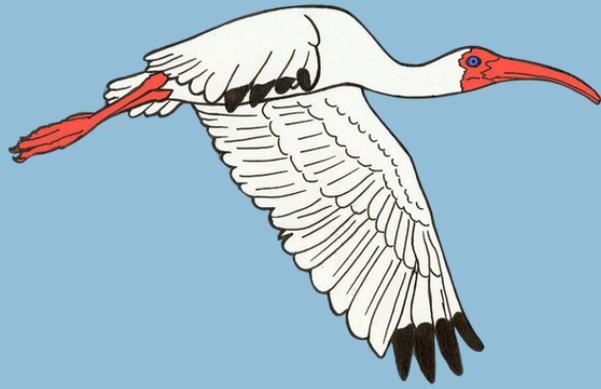


the Ibis



Newsletter of the Orleans Audubon Society
Volume: XIX Issue: 4

A Chapter of the National Audubon Society
April-May 2026

April-May 2026 Programs

Is Life a Beach for Coastal Breeding Birds? Re-evaluating Nest Site Selection in a Changing World

Speaker: Kiara Valentine
Tuesday, April 21st
6:30 p.m. social, 7:00 p.m. program
Community Church Unitarian Universalist, 6690 Fleur de Lis (Lakeview)

Imagine trying to raise a family on a busy beach where predators are abundant, storms flood your home, and heatwaves threaten your unborn young. This is the daily reality for beach-nesting birds. Their already tough job is getting harder due to coastal development, increasing predators, and climate change, which brings rising seas and deadly heat. My research addresses the question: does how a bird nests determine its fate in a warming world?

Kiara Valentine earned a B.S. in Biology from Virginia Commonwealth University in 2009 and worked as a biological technician for several years before landing at St. Vincent NWR. There she worked with beach-nesting birds, marine turtles, and gopher tortoises. She is currently a PhD student in the department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at Tulane University. Kiara is interested in how climate change affects nest-site selection, fitness, and conservation initiatives around the Gulf coast.



OAS Spring Banquet:

Bluebirds of Happiness; the Life and Times of the Eastern Bluebird

Speaker: Jane Patterson

Tuesday, May 19th

Cash bar 6:30 p.m., Buffet 7:00 p.m. and program 8:00 p.m.

Five Happiness Chinese Restaurant, 3605 South Carrollton Avenue, New Orleans, LA 70118
(Banquet Hall across from restaurant.)

Buffet Menu: Appetizers: Egg Rolls, Chicken Wings. Entrees: Combination Fried Rice, Vegetable Delight, Beef with Broccoli, General's Chicken, Pecan Shrimp. Dessert: Almond Cookies. Beverages: Tea and soft drinks.

Cost: \$45.00 per person for early reservations; \$50.00 per person for late reservations. Reservations required.

Please see reservation form on last page.

PLEASE MAIL BANQUET RESERVATION FