a count near you. The National Audubon Society has count circle maps available online: <https://www.audubon.org/conservation/join-christmas-bird-count>

Slidell CBC - Sat., Dec. 17 – compiler Wendy Rihner, 330-348-3810, wrihner@gmail.com

New Orleans CBC – Mon., Dec. 26 - compiler Glenn Ousset, 504-495-4284, gousset@bellsouth.net

Grand Isle CBC – Wed., Dec. 28 – compiler Chris Brantley, chrisbrantley@charter.net

St. Tammany CBC – Fri., Dec. 30– compiler Chris Brantley, chrisbrantley@charter.net

Venice CBC – Fri., Dec. 30– compiler David Muth, 504-872-5993, muthdp@gmail.com

New OAS-Only Membership Level with *Louisiana Heron* Print

Join or renew with Orleans Audubon Society only: OAS-only memberships expire on December 31. If you want all of your dues to support local conversation and education, you may select an “Orleans Audubon Society” only membership. In this case you will not receive Audubon Magazine and you will not become a member of the National Audubon Society. You will receive our newsletter *The Ibis* and may also opt to receive it electronically instead of by mail. In addition, OAS is currently offering three levels of OAS-only membership that all come with a fine art bird print: \$100, \$200, and a \$300 lifetime membership. With the \$100 option, you will receive a signed and numbered limited edition fine art giclée of a watercolor painting “Pelican in Couturie Forest” by Joan Garvey (11” x 14” with a 1” border). With the **NEW \$200** option, you will receive a signed and numbered limited edition fine art giclée of a watercolor painting “Louisiana Heron” by Joan Garvey (16” x 24” with a 1” border). With the \$300 lifetime membership option, you will receive a signed and numbered limited edition fine art giclée of a watercolor painting “Reddish Egret” by Joan Garvey (18” x 24” with a 1” border). To join or renew, clip the form below and mail it with your check, payable to “Orleans Audubon Society” to: Mary Joe Krieger, OAS Treasurer, 3623 Nashville Ave., New Orleans, LA 70125.

Name _____

Address: _____

electronic version of newsletter only Email _____

\$20 OAS-only membership _____

\$100 membership + pelican print _____

\$200 membership + heron print _____

\$300 lifetime membership + egret print _____



Help Protect the Lower Pearl River:

Ask the President to Oppose Funding for Alternative C or “One Lake”

By Andrew Whitehurst, Water Program Director for Healthy Gulf

The Pearl River “One Lake Project,” is a plan for flood reduction that would impound a 1,500-acre lake in Jackson, Mississippi, seven miles downstream of the Ross Barnett Reservoir. This project would dredge and fill 1,864 acres of wetlands and turn 10 miles of river into a wider, deeper, and slower moving channel – a lake with islands – which would disrupt or destroy habitats for two federally threatened species. This would also open batture floodplain land for economic development in the cities of Jackson and Flowood, Mississippi, as the Pearl River is flanked by these cities. Please contact President Biden in December and early January and ask him to **not support** funding for Alternative C. A sample letter is provided at the end of this article.

The Pearl River “One Lake Project” Draft Environmental Impact Statement Agency Technical Review (ATR) report from 2020 was obtained by a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request to The Rankin Hinds Pearl River Flood and Drainage Control District, the project’s non-federal sponsor. This agency, (a two County levee board) is pursuing (Alternative “C”) from its June 2018 DEIS: *Pearl River Basin Mississippi Federal Flood Risk Management Project, Hinds & Rankin Counties*. This project’s Alternative “C” would dredge ten miles of the Pearl River wider and deeper, fill 1864 acres of floodplain wetlands, install a new low-head dam (weir) and create a 1500 acre lake on the Pearl River, seven miles downstream of the Ross Barnett Reservoir.

The report obtained represents the most recent complete review of the flood reduction project available. The Army Corps of Engineers Mississippi Valley Division is now performing “issue resolution” on the Draft EIS. Until a Final EIS is published by Army Assistant Secretary for Civil Works, Mike Connor, we won’t know if the review notes produced any significant revisions or improvements to this destructive project.

Because the non-federal sponsor continues to pursue the dredging of a new lake on the Pearl River in Jackson rather than building new levees or using non-structural flood reduction methods, inherent problems with dredging, damming, and floodplain wetland filling will remain. Below are five ATR review criticisms of the project that no amount of Draft EIS revision or issue resolution can improve if the lake (Alternative “C”) continues to be pursued.

8285727 Planning - Plan Formulation, reviewed by S. Shultz of Army Corps Sacramento District.

“Concern: Incremental Analysis of the Final Array of Alternatives”,

“Basis: ER 1105-2-100 specifies that the proposed project features must be shown to incrementally reduce the problem (i.e. the flood risk). It is unclear how construction of the weir and impoundment of water reduces the flood risk to the adjacent communities. The existence of the 1,500 acre lake does not create any additional flood storage capacity or conveyance capacity. It could provide recreation benefits however these benefits could also be provided without the impoundment of water by improving access to the river. The new widened and taller levees would seem to be an impediment to recreational access and the trapezoidal channel would lose aesthetic quality compared to the current riparian corridor.” Significance: Critical.

“Recommended Action: Conduct incremental analysis for the final array of plans, namely the feature which provides the most benefits for the costs. Determine the amount of risk reduction for each increment. This could be shown as a reduction in water surface elevation. The setback levee most likely will be the feature with the greatest risk reduction so suggest starting with that. Add additional features and document the incremental benefits. Provide a description and explanation of the risk reduction associated with the weir relocation and subsequent impoundment of water behind the weir.”

Back-check recommendation: “The stated purpose of the weir is for water supply delivery to the water plant. It is unclear why the existing weir location is not adequate. Additionally, the new weir would be used to impound water upstream in order to keep vegetation from growing in the floodway. The impounded water upstream would also provide recreational benefits in the form of a new reservoir. For future cost allocation purposes, it should be determined if the weir is a LERRD (relocation) and if its purpose is to keep the floodway clear, this is an O&M function - both of which are sponsor costs rather than Federal costs.”

Reviewer Shultz’s comment requests a better “incremental analysis”, questions the basic necessity of creating a new impoundment on the Pearl’s channel, and disputes whether weir relocation is a federal cost. Other commenters, including St. Tammany Parish government have also questioned the flood reduction utility of excavating a deeper, wider channel and then impounding a permanent pool within it. The floodgate operators at the Ross Barnett Reservoir Dam, seven miles upstream, regularly increase tail-water discharge of the Pearl River by 30,000-40,000 cubic feet per second in 24 hours. Creating a new lake, then inviting floodplain development in such a dynamic setting, just downstream of the Ross Barnett Reservoir, should be further questioned.

8283984 (Economics): T. Shimabukuro, Regional Economist, Sacramento District.

“Location benefits comprise more than 25% of total benefits so it is critical that the derivation of these benefits are presented fully. It is important to note that this benefit category is rarely used because of policy concerns related to E.O 11988 (Development in the Floodplain). Project justification appears to be very sensitive to the inclusion of these benefits. The comment was closed when the PDT (Proj. Development Team) provided the requested information in the updated Economics Appendix.

8283988 (Economics) T. Shimabukuro.

“Concern: The rationale for including economic intensification/location benefits.

Basis: Claiming benefits associated with future development of the floodplain may be contrary to the intent of Executive Order 11988 or Section 308 of WRDA 1990. Significance: Medium.”

8284197 (Hydraulics): T. Gambucci, Hydraulic Engineer, Rock Island District.

“Weir submergence may not be taken into account in the RAS models. If the discharge coefficient doesn't change, discharge over the weir may be erroneously high in which case the flood profile reductions shown in Table 3.3 would be too high. The comment was closed when the hydraulic model was provided to the reviewer.”

8284198 (Hydraulics): T. Gambucci.

“The addition of a weir and repositioning a levee upstream resulted in a 5-8 ft. reduction in the 100-year flow profiles which is not typical and requires thorough review. Water control structures such as the weir are typically submerged during large flood flows at which time flood profiles return to normal or higher levels upstream. The comment was closed when the RAS model was provided to the reviewer.”

The comments above by ACOE reviewer Shimabukuro suggest that this plan for floodplain development is contrary to Executive Order 11988 (1977) written during the Carter Administration - part of controlling ACOE plan formulation policy. It stakes a large share of the project’s economic benefits on floodplain development, contrary to EO 11988. Reviewer Gambucci further questions whether the weir (low-head dam) that would impound the lake at 258 feet above sea level will actually work to reduce flood heights when the weir is submerged by flood discharges.

Background: The Pearl River, “One Lake” project was Alternative “C” in a 2018 Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for a flood management project in Rankin and Hinds Counties (Ms.) that is still under review by the Army Assistant Secretary for Civil Works. The Rankin Hinds Pearl River Flood and Drainage Control District is the non-federal project sponsor. There were two other flood reduction alternatives in the 2018 Draft EIS: Alternative “A” which described non-structural measures like elevations and buyouts of flood prone properties, and Alternative “B” calling for extensive levee improvements. The Rankin Hinds District was given permission to develop the DEIS and related studies, primarily because the Vicksburg Corps of Engineers District, preferring levees, declined any further consideration of a lake design in 2007. Rankin Hinds District began a scoping process for a Draft EIS in 2013, publishing the current version DEIS in July of 2018. The Army Assistant Secretary for Civil Works staff began review of the latest DEIS version in July 2022 and has tasked the Mississippi Valley Division of the Corps, Commanded by Maj. General Diana Holland, to build a review team composed of staff from the Memphis, New Orleans and Vicksburg Corps District offices. This team will resolve issues found in the Secretary’s most recent examination of the project documents and produce a “decision document” for the Army Secretary in early 2023.

Setting and Federal Funding: The lake option Alternative “C” is favored by Jackson and Rankin and Hinds Counties as a project that will allow economic development on lands that are now riverbanks and wetlands. Land will be elevated by filling, using material dredged from the riverbed. The lake idea has enjoyed recent momentum and is the subject of media reports promoting it as a singular flood reduction solution that would also solve the widely reported drinking water crises in Jackson. However, turbidity from lake dredging would actually further complicate drinking water treatment at the City’s Fewell Waterworks. The Greater Jackson Chamber of Commerce Partnership and the Mississippi Development Authority both partially funded the non-federal sponsor’s Draft EIS, starting in 2013. Senator Roger Wicker placed \$221 million from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (IIJA) into the Army Civil Works Program construction spending addendum on October 3, 2022 with a news release anticipating Corps approval of a flood control plan. It is no secret which flood control plan the Senator and the Jackson Metro area desire.

Ask the White House not to fund the Pearl River “One Lake” project. While General Holland’s team is at work creating a decision document for Secretary Connor, the towns, Counties, Parishes and business interests along the Pearl River who disagree with the “One Lake” project have a short window of opportunity to ask the Biden Administration not to move this federal project forward. Now is the time to contact the White House Office of Management and Budget to ask the Administration to reconsider. Communicate via the White House Website. www.whitehouse.gov/contact Note that there is a 2,000 character limit.



Sample Letter

The White House
Office of Management and Budget
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W.
Washington D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President & OMB Director Shalanda Young:

I am writing to ask the White House Office of Management and Budget not to support funding for Alternative “C” in a flood management project on the Pearl River in Jackson, Mississippi, described in a 2018 Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) now under review by Mike Connor, the Army Secretary for Civil Works: *Pearl River Basin Mississippi Federal Flood Risk Management Project, Hinds & Rankin Counties, MS*.

Alternative “C” is a lake dredging plan, a.k.a. “Pearl River One Lake Plan” that has been described by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as the “most environmentally damaging” alternative in 2018 official comments. A 2020 Agency Technical Review report by the Corps states that the lake alternative contradicts Corps plan formulation policy and Executive Order 11988 (1977) discouraging development in floodplains.

Five Mississippi Counties, two Louisiana Parishes, towns in both states, and the Louisiana Legislature all passed resolutions opposing Alternative “C” from the 2018 Draft EIS. On an already dammed, regulated river, Alternative carries the most risk to habitat and wetlands in the project area and downstream, to the federally threatened Gulf Sturgeon and Ringed Sawback Turtle, and to channel stability. USGS researchers at the Lower Mississippi Gulf Water Science Center are now modeling flow alterations on the Pearl. The RESTORE Act funds this modeling. Basic research questions need answers before any new damming is considered on the Pearl River. Jackson Mississippi needs better flood protection, but creating another lake on the Pearl River with Alternative “C” is the worst approach.

Year-end Appeal

I find it personally rewarding and fulfilling to be a part of this vibrant environmental organization. OAS’s strength lies in the collective expertise and talents of its members. Together, we have achieved many milestones for local wildlife and habitats.

If you like what we’re doing, and want to contribute to local environmental education and conservation, please make a year-end donation to OAS. OAS is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization, and as such, your donation may be tax deductible. If donating by check, make the check payable to “Orleans Audubon Society” and mail it to: Mary Joe Krieger, OAS Treasurer, 3623 Nashville Avenue, New Orleans, LA 70125. Or send a donation using the “Donate” button on the OAS website via PayPal. If you prefer to make a recurring, monthly donation, find our recurring donation campaign on the OAS Facebook page.

Be a Part of Audubon

Keep Your Membership Current!

To join or renew with the National Audubon Society and OAS: type into your browser bar or click on the National Audubon Society link below to join or renew your membership with National Audubon Society and Orleans Audubon Society. You will receive the award-winning Audubon Magazine and support Audubon’s nation-wide bird conservation efforts.

If you live within Orleans Audubon’s service area (Washington, St. Tammany, Tangipahoa, St. John the Baptist, Orleans, Terrebonne, Jefferson, St. Charles, St. Bernard, Plaquemines, and Lafourche Parishes), you will automatically join/renew with OAS when doing so with NAS. The minimum donation is \$20.00. <https://action.audubon.org/donate/chapter-membership?chapter=K00>

H5N1 Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) in Louisiana

By Dr. Jennifer Coulson

According to the USDA website, 38 cases of H5N1 Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI, a.k.a. bird flu) have been detected in Louisiana. Most cases were Blue-winged Teal shot by duck hunters in southwest Louisiana, but several were captive birds from northeast Louisiana. This year in Texas, 76.4% of 208 hunter-killed ducks tested positive for HPAI.

The arrival of wintering waterfowl is expected to facilitate the rapid spread of HPAI, likely triggering a nationwide epidemic. According to the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF), “HPAI has been detected in wild birds, domestic poultry, or both in 49 states and resulted in the death of over 3,000 wild birds and nearly 48 million domestic birds (poultry). Waterfowl can become sick and die from the disease, however, many birds are carriers that do not show clinical signs.”

While waterfowl can be carriers and sometimes survive HPAI infections, HPAI appears to be highly lethal to birds of prey that consume these infected waterfowl. Falconers across the U.S. have reported 100% mortality in their captive raptors that ingested even a few bites of an infected duck. Unfortunately, this suggests that HPAI could have a devastating impact on wild raptors. In Louisiana, our nesting Bald Eagles and wintering Peregrines could be the most impacted. Red-tailed Hawks and Northern Harriers that occasionally prey on waterfowl could also be at risk.

Scavengers are being affected too. At the Raptor Research Foundation conference in Fort Lauderdale, a veterinary technician told me that Black Vultures were dying in mass in Florida. Multiple groups of 30 to 100 were found dead under roost sites, and their carcasses tested positive for HPAI. Presumably these birds contracted HPAI when they scavenged infected carcasses.

Raptors usually died within one to five days of eating an infected duck. LDWF is urging all rehabilitators, falconers and zoos to avoid contact between captive and wild birds and to report die-offs of raptors and other avian species showing neurological signs of disease.

LDWF requests reports of “any neurologic wild or domesticated birds or unusual mortality events involving wild birds or birds that present with otherwise unexplained respiratory, GO, or neurological signs.” Send reports to: LDWF State Veterinarian Dr. James LaCour at jlacour@wlf.la.gov or LDWF Assistant State Veterinarian Dr. Rusty Berry at rberry@wlf.la.gov. For more information, visit the National Wildlife Health Center’s and USDA’s avian influenza websites.



