

Newsletter of the Orleans Audubon Society.

A Chapter of the National Audubon Society.

Volume: XXXVIII Issue: 2

December 2023/January 2024



Potluck Holiday Party



Hosted by Kathleen Crago
Tuesday, December 12
7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.
Location: De Limon Club House, 801 Rue Dauphine

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

Directions and Parking Information: 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.

OAS PROGRAMS

Mastering the Web: A Fascinating Journey through the Natural History of Spiders

Speaker: Dr. Aimée K. Thomas
Tuesday, January 16
6:30 p.m. social, 7:00 p.m. program
Community Church Unitarian Universalist, 6690 Fleur de Lis (Lakeview).



Dr. Aimée K. Thomas is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Biological Sciences and the interdisciplinary Environment Program at Loyola University New Orleans. She has an interest in promoting environmental awareness by 1) researching the natural history of invertebrate species, particularly local and tropical spider communities, and 2) effective communication of science through community-engaged learning research, teaching, and outreach. Her recent projects have focused on spider communities in Belize, New Orleans City Park, and Jean Lafitte National Park, insect pollinators in urban landscapes, using urban landscapes as a learning lab, and STEM education in informal learning environments. She currently serves as PI on the funded project "Transforming a public work into a learning laboratory" where they are studying ways to empower New Orleanians to sustainably live with water. Aimée will discuss her passion for and fascination with spiders.

Urban Conservation: Protecting NOLA's Rooftop-nesting Birds

Speaker: Chloe St. Germain-Vermillion, Coastal Field Technician, Audubon Delta

Tuesday, February 20

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

Community Church Unitarian Universalist, 6690 Fleur de Lis (Lakeview).

Normally, coastal species favor sandy or shelly beaches to breed, nest, and raise their young. Unfortunately, with sea-level rise, habitat degradation, and increased human encroachment on the Gulf Coast, suitable beachfronts for these birds become scarcer every year. To adapt to diminishing resources, some birds have grown accustomed to nesting on gravel rooftops, which provide an adequate substitute. This presentation will be discussing a new stewardship program by Orleans Audubon Society and Audubon Delta, which seeks to identify, monitor, and protect rooftop-nesting birds in the New Orleans area. The presentation will review the program's goals, the ecology of the program's focal species (Least Tern, Gull-billed Tern, Black Skimmer, and Common Nighthawk), findings from the program's 2023 pilot year, and monitoring protocol for the 2024 breeding season. If you'd like to learn more about how you can have a direct impact on the conservation of these sensitive species, we will also provide information on how to become a volunteer surveyor for this exciting project!

Working primarily in Southeastern Louisiana, Chloe has been monitoring coastal populations of breeding Least Terns, Common Nighthawks, and Wilson's Plovers for the past two years. She is also responsible for coordination of the Audubon Coastal Bird Survey in Grand Isle, as well as banding Grand Isle State Park's winter mega-roost of Black Skimmers. When she's not shorebirding on the beach, she enjoys assisting with Audubon's other avian research across the state, especially at banding stations.

Audubon Abita Bird Club

By Dr. Donata R. Henry

For those of you who would enjoy finding some birding buddies in West St. Tammany, we are pleased to announce that the Audubon Abita Bird Club is incubating! We invite nature lovers of all skill levels to join our monthly meetings/fieldtrips. The mission of our group is to provide a friendly space in which to learn about, explore and appreciate the amazing world of birds and their diverse habitats. We look forward to a speaker series with local bird experts and naturalists, field trips around south-east Louisiana, and outreach opportunities with birds in mind. Stay tuned for updates on the Audubon Abita Bird

The first meeting will be on Thursday, December 7th at 6:00 p.m. at the Abita Springs Town Hall.



Please remember OAS on **Giving Tuesday** on **November 28th** and also in your year-end donations. On **GivingTuesday** the whole world comes together to give back. Join this global generosity movement and help unleash the power of people and non-profit organizations to transform our community and the world. For more information see page 10.

OAS Birding Field Trips

Bring binoculars, field guides, bug spray, rain gear, sunscreen and refreshments. Boots and cell phones may be useful. Snacks and drinks are recommended. Contact the trip leader if you have questions. Check the OAS website's "events" page prior to a trip in case there are last minute changes. <https://jjaudubon.net/events/>

At the discretion of the leader(s) trips will be divided into groups if the number of attendees becomes too large. eBird users: Please share your eBird account email address with the trip leader and the trip leader or designee will keep the trip list to share with participants.

Bayou Sauvage National Wildlife Refuge –Half Day Trip

Saturday, November 18

Time: 8:00 a.m.

Location: Meet at the Ridge Trail, 20876 Chef Menteur Hwy, New Orleans, LA 70129, 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 the parking area on the left. From here we may go to different parts of refuge depending on migratory conditions.

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

Audubon Park –Half Day Trip

Saturday, December 2

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

The **Fontainebleau State Park** birding trip, originally scheduled for December 9th, has been moved to January.

The 124th Christmas Bird Count

Christmas Bird Counts are happening from December 14, 2023 through January 5, 2024. 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. 16 – compiler Wendy Rihner, 330-348-3810, wrihner@gmail.com

New Orleans CBC – Sat., Dec. 23 - compiler Glenn Ousset, 504-495-4284, gousset@bellsouth.net

Grand Isle CBC – Wed., Dec. 20 – compiler Chris Brantley, chrisbrantley@charter.net

Reserve-Bonnet Carré Spillway CBC – Tues., Dec. 26 – compiler Chris Brantley, chrisbrantley@charter.net

St. Tammany CBC – Fri., Dec. 29 – compiler Chris Brantley, chrisbrantley@charter.net

Venice CBC – date to be determined – compiler David Muth, 504-872-5993, muthdp@gmail.com

Won't You Be My Neighbor?

Building Nesting/Roosting Towers for Chimney Swifts

By Natalie Waters, BTNEP Wildlife Conservation Coordinator

You usually hear them first before you see them, an excited and unmistakable chattering erupting in the sky above you. Then you look up to see their dark silhouette and rapid wingbeats, the “flying cigar” that we all know, Chimney Swifts! Chimney Swifts are remarkable little birds with an interesting life history. They are a long distant migratory species, breeding in the eastern U.S. and southeast portion of Canada and wintering in South America. Swifts spend most of their life on the wing. They are aerial insectivores, feeding on flying insects like beetles, flies, moths, and true bugs. Although they are similar in appearance to swallows, swifts are more closely related to hummingbirds, belonging to the order Apodiformes, which translates to “without feet.” They have feet, but they cannot use them to perch upright like other birds, instead they must cling to vertical surfaces like the inside of a chimney.



Figure 1. Chimney Swift tower on Nicholls University Campus



Figure 2. Two nests were found in one of the Longfellow-Evangeline State Historic Site Towers this year

They collect twigs for their nest on the wing too, using their sticky saliva from a gland under their tongue to glue their nest to the inside wall. Historically Chimney Swifts nested on the walls inside of caves, cliff faces, or in old hollowed out trees. They adapted to roosting and nesting in chimneys with the arrival of European settlers. Unfortunately, over the past several decades Chimney Swift populations have declined drastically. The causes of decline could include the decline in insect populations, degradation of nesting and wintering habitats, and collisions with stationary/moving structures or objects. Historic chimneys suitable for nesting and roosting are being destroyed or capped off. Large urban chimneys and new residential home chimneys have resulted in more new homes built with covered insulated sheet metal flues for fireplaces, which are too narrow and slippery for Chimney Swifts to use. One of the ways organizations and individuals can provide suitable nesting and roosting habitat is to preserve brick chimneys that allow the swifts to roost and nest. Another way is to construct Chimney Swift towers.

Chimney Swift towers are “mini-chimney replicas” that function as both a nest site and a nighttime roost for the birds. Beginning in the spring of 2020, The Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program (BTNEP) worked with partners to construct and install Chimney Swift towers and educational signage to promote the conservation of this beneficial species. BTNEP followed the 12 ft. tower design described in the book, *Chimney Swift Towers: New Habitat for America’s Mysterious Birds* by Paul and Georgan Kyle. Four towers were installed by the summer of 2020 in Thibodaux, Louisiana. Miraculously those four towers managed to survive Hurricane Ida without a scratch in 2021! Three more towers were installed at the Longfellow-Evangeline State Historic Site in St. Martinville at the end of summer in 2022. The tower on Nicholls campus was the first tower to have a nesting pair in 2021 and it’s had a nesting pair every year since. This year was an exciting year for the project, four out of the seven towers had a nest, and one tower had two nests! Chimney swifts will roost together during migration, but typically only one pair will nest per chimney or tower, so finding two nests in one tower was a surprise. We’re unsure if the nests were created by the same pair or if two nesting pairs used the tower this year. We’re curious to see if this will occur again next season.



Figure 3. New towers were installed this fall on UNO’s campus (left) and at the Audubon Louisiana Nature Center (right).



John Nelson building a swift tower

We’re happy to announce this year we partnered with the Orleans Audubon Society to construct and install four new towers this Fall! Two of the towers are located on UNO’s campus and two were installed at the Audubon Louisiana Nature Center in New Orleans. We’d like to thank Orleans Audubon Society, especially John Nelson, who almost singlehandedly constructed and installed these new towers, and volunteers: Jennifer and Tom Coulson, and Brett, Juniper, and Moss Falterman. We’re also grateful to UNO and UNO project lead Liz Sigler, and the Audubon Louisiana Nature Center and Audubon Nature Institute project lead Isaac Wyatt, for adopting the towers. Art students at UNO are preparing to paint a mural of Chimney Swifts on towers so it will function as a piece of art and a home for Chimney Swifts!

There are many ways you can help Chimney Swifts. If you’re lucky enough to have a brick chimney you can allow a nesting pair to use your chimney for the summer and then clean it out in the winter when the birds have migrated south. If you interested in creating a tower, visit chimneyswifts.org to learn more about the process, and if you do create one, please let us know! We’d love to hear about it. Since Chimney Swifts rely on flying insects for food, it’s important to limit or eliminate the use of pesticides. Planting and preserving native plants to increase insect diversity and abundance is another important thing you can do. You can prevent window strikes by using bird safe window decals or films. You can also participate in citizen science efforts like “A Swift Night Out,” a community event to celebrate swifts by counting them in August and September as they enter communal roosts prior to migrating south.

It’s important to remember Chimney Swifts are one of our common birds in steep decline, we’re losing more and more swifts every year. We hope to encourage more cities and towns to start thinking about how we can make our neighborhoods and green spaces more suitable for birds and other wildlife.

-Natalie



Juniper and Moss Falterman

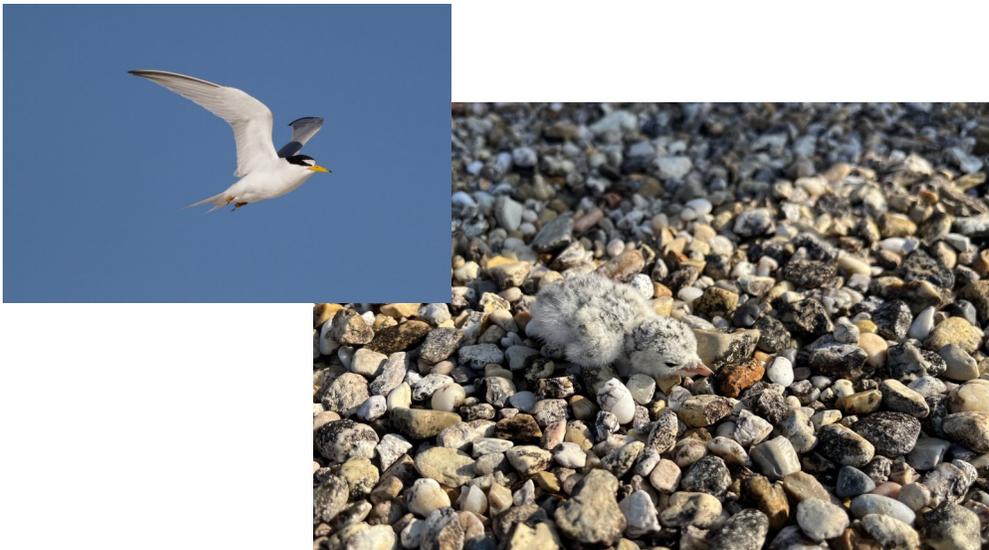
Snippets from the Pilot Year of the New Orleans Rooftop-Nesting Program

By Chloe St. Germain-Vermillion, Audubon Delta's Coastal Bird Technician

Seabirds on a roof near you? It's more likely than you'd think.

Why do these birds choose to nest in the city when they'd look more at home on the beaches of coastal Louisiana? Normally, coastal species favor sandy or shelly beaches to breed, nest, and raise their young. Unfortunately, with sea-level rise, habitat degradation, and increased human encroachment on the Gulf Coast, suitable beachfronts for these birds become scarcer every year. To adapt to diminishing resources, some birds have grown accustomed to nesting on gravel rooftops, which provide adequate material for building "scrape" nests. Beginning in 2023 as an expansion of Louisiana's Coastal Stewardship Program, Audubon Delta, in collaboration with Orleans Audubon Society (OAS), launched a rooftop-nesting program aligning with rooftop-nesting protocols of other Gulf Coast states. Before this, there had never been a study implemented in the City of New Orleans to track its breeding populations of coastal birds. Thus, this program aims to fill in the knowledge gaps regarding Louisiana's urban seabird breeding colonies. Four focal species are being monitored as part of this project. Our colonial seabird species are Least Tern, Gull-billed Tern, and Black Skimmer. Common Nighthawks are the only solitary nesters being monitored for this program, as they require similar habitat and are a species of conservation concern which has seen rapid declines in its population.

The New Orleans Rooftop-Nesting Program finished its pilot field season with great results. Beginning in May, drive-by surveys of 15 sites were conducted twice a month within the greater New Orleans area to detect evidence of nesting activity. These sites were selected based on historic accounts of nesting colonies and the suitability of the current rooftop substrate for nesting (i.e., gravel.) Colony formation was confirmed from the ground by the presence of focal species, aerial displays between breeding pairs of birds, and evidence of birds repeatedly landing on a roof. From these initial surveys, four sites were monitored for nesting activity through August: Milneburg Hall at the University of New Orleans, General De Gaulle Storage in Algiers, Chalmette Super Self Storage, and the Port of New Orleans at LCMC Children's Hospital. Of these locations, we secured access to the roof of UNO Milneburg Hall, General De Gaulle Storage, and Chalmette Super Self Storage. This awesome achievement for the pilot year allowed us to survey those colonies directly. Milneburg Hall at UNO hosted a colony of about 10 Least Tern pairs and at least 7 chicks. General De Gaulle Storage in Algiers sustained a whopping 29-35 pairs of Least Terns, 28 nests, and at least 30 chicks on its roof, making it one of the most productive colonies of the season. Similar levels of productivity were seen at the Chalmette Super Self Storage complex, which hosted approximately 30 Least Tern pairs and 35 Least Tern chicks. Amazingly, this site was also confirmed to have two pairs of nesting Black Skimmers! Although we couldn't view the colony directly this season, we estimate that the Port of NOLA colony held approximately 10 Gull-billed Tern pairs.



photos by Katie Barnes/
Audubon Delta

Following what we've learned from the pilot year, in May of 2024 we will begin implementing the official monitoring protocol for the project. The data collected during surveys will be used to achieve the following goals:

1. Identify active nesting rooftop sites;
 2. Estimate breeding pair densities;
 3. Quantify nest survival probability and causes of nest failure;
- [Estimate](#) fledge success;

Increase nest success using stewardship and added protective measures to stabilize local populations.

Surveys will be conducted by teams of dedicated volunteer surveyors and overseen by neighborhood coordinators who will track visits to sites and ensure surveys are being completed on schedule. Of course, any volunteers wanting to do rooftop surveys will be asked to undergo training to ensure the safety of both birds and surveyors. These positions will be recruited by Orleans Audubon Society, so if you are interested in volunteering, stay tuned for updates on the OAS website, and be sure to attend the chapter meeting on February 20th for an even more in depth look at the 2023 season and what's in store for 2024. Plus, if you love seeing baby Least Terns, you will not be disappointed!

For more information about the Rooftop-Nesting Program or Audubon Delta's other coastal stewardship work, please feel free to reach out to Chloe St. Germain-Vermillion, Audubon Delta's Coastal Bird Technician, by emailing chloe.sgvermillion@audubon.org.

Book Review: What Kind of Company Does a Tree Keep?

By Wendy Rihner

"You can tell a lot about a tree from the company it keeps," so writes James B. Nardi in *The Hidden Company That Trees Keep*. This is a wonderful new book that highlights recent discoveries in the less common "hidden companions" of trees: invertebrates and microbes, many of these companions doing really cool things like aiding a tree's immune system.

Nardi arranges his book into seven chapters: (1) the defenders of trees against attacks; (2) leaves, buds and twigs; (3) bark; (4) circulatory system; (5) flowers and fruits; (6) roots. Chapter 7 closes the book, offering ways the reader "can arrange firsthand encounters with the hidden company trees keep," in other words, exercises for us to go out and discover.

Chapter One is fascinating! I can't look at a tree now and *not* wonder if it's releasing chemicals to attract predators of the caterpillars munching on its leaves! Chapter Six is my favorite. Nardi gives us a look at the world underneath the tree, the dark world of decomposing arthropods and microbes. Like these chapters, each opens with a helpful overview of the specific tree part and its hidden companions.

A "field guide" of sorts closes each chapter. This is not a field guide in the traditional sense; rather, Nardi describes in detail some of the creatures we can find on/under a tree. Included with each profile is Nardi's masterful drawing of the arthropod or microbe.

Finally, the book provides three separate colorful illustrations Nardi labels "LeafScape," "BarkScape," and "RootScape." These artistic renderings provide vivid images of a tree's "hidden company" at work.

A research scientist in the School of Integrative Biology at the University of Illinois, Nardi writes not for scientists but for lay people who want to learn about trees, the lives trees support and the lives that support trees. His writing is almost literary; his sentences are well-turned and succinct. He is a naturalist-storyteller with some very engaging and absorbing stories to tell about the seen and unseen life around trees.

Big Decision on St. Tammany Development Plan

By Andrew Wilson, OAS Conservation Chair

This is a case from the 22nd JDC in which St. Tammany Parish (STP) citizens sought the right to appeal the decision of the STP Planning and Zoning Commission (P&Z) approving the “New Directions 2040 Development Plan” which had been developed by a consultant chosen by St. Tammany Parish Government (STPG). Parish officials refused to allow any appeals whatsoever. The Louisiana State 1st Circuit Court of Appeal has now ruled that there was a right to appeal and the challenges to the Development Plan will now continue.

As to the details, many citizens had opposed the Parish Plan since its primary goal, which was not revealed until final approval, was to allow for the construction of 17,000 acres of 1 million sq. ft. warehouses to be built all along already over-burdened and dangerous I-12 to receive and process the intermodal cargo from the Port of New Orleans. This would mean thousands more 18 wheelers on I-12 in St Tammany Parish every month. In addition, thousands of acres of forest and wetlands would be bulldozed for the construction. This would also mean that P&Z which consists of non-elected, appointed members, could implement a multi-billion dollar economic decision that would transform idyllic St. Tammany Parish into a massive industrial transportation hub with little or no input from its citizens.

When 76 citizens attempted to appeal that P&Z decision to the Parish Council as is allowed by Parish Ordinance, the STP DA’s office of Warren Montgomery advised the citizens there would be no appeals as STPG officials had already decided ahead of time that there simply would be no appeals. So the DA barred any of the appeals by the 76 citizens as well as Orleans Audubon Society who sought to do so. To justify this action, ADA Emily Couvillion had sent a letter to OAS attorneys with the DA’s legal analysis as to why there could be no appeals, essentially suggesting that the P&Z’s decision approving the Plan could not be appealed because it was a non-appealable policy or legislative decision despite the absence of any law to support this contention. In response, OAS and the citizens filed a Petition for Mandamus in the 22nd JDC seeking an Order requiring the STPG to docket the appeals.

The District Court, the Honorable John Keller, agreed with STPG that the P&Z decision was legislative, or policy oriented and was therefore not appealable, despite the fact that no such exception exists in the STP appeal Ordinance. The District Court did agree that the citizens had a good faith basis for challenging the decision, since state law required the STPG/P&Z to perform studies related to environmental impacts, drainage, traffic, fire-fighting capability, and water usage, etc., before implementing the Plan, but those studies never happened. To the contrary, the P&Z simply approved whatever STPG’s hand-picked consultant presented. But the Court’s acknowledgment of this statutory violation did not affect his decision as the Court still ruled that OAS and the citizens had no cause of action for mandamus.

OAS and the citizens appealed. The First Circuit Court of Appeal agreed that there was no law to support the actions of the DA and STPG. Based upon this reasoning the First Circuit held that the docketing of an appeal under the Parish appeal Ordinance is a non-discretionary ministerial duty so neither STPG nor the STP DA had the right to bar appeals and the ADA’s legal analysis justifying the denial of the citizens’ appeals was legally incorrect. The First Circuit then reversed the District Court and remanded for further proceedings which should essentially involve the issuance of a mandamus Order by the Court to allow the Appeals to proceed. If so, the 76 appellants will pursue their appeals to the STP Council. As there will be many new faces on the Council at this time, it is unclear what the outcome will be. If their appeals are denied, the appellants will then appeal to the 22nd JDC at which time they will raise the absence of studies to support the Plan, an issue which Judge Keller has already acknowledged is valid.

A Few Highlights from 2023

Northshore: OAS won its appeal, objecting to the lack of studies and public input for St. Tammany Parish’s “New Directions – 2040” economic development plan, a plan involving a major industrial development of the I-12 corridor. *See Andrew Wilson’s report.*

Pearl River: OAS continued its partnership with Healthy Gulf and American Rivers to promote the Pearl River as one of America’s most endangered rivers in 2023, largely because of the “One Lake” proposal to dredge and dam the river. Charlie Pfeifer and Jennifer Coulson were featured in the Pearl River grassroots campaign video. As possibly an indication of some grassroots campaign success, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has delayed the release of its draft Environmental Impact Statement stating that it was working on alternative flood solutions for the Jackson area.

Chimney Swift Towers: OAS partnered with the Barataria Terrebonne National Estuary Program (BTNEP) in an exciting effort to install four Chimney Swift towers in New Orleans. The species has experienced a steep decline, estimated at a 67% population loss since 1970. Swifts rely mostly on human structures for nesting and roosting. Two of the towers OAS built are at UNO, and two are at the Audubon Louisiana Nature Center. *See Natalie Waters’ article.*

Swallow-tailed Kites: OAS’s partnership with BTNEP focused on kites in the Barataria-Terrebonne basin. On July 7 we documented a group of 13 Swallow-tailed Kites and found one nest near Little Tensas Bayou in the Atchafalaya Basin. Jennifer Coulson and John Nelson captured an adult female here, the *Belle River* kite, outfitting her with a GPS-satellite transmitter. Project volunteers Zach and Becky Miller discovered the kites, brought Jennifer and John out in their boat to the site, and assisted with the capture and marking of *Belle River*. Two weeks later we returned to find 18 kites in the area, including 5 fledglings.

The “Sustainable Forestry for Swallow-tailed Kites” partnership with American Bird Conservancy (ABC), International Paper and the Avian Research and Conservation Institute focused on kite use of working forests in the wood sourcing area for International Paper’s Bogalusa Paper Mill. OAS conducted 7 aerial and 39 ground surveys and monitored 19 nests in Washington and St. Tammany parishes, Louisiana, and Pearl River, Marion, and Lincoln counties, Mississippi. Fourteen of 18 nests where the outcome was known were successful, producing 20 fledglings. Thus kites had good nest success (78%) with a productivity rate of 1.11 young fledged per breeding pair. Of the four nests that failed, one nest was depredated by a raccoon, another failed due to high winds, and the cause of failure could not be determined for two nests.

We deployed our first GSM-GPS transmitter, which uses cell phone tower technology to relay the data. On June 22, Jennifer and Tom Coulson and Brett Falterman captured the *Abita Flatwoods* female on the Abita Creek Flatwoods Preserve, owned by The Nature Conservancy. The Preserve’s kites often hunted over and roosted on the surrounding privately owned working forests and fields, so the tracks of this kite helped us identify private lands to focus our conservation efforts.

Conservation outreach included discussions with 15 landowners and managers about kite habitat needs. Jennifer also gave a presentation for forestry and wildlife students from the LSU School of Renewable Natural Resources when they toured the Bogalusa Paper Mill. She also helped E.J. Williams of ABC lead two Sustainable Forestry for Birds workshops.

Kite Tracking Update: The two kites that OAS tagged bred approximately 88 miles apart in different habitats. *Belle River* nested in a vast cypress-tupelo swamp and *Abita Flatwoods* nested in a bayhead swamp surrounded by a remnant longleaf pine savanna. Their fall tracks show them shadowing one another in the state of Mato Grosso in western Brazil. On a number of occasions they have hunted over the same fields or used the same roosts, but usually several days apart. Recently, however, their paths probably crossed, when both kites were hunting and roosting along the Rio Sacre, near the famous Salto Belo waterfalls. The 127 foot falls are breathtaking enough—but then picture a group of Swallow-tailed Kites flying across this spectacular backdrop! On October 17, the kites’ tracks were 0.1 mile apart within 1 hour of each other. Then, on the morning of October 18, their tracks were a mere 200 feet apart within 2 hours of one another! Their paths have since diverged. As of November 4, they are approximately 85 miles apart: *Belle River* is hunting near the Rio do Sanque, and *Abita Flatwoods* is hunting near the Rio Santana.

Bald Eagles: We were all anxious to see what the Algiers Bald Eagles would do when they returned to find that their old nest on a stadium light fixture at the Skelly-Rupp Memorial Stadium had been relocated to a flimsy artificial nest platform. In addition, the stadium light fixture is now in use with a guard to prevent the eagles from nesting on it. Fortunately, Thomas Custard reports that the pair is now nesting in a substantial Bald Cypress tree. OAS thanks Amy Wing, Thomas Custard, Wanda Boudreaux, Missy Bowen, and others for monitoring the stadium construction and its potential effects on the eagles.

Rooftop Nesting Birds: Audubon Delta and OAS volunteers conducted the first field season studying and conserving rooftop nesting birds in the greater New Orleans area. See *Chloe St. Germain-Vermillion’s report*.

South Point: Dr. Peter Yaukey reported on the South Point Migration Monitoring project at Bayou Sauvage National Wildlife Refuge. The point of land juts out into Lake Pontchartrain where the Norfolk Southern Lake Pontchartrain Bridge ventures out over the lake. South Point, an intriguing spot to study bird migration, could be a world class destination for birders, if only access could be arranged. OAS volunteers, including Peter, Joan Garvey, Mark Meunier, John Nelson, and David Muth, conducted 7 spring and 21 fall migration counts. Highlights were Eastern Kingbird counts that exceeded 1,000 birds on several mornings, a new high count of Savannah Sparrows (1,945), and a tally of 19 warbler species on a single October morning. Additional highlights were the continued, enigmatic presence of Red-headed Woodpeckers in spring and fall, and occurrence of unusual species including Tropical/Couch’s Kingbird, Vermilion Flycatcher, and Ash-throated Flycatcher. Volunteers continue to refine their skills at photographing birds in flight past the point, and numbers of local birders participating in migration counts at South Point reached a new high.

Wild Bird Rescue: OAS’s wild bird rescue program expanded in 2023 and news of its existence continued to spread by word of mouth. OAS volunteers provided advice to the public when nestlings fell from nests and needed to be returned to their parents, and also picked up injured and orphaned wild birds, providing temporary care until they could transport them to licensed wildlife rehabilitators, primarily Wings of Hope in Livingston. OAS volunteers also released rehabilitated birds, which is the most rewarding part! John Nelson and Sherry DeFrancesch conducted the bulk of rescues, with Jennifer and Tom Coulson also assisting. OAS volunteers rescued at least 67 wild birds including: 1 Rock Dove, 2 Mourning Dove, 1 Sora Rail, 7 Virginia Rail, 1 Anhinga, 8 Black-crowned Night-Heron, 3 Yellow Crowned Night-Heron, 1 Great Blue Heron, 2 Green Heron, 8 Mississippi Kites, 5 Red-shouldered Hawks, 2 Red-tailed Hawks, 1 Cooper’s Hawk, 4 Barn Owls, 10 Barred Owls, 1 Great Horned Owl, 1 Eastern Screech-Owl, 3 Blue Jays, 1 American Crow, 1 House Finch, and 4 Northern Cardinals.

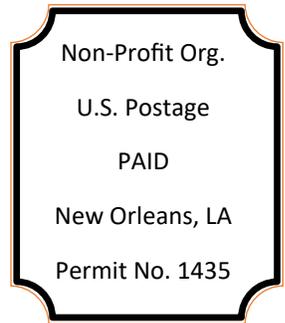
The Anhinga which John rescued and a Barred Owl which Jennifer rescued were both entangled in monofilament fishing line. One of the Red-tailed Hawks that Jennifer rescued wore a USGS band. The hawk, a juvenile, was banded near Oregon, Illinois, on September 20, 2022, and Jennifer captured it on February 8, 2023, along Old Spanish Trail in Slidell approximately 810 miles due south of its banding location, as the hawk flies. Unfortunately the gunshot wound through the wing and body was necrotic and the hawk had to be euthanized.

Black Rails: OAS urged Louisiana Department of Natural Resources to deny a permit for Commonwealth Liquefied Natural Gas export terminal because the LNG plant’s siting would destroy 897 acres near the Calcasieu Pass, including critically important habitat harboring the largest known concentration of the federally threatened Eastern Black Rail in Louisiana.

Rusty Blackbirds: OAS working with the Louisiana Wildlife Federation convinced the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and to eliminate all language pertaining to a Louisiana hunting season for blackbirds, cowbirds and grackles on the legal grounds that the season violated the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Declining populations of two blackbirds of conservation concern, the Rusty Blackbird and the Common Grackle, will now enjoy a release from hunting pressure. The Rusty Blackbird is one of the fastest declining North American landbirds, with a population loss of 85–95% over the past 40 years.

The SE Louisiana Chapter of the
National Audubon Society

Orleans Audubon Society
3623 Nashville Avenue
New Orleans, LA 70125



Giving Tuesday & Year-end Giving

You can help OAS achieve its mission to conserve the wildlife and wild places of the southeastern U.S. and to foster an appreciation of nature. Please remember OAS on **Giving Tuesday** on **November 28th** and also in your year-end donations. On **Giving-Tuesday** the whole world comes together to give back. Join this global generosity movement and help unleash the power of people and non-profit organizations to transform our community and the world.

OAS has a lot of exciting projects that we need more funding for, ranging from wildlife sanctuary improvements to Swallow-tailed Kite global tracking to OAS's Native Plants for Birds campaign. We need additional funding to rebuild and extend the boardwalk and observation deck at the Marguerite Moffett Audubon Sanctuary near Chauvin in Terrebonne Parish. We also need funds to rebuild the two eagle-osprey nesting platforms there. For the Swallow-tailed Kite research and conservation project, OAS needs donations to cover data retrieval for the GPS-satellite and GSM-GPS transmitters we have deployed on adults. We also need matching funds for grants which partially cover the 2024 aerial surveys we have planned to search for Swallow-tailed Kite nesting and roosting areas. OAS's wild bird rescue team needs equipment and supplies, ranging from landing nets, gloves, towels and transport crates to frozen mice and fish.

If you like what we're doing, and want to contribute to local environmental education, advocacy, and conservation, please donate to OAS on GivingTuesday and at the close of 2023. 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. You may also wish to donate to our fundraiser on Instagram or set up your own Facebook Fundraiser to benefit the Orleans Audubon Society.