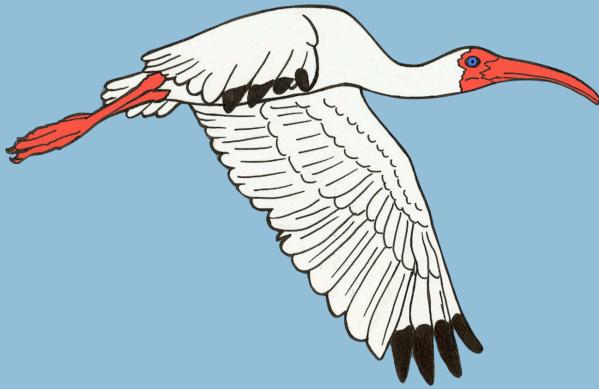


# the Ibis



Newsletter of the Orleans Audubon Society

Volume: XIX Issue: 3

A Chapter of the National Audubon Society

February-March 2026

## Feb-March 2026 Programs

### Fifty Years of Change in Louisiana's Birdlife

Speaker: David Muth

Tuesday, February 24th

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

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

The last major book on Louisiana's birds was published in 1974. In the 50+ years since, our state's birdlife has undergone profound change. For one thing, the list of species known from the state has grown by nearly 90 species, a pace that ensures that Louisiana will become one of the few states with over 500 species on our list. But we have also witnessed profound changes in bird populations. For our common migrants and residents this has mostly been negative, part of a depressing national trend. But we are also seeing explosions in populations of many species that were at a low point 50 years ago, but that are rebounding from the effects of pesticides and persecution. And we are also seeing southern species that were rare or unknown now occupying the state, presumably as a result of a warming planet and doubtless other factors not fully understood. A birder whose time afield roughly overlaps that fifty years surveys the changes, and relates a few birding stories in the process.



Osprey. Photo: Chloe St. Germain-Vermillion

*David Muth joined the National Wildlife Federation at the beginning of 2011 after working for the National Park Service at Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve since 1980. At Jean Lafitte, he managed the park's natural and cultural resources, including the Barataria Preserve, a wetland in the upper basin on the outskirts of New Orleans that Congress set aside as a representative example of the delta ecosystem. A native of New Orleans, David has had a lifelong love of the delta, including its landscapes, history, culture, and wildlife. He is an avid birder and has served as past President of the Louisiana Ornithological Society, an officer of Orleans Audubon Society, an advisor to Woodlands Trail and Park, and a regional editor covering Louisiana for North American Birds, a journal covering bird sightings and distribution.*

## Tulane Special Collections Visit: “Flipping the Bird!”

Speaker: Dr. Agnieszka Czeblakow

Tuesday, March 24<sup>th</sup>, 6:30 p.m.

Tulane University's Tilton Memorial Library, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor

7001 Freret Street, New Orleans, LA 70118

Orleans Audubon is specially invited to a private viewing of the rare books, historical records, and beautiful field guides housed at the Howard-Tilton Memorial Library's Special Collections. Dr. Agnieszka Czeblakow will take us on a tour of the most beautiful and unusual field guides you've ever seen, from some of the earliest naturalists to contemporary zines. We'll get to see the original journals of Henry Kopman (the first person to systematically document NOLA's birds) and browse Audubon's Birds of North America elephant folio - one of the few remaining originals! The event will be held on the 6th floor of the Howard Tilton Memorial Library on Tulane's campus at 6:30pm.

**Parking:** *Visitors do not need a parking permit after 5:30 p.m. Parking is available in front of the library and elsewhere on campus. If parking on the street, Freret Street and Law Road are your best options.*



Ivory-billed Woodpecker from the Audubon folio. Photo: Donata Henry

## Audubon Abita Bird Club Events

### What Tropical Birds are Telling Us: Is Reforestation in Northwestern Ecuador Working?

Presenter: Dr. Donata Henry

Tuesday, January 27th, 6:00-7:30 p.m.

Location: Abita Springs Town Hall, 22161 Level St., Abita Springs, LA 70420

How do we know when conservation is working? What can we learn from the birds? In this talk Donata Henry will share the results of five years of mist-netting in an area of active forest management and restoration in the Choco Rainforest in Ecuador. And of course, you'll get a close-up look at some extraordinary tropical birds!

*Dr. Donata Henry is a Senior Professor of Practice in the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at Tulane University. She co-teaches a tropical ecology field course in the Choco Rainforest at the FCAT (Fundacion para la Conservacion de los Andes Tropicales) Station where she guides students in investigating the ecology of tropical birds.*



Donata holding a Golden-hooded Tanager

# 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. Any last minute changes will be posted on the events page of the Orleans Audubon Society website, so check <https://jjaudubon.net/events/> for updates.
- At the discretion of the leader(s), trips will be divided into groups if the number of attendees becomes too large. Please be considerate of others: if you have seen a bird, move out of the way for those behind you.
- **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.

## **Joe Brown Park- Half Day Trip, Sunday, February 1st, 8:00 a.m.**

Meet just inside Joe Brown Park. Exit I-10 at Read Blvd. and turn right on Read. The park entrance will be on the left about 1/2 mile down Read.

Leader: Shae Freeman 504-339-3055, [23joules@gmail.com](mailto:23joules@gmail.com)

## **Audubon Park and the Fly - Half Day Trip, Saturday, February 21st, 8:00 a.m.**

Meet inside the parking lot off Magazine St. near the Audubon golf clubhouse.

Leaders: John Nelson 504-258-100 [johnnygnelsoniv@gmail.com](mailto:johnnygnelsoniv@gmail.com) and Helen Sierminski 303-810-4382 [animalvictory333@gmail.com](mailto:animalvictory333@gmail.com)

## **LaFreniere Park - Half Day Trip, Saturday March 7th, 7:30 a.m.**

Meet at the Foundation Center parking lot off of S. Scenic Drive on the East side of the park.

Leader: Marcie Blanchard [marcieblanchard@yahoo.com](mailto:marcieblanchard@yahoo.com)

## **Bayou Sauvage National Wildlife Refuge – Half Day Trip, Saturday March 21st, 8:00 a.m.**

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

Leader: John Nelson 504-258-1009 [johnnygnelsoniv@gmail.com](mailto:johnnygnelsoniv@gmail.com)

## **Couturie Forest, City Park - Half Day Trip, Saturday April 11th, 7:00 a.m.**

Meet at the Couturie parking lot on Harrison Ave. just east of the police stables and City Park volunteer house.

Leaders: John Keegan 504-296-9486 [keeganjohnadam@gmail.com](mailto:keeganjohnadam@gmail.com) and Marcie Blanchard [marcieblanchard@yahoo.com](mailto:marcieblanchard@yahoo.com)

## **Grand Isle - All Day Trip, Saturday April 25th, 8:00 a.m.**

Meet at Moran's grocery/gas station (It is now open!) 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: Chloe St. Germain-Vermillion 337-804-2658 [chloe.sgvermillion@audubon.org](mailto:chloe.sgvermillion@audubon.org) and John Nelson-504-258-1009 [johnnygnelsoniv@gmail.com](mailto:johnnygnelsoniv@gmail.com)

# Native Plant Sale!

Springtime is planting time! With the promise of spring migration come spring blooms! There are some great opportunities to purchase native plants in the greater New Orleans area in Spring 2026:

✿ **Saturday March 21st to Sunday March 22nd:** Destrehan Plantation, Spring Garden and Pet Show, Destrehan, LA <https://www.destrehanplantation.org/events/spring-garden-festival>

✿ **Saturday March 28th:** Big Bass Fishing Rodeo, City Park, New Orleans  
Birdgirl's Blooms will sell natives at the Fishtival!

✿ **Saturday April 24th to Sunday April 25th:** Northshore Garden and Plant Sale, St. Tammany Parish Fairgrounds  
Birdgirl's Blooms will sell natives under the big tent; other native plant vendors will also participate.

✿ **Orleans Audubon Programs:**

Birdgirl's Blooms will sell at both the February and April Orleans Audubon Monthly programs.