Highlights and Mostly Wins for Conservation in 2022

By Dr. Jennifer Coulson, President

2022 was a busy year for OAS, filled mostly with amazing accomplishments in environmental education, bird conservation and habitat protection. There were many important wins for wildlife and habitats, or in some cases, OAS launched campaigns to try to change parish or state policies to benefit wildlife and the environment, and while there is progress, some battles are by no means won. Read on to find out what OAS has been up to, help us celebrate the wildlife wins, and follow the progress on several ongoing conservation battles.

Environmental Education

Concerning its Environmental Education Program, OAS managed challenges of the ongoing pandemic by hosting a mixture of Zoom and in-person educational activities. With respect to Program Meetings, OAS hosted eight Zoom programs and 4 in-person meetings, including two socials. Program Chair Joelle Finley provided a great lineup of intriguing speakers and topics. Dr. Erik Johnson talked about conservation needs and biology of the threatened Black Rail. Dr. Jason Hoeksema told us about the Delta Wind Birds program in Mississippi and how it creates habitat for migrating shorebirds in agriculture. Dr. Jordan Karubian told us about efforts to conserve the Chocó region of northwestern Ecuador, and Dr. Shilo Felton talked about National Audubon's approach to offshore wind energy. Dr. Nick Mason updated us on the LSU Museum of Natural Science Ornithology Program and ways the museum and birders might interact. New Orleans' own Christie Riehl talked about cooperative breeding in tropical cuckoos and her innovative research on Greater Anis. Membership Chair Joan Garvey's delicious food greatly enhanced the pre-meeting socials. OAS thanks Kathleen Crago for hosting the Pot Luck Holiday Party.

OAS posted nine recorded programs to YouTube and Facebook. Links to the recorded programs are posted on the Events page of the OAS website: <https://jjaudubon.net/events/> The newest recordings are: *Birding Colombia's Southern Frontier—Putumayo* by Joelle Finley and Ken Harris, *Celebrating the Swallow-tailed Kite* by Jennifer Coulson, and two talks by Joan Garvey: *Alaskan cruise with an extension to Victoria*, and *California Birding*. OAS's YouTube Channel has really taken off with 240 subscribers and 23,773 views! We plan to continue recording and posting as many programs as possible for those of you who can only join us virtually. Find us using OAS's YouTube handle: [@orleansaudubonsociety2410](https://www.youtube.com/@orleansaudubonsociety2410)

OAS hosted 10 birding field trips and promoted three birding trips hosted by Sankofa and Woodlands Conservancy. Field trips resumed in March with a birding trip to Fontainebleau State Park. Other birding destinations included Bayou Sauvage National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), Couturie Forest, Bayou Coquille Trail, Pearl River Wildlife Management Area (WMA), Bogue Chitto NWR, Grand Isle, St. Bernard, Diamond and Bonnet Carré Spillway. OAS thanks its fieldtrip leaders: Chris Brantley, Joelle Finley, Ken Harris, Holly Morales, Glenn Ousset, and Dr. Peter Yaukey.

OAS also participated in area environmental festivals. Wendy Rihner manned an OAS booth for UNO's Earth Day Celebration. Joelle Finley and Ken Harris led birding trips for the Grand Isle Migratory Bird Celebration, and Glenn Ousset led birding trips for the St. Bernard Bird Festival.

Environmental Education Chair Wendy Rihner reported on OAS's partnership on the Urban Bird Habitat and Environmental Education grant at the University of New Orleans. OAS assisted with three UNO woodlot restoration volunteer days where Upward Bound students, OAS volunteers and others, removed invasive exotic plants, and planted native shrubs and trees. In March, Tom Coulson and I gave an "Urban Raptors" presentation to 40 Upward Bound students. The students exhibited excitement and sheer delight when Tom and I flew one of our trained Harris's Hawks across the amphitheater lawn. In April, Wendy and Angela Chalk did a bird bill adaptations workshop for the students. The September program focused on birding and bird banding. Liz Sigler, Reneé Sawyer and I took the students on an on-campus birding walk where the students got great looks at roosting Great Blue Herons and a Red-shouldered Hawk perched in the woodlot! I banded an Inca Dove that Sherry DeFrancesch rehabilitated, and the students also visited with Hamy, the Great Horned Owl. OAS thanks the Coulsons, Sherry DeFrancesch, Chieko Hunter, Glenn Ousset, Judith Santano, and Reneé and Samantha Sawyer for helping with the banding program, and John Nelson and Joelle Finley for donating birding field guides and binoculars.

Wendy Rihner reported that OAS's Native Plants for Birds Program is popular with our members and the public. OAS worked with Audubon Delta to host a native plant sale on April 8 in New Orleans. The event was a big success, selling out of plants. Wendy helped to form a Pontchartrain Basin chapter of Wild Ones, a native plants group serving St. Tammany and Washington parishes.

Conservation

Coastal Restoration: OAS signed on to Louisiana Wildlife Federation's (LWF) recommendations for the CPRA Annual Plan. OAS also urged to the USACE to use the Maurepas Swamp project as mitigation for the West Shore Lake Pontchartrain levee project. OAS also signed on to NWF's letter to the Louisiana Trust Implementation Group supporting Draft Restoration Plan and Environmental Assessment #8, including the East Orleans Landbridge and Bayou la Loutre Ridge Restoration and Marsh Creation.

Northshore: Andrew Wilson led OAS an appeal, with 76 appellants, objecting to the lack of public input for St. Tammany Parish's "New Directions – 2040" economic development plan. The plan proposes large-scale rezoning and development of enormous warehouses for several sites along the I-12 corridor. When STP denied the appeal, OAS filed with the 22nd Judicial District Court in Covington of a Petition for Mandamus/Declaratory relief and a protective Petition for Certiorari to preserve the appeals to STP. While Judge Keller ruled against OAS's petition due to his interpretation that a master plan is not binding, he left room for alternative appeals. Clearly, public input/appeal is required for a plan of this magnitude that would radically alter STP and impact several significant drainages. Stay tuned.

Lakefront: Thanks in large part to the efforts of OAS's legal eagles, Andrew Wilson and Michael Tifft, the lakefront condominium development project was defeated. This high-rise condo would have partially obstructed a navigable waterway.

Black Rails: OAS and LWF drafted a resolution objecting to the siting of Commonwealth Liquefied Natural Gas Export Terminal at the mouth of Calcasieu Pass to conserve habitat critical to the federally threatened Eastern Black Rail. OAS launched a grassroots campaign to oppose this siting. OAS thanks those who write letters and OAS Board Member Charlie Pfeifer for serving as OAS's LWF Delegate.

Whooping Cranes: OAS and LWF adopted a resolution objecting to the proposed down-listing of the Whooping Crane. OAS advocated for increased fines for the shooting of a Whooping Crane, where restitution would reimburse the state for its investment in rearing and reintroducing cranes, and the amount would be substantial enough to be an effective deterrent. OAS also advocated for rescinding of the McKittrick Policy.

Rusty Blackbirds and Common Grackles: OAS adopted a resolution: "Take of Crows, Blackbirds, Cowbirds and Grackles should be Regulated under a Depredation Permit and not a Hunting License; Rusty Blackbird Needs Exclusion". OAS objected to the state's blackbird hunting season because these regulations violate the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and fail to exclude the highly vulnerable Rusty Blackbird. Rusty Blackbirds have experienced one of the most significant declines ever documented among North American birds. At Erik Johnson's and Charlie Pfeifer's urging, we added Common Grackles to the request for exclusions. OAS and LWF are working with LDWF to implement changes to its hunting regulations. OAS has requested a meeting with LDWF's general consul. OAS also asked the EPA for expedited rulemaking on pesticide-coated seeds following their failure to remove them from FIFRA-exempt status.

Pearl River: OAS partnered with Healthy Gulf to nominate the Pearl River to be one of America's most endangered rivers in 2023. Healthy Gulf, the Sierra Club and OAS urged the White House to not fund the "One Lake" alternative which would involve dredging and would be the worst "solution" both environmentally and practically to Jackson's flooding problems.

Bald Eagles: OAS supported H.R. 405, the Lead Endangers Animals Daily (LEAD) Act asking the Biden administration to put back into place the policy of banning lead ammunition on NWRs.

Bird Research, Monitoring and Conservation

Swallow-tailed Kites: OAS volunteers found and monitored 16 Swallow-tailed Kite nests in Louisiana and Mississippi. Twelve nests produced 18 fledglings and four nests failed. Thus kites had fairly good nest success (67%) with a productivity rate of 1.1 young fledged per nesting attempt. Two nests failed when the adult was killed on the nest. At the failed nest in Diamondhead, Mississippi, a trail of adult kite feathers led from the nest to the day roost of the culprit, a Great Horned Owl.

OAS entered into partnerships for two projects to locate and monitor kite nests and roosts, deploy GPS transmitters on adults, and conduct landowner conservation outreach. The partnership with Barataria Terrebonne National Estuary Program (BTNEP) involves work in the B-T basin, while the partnership with American Bird Conservancy, Avian Research and Conservation Institution and International Paper is taking place on working forests in Louisiana and Mississippi. For the latter, I conducted an aerial survey in July and participated in a landowner outreach workshop in the Bogalusa, LA-Columbia, MS area in November.

OAS also submitted the final report with conservation recommendations to Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks, for the 2021 Mississippi State Wildlife Grant entitled, “Conserving the Swallow-tailed Kite in Central Mississippi with a Focus on Peripheral Activity Centers.”

Bald Eagles: The 2022-23 Bald Eagle nesting season is already underway. In Algiers Bald Eagles are nesting again on a stadium light fixture at the Skelly-Rupp Memorial Stadium. Missy Bowen and others alerted OAS to the possibility that the City of New Orleans may have plans for construction on the site. I’ve been in touch with Rob Dobbs the Nongame Ornithologist for LDWF. He reached out to the city but did not receive a reply. If anyone has information about the project, please contact Rob or me. OAS thanks Bryon Almquist, Missy Bowen, Tom and Jennifer Coulson, Thomas Custard, Joan Garvey, David Muth, John Nelson, Dan Purrington, Terri Skelton, Andrew Wilson, Peter Yaukey, Wesley Smith and others for help monitoring nests.

Photo: BAEA_5-3-2022 – photo credit: Bald Eagle nest at Skelly-Rupp Memorial Stadium, photo by Thomas Custard

American Kestrels: OAS volunteer John Keegan discovered that a pair of American Kestrels in downtown New Orleans nested dangerously close to a helicopter pad. OAS is partnering with the LSU Health Sciences Center to build and install nest boxes in safer locations on the campus. John Nelson is busy building nest boxes.

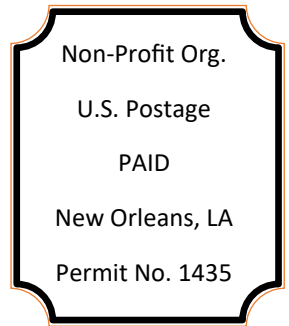


BAEA_5-3-2022 – photo credit: Bald Eagle nest at Skelly-Rupp Memorial Stadium, photo by Thomas Custard

South Point Migration: Dr. Peter Yaukey reported on the South Point migration monitoring project at Bayou Sauvage. OAS volunteers, including Peter, Joan Garvey, Mark Meunier, and David Muth, conducted 8 spring and 20 fall migration counts. Highlights were four separate mornings in August through September in which Eastern Kingbird counts exceeded 1,000 birds. Additional highlights were the continued, enigmatic presence of Red-headed Woodpeckers in spring, and occurrence of unusual species including Wood Stork, Say's Phoebe, Vermilion Flycatcher (3 dates), Ash-throated Flycatcher, and Cave Swallow. Our ability to use photography to identify some hard to distinguish species in flight significantly improved this year, thanks to Joan and David, adding some species to our surveys that would formerly have been missed.

The SE Louisiana Chapter of the
National Audubon Society

Orleans Audubon Society
3623 Nashville Avenue
New Orleans, LA 70125



**SUPPORT ORLEANS AUDUBON THIS HOLIDAY
SHOPPING SEASON!**

Make a difference this holiday. Shop for gifts at <https://smile.amazon.com/ch/23-7169988> to generate donations for Orleans Audubon Society.

The AmazonSmile Foundation will donate 0.5% of eligible purchases to OAS.