## Great Backyard Bird Count

**February 13-16th marks the 29th annual Great Backyard Bird Count!**

Each year in February, birders around the world come together to observe and count as many birds as they can and report their findings. Data from this period accumulates in the eBird database, which scientist can use to assess global bird populations, as well as gain a snapshot of birds right before one of their annual migrations. So this February, go out to your favorite birding spots and join us for the Great Backyard Bird Count!

Find more info here: <https://www.birdcount.org/>



# Results from the Inaugural Crescent City Circle

By Shae Freeman

Friends,

The 126th Christmas Bird Count gained a new circle in Southeastern Louisiana this year: the Crescent City count. Covering all of the New Orleans metro area, Metairie, Harahan, Elmwood, Kenner, and a large swath of the West Bank, this circle will hopefully provide much needed urban bird data for researchers for years to come. There is a longer history of the original New Orleans circle, but I am not sure I am the person to tell it. Suffice it to say, the original circle was moved east nearly 50 years ago, so there is a dearth of Christmas Bird Count data for the greater New Orleans since that time. After contemplating this circle for nearly 2 years, and debating with much better birders about the pros and cons of creating it, I applied for the circle in October 2025 and received approval in November. Without further ado, here are the results of our efforts!

There were a total of 33 participants (give yourselves a hand!), divided into 11 parties, and 5 feeder watchers. Our cumulative species count was 131 with 11 additional taxa. In total, there were over 44,000 individual birds reported on the trip report...with nearly half of them being Lesser Scaup! Speaking of Lesser Scaup, some highlights from the count circle include the enormous winter rafts of Lesser Scaup on the river, counted by Donata Henry and company. A formidable task to be sure, but I will let the list comments speak for themselves: "For an approximate 1.5 mile stretch of the Mississippi River there were birds in a continuous flock in rafts of sizes ranging from hundreds to thousands...". Shout out to Peter Yaukey for giving good instruction on how to approach counting those scaup, as I gave Donata little to no warning about it!

We also had some great rarities: Greater Scaup, Crested Caracara (in Metairie cemetery!), Lark Sparrows, Yellow-throated Warbler, Prairie Warbler, Black-and-white Warblers, Nashville warbler, Western Tanager, Summer Tanager, Indigo and Painted buntings, and Clay-colored Sparrow. Although we know some of these are expected over-wintering birds, it's still nice to see some relatively scarce species in urban landscapes!



Clay-colored Sparrow. Photo: Taylor Naquin



Ash-throated Flycatcher. Photo: Chloe St. Germain-Vermillion

The enthusiasm with which this birding community has shown for this count has been nothing short of inspiring. My hope is that involvement will continue to grow, drawing in seasoned and new birders alike. It bears repeating here: although I took the initiative to start this circle, I truly regard it as our circle and a big thank you to all who participated to make it successful. I love this birding community, and am sincerely grateful to be a part of it.

Have a great birdy year!

# Reading Trees

## A Book Review of Tristan Gooley's How to Read a Tree

By Wendy Rihner

I imagine that most birders love trees. I am obsessed with trees. But this obsession is not about naming them or identifying species, for where is the excitement in that? No, I want to read the trees I find in the field, for reading them will inform us about their environment and what is happening to and around them, the good and the bad. This is the goal of Gooley's book, How to Read A Tree, Clues and Patterns from Bark to Leaves. Indeed, it has become my new favorite field guide. He divides the book into two sections: "The Art of Reading Trees, An Introduction;" and "How to See a Tree, An Interlude."

He provides readers with a lot of useful information that can be applied to trees anywhere in the world. For example, I never heard of the term "defender branches," but I have seen on very tall trees the lowest branches that grow near the tree's shady base. Gooley reminds us that these low branches defend against any interlopers that might try to grow in whatever sunlight finds its way to the forest floor. Have you ever walked through the woods and detected a tree trunk thinner in spots than the rest of the trunk? Blame it on the wind!

Gooley has an accessible, contemplative writing style that is not bogged down in scientific terms or Latin names. Interwoven in the book are family anecdotes that, along with its accessibility, make it anything but a dense scientific study. He genuinely wants readers to see trees the way he does. A fellow at the Royal Geographic Society, Gooley has earned the nickname of "nature navigator" for two of his other books *How to Read Water* and *The Lost Art of Reading Nature's Signs*.

## Fine Increased for Killing a Whooping Crane in Louisiana

By Charlie Pfeifer, OAS's Louisiana Wildlife Federation Delegate, OAS Conservation Committee

In 2021, the OAS Board of Directors passed a resolution requesting increased civil penalties for the killing of a whooping crane. It then went to the Louisiana Wildlife Federation (LWF), of which OAS is an affiliate, where it was passed unanimously by the LWF board.

The OAS and LWF resolution pointed out that the expense of raising the young birds in captivity and preparing them for a life in the wild costs the State of Louisiana an estimated \$85,000 per bird. It also called attention to the fact that Louisiana's Whooping Crane population has been subject to criminal shootings at a rate far in excess of other states, which is threatening the success of LDWF's reintroduction program with shooting deaths, totaling 12 since inception of the program. Finally, the resolution maintained that the current restitution penalties are totally inadequate to provide the needed deterrent to combat this shooting problem.

The previous restitution value assigned to federally endangered animals, including the Whooping Crane, was \$4351.49. At the June Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Commission meeting the commission voted to raise the restitution value to \$15,000.00. While this number does not represent the full replacement value of a whooping crane, it represents the highest restitution value ever assigned to an animal in Louisiana. This is not the amount we requested in the resolution, but it is a step forward. Rick Owens, LWF Advocacy Manager commented on the fine increase for the Whooping Crane, stating that the "value increase is more than triple the value of any other animal value now in the regulations."

# Establishment of the Joelle Finley Memorial Education Fund

By Jennifer Coulson



Birding friends Joelle Finley, Rosemary Seidler, and Cathy DiSalvo. Photo: Cathy DiSalvo

For those of you who are new to the New Orleans birding, environmental and naturalist community, one of our prominent leaders, Joelle Finley, passed away on June 21, 2025. At the time of her passing, Joelle was Orleans Audubon's Vice-President, Program Chair and Field Trip Chair and she also served on numerous committees. She was also active in the Louisiana Master Naturalists of Greater New Orleans, Louisiana Ornithological Society, Sierra Club, and Crescent Bird Club (defunct). She also volunteered for numerous projects in New Orleans City Park.

The outpouring of generosity and wishes to commemorate Joelle Finley has been an inspiration to Orleans Audubon's leadership. We quickly raised enough funds to cover OAS's contribution to the dedicated, memorial bench, which is to be installed along a trail overlooking a lagoon in Couturie Forest. We thank our partners, the City Park Conservancy, Louisiana Ornithological Society, and Louisiana Master Naturalists of Greater New Orleans for joining us in honoring Joelle with this bench. As of December 31st, OAS has received **\$7,740.00** in memorial donations! After OAS contribution for the memorial bench, we had an excess of **\$5,240.00** remaining.

At the OAS Board meeting on January 13th, we discussed many possible options for honoring Joelle with the remaining funds. Some of the ideas floated were to provide scholarships for youths to attend American Birding Association camps, eBird Youth Birders Event, or youths, families and teachers to attend Hog Island Audubon Camp. We also entertained the idea of offering a series of birding workshops at state parks and other venues. In the end, the Board decided it best to create a permanent fund allowing for all of these options, the Joelle Finley Memorial Education Fund, and to continue to raise funds to make this an ongoing, dedicated memorial. The funds will be used for the many purposes outlined above, as well as for similar scholarships and training opportunities. If you would like to recommend individuals or groups for scholarships or training, or to propose ideas for workshops, please contact OAS's Environmental Education Chair, Wendy Rihner (330-348-3810; [wrihner@gmail.com](mailto:wrihner@gmail.com)).

OAS is now accepting donations for the Joelle Finley Memorial Education Fund. If sending a check, please make it payable to "Orleans Audubon Society" and note "Joelle Finley" on the memo line. Mail check to: Mary Joe Krieger, OAS Treasurer, 3623 Nashville Avenue, New Orleans, LA 70125. Donations may also be made using the PayPal "Donate" button on the OAS website: <https://jjaudubon.net/donate/>. If using PayPal, please note that the donation is in honor of Joelle Finley, or send an email note to [OrleansAudubon@aol.com](mailto:OrleansAudubon@aol.com). **Thank you to all who have contributed thus far!**

# Current OAS Officers and Board Members

## Officers

**Jennifer O. Coulson:** President, *Swallow-tailed Kite Project, Bald Eagle Nest Monitoring, Conservation Committee, Wild Bird Rescue*

**Chloe St. Germain-Vermillion:** Vice-President, *Editor of The Ibis, Rooftop Nesting Birds Program, Coastal Bird Surveys, Conservation Committee*

**Mary Joe Krieger:** Treasurer

**Sherry A. DeFrancesch:** Secretary, *Wild Bird Rescue*

## Board of Directors

**Byron Almquist:** *Public Lands*

**Joan Garvey:** *Membership Chair, Hospitality*

**Donata Henry:** *Program Chair, Audubon Abita Bird Club Director, Birding Zine*

**David P. Muth:** *Sanctuary Chair, Conservation Committee, Marguerite Moffett Audubon Sanctuary boardwalk oversight*

**John Nelson:** *Field Trip Chair, Swallow-tailed Kite Project, Wild Bird Rescue, Sanctuary Committee, Marguerite Moffett Audubon Sanctuary boardwalk oversight*

**Glenn Ousset:** *Citizen Science Chair*

**Charlie Pfeifer:** *Louisiana Wildlife Federation Delegate, Conservation Committee*

**Wendy Rihner:** *Environmental Education Chair, Native Plants, Publicity Chair*

**Michael J. Tift:** *Legal Chair, Sanctuary Committee*

**Andrew C. Wilson:** *Conservation Chair, Legal Committee, Louisiana Wildlife Federation Alternate Delegate*

**Peter Yaukey:** *Sanctuary Committee, Birding Course Series*

# Be a Part of Audubon Society

## Keep Your Membership Current!

### 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.

**Follow this link to renew:** <https://action.audubon.org/donate/chapter-membership?chapter=K00>

### Join or Renew with Orleans Audubon Society only:

OAS-only memberships expired on December 31st. If you want all of your dues to support local conservation 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 quarterly newsletter *The Ibis* and may also opt to receive it electronically instead of by mail. Please donate a minimum of \$20.00 to become an OAS-only member.

**Join/renew at the \$100.00 donation level** and receive a fine art giclée of a Brown Pelican: Along with your usual membership, 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 1" border).

**Join/renew at the \$150.00 donation level** and receive a fine art giclée of Swallow-tailed Kites: Along with your usual membership, you will receive a signed and numbered limited edition fine art giclée of a watercolor painting "Swallow-tailed Kites" by Joan Garvey (11" x 18" with 1" border, to fit a 16" by 20" frame). Joan's painting was inspired by William Kleinfelder's photograph.

**Join/renew at the \$200.00 donation level** and receive the fine art giclée of a Tri-colored Heron: Along with your usual membership, you will receive a signed and numbered limited edition fine art giclée of a watercolor painting "Louisiana Heron" by Joan Garvey (14" x 18" with 1" border; fits into a 16" x 20" frame).

**Become a Lifetime Member of OAS. Join/renew at the \$300.00 donation level** and receive a fine art giclée of a Reddish Egret: Along with your usual membership, 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 1" border).



*Pelican in Couturie Forest* by Joan Garvey



*Swallow-tailed Kites* by Joan Garvey



*Louisiana Heron* by Joan Garvey



*Reddish Egret* by Joan Garvey

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

Orleans Audubon Society  
3623 Nashville Avenue  
New Orleans, LA 70125

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Please also provide your name, mailing address and email address.

To join or renew using PayPal, please visit: <https://jaudubon.net/join/>

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Name

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Address

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Email

- \$20 OAS-only membership
- \$100 membership + pelican print
- \$150 membership + Swallow-tailed Kite print
- \$200 membership + heron print
- \$300 lifetime membership + egret print
- membership without print
- electronic *The Ibis* newsletter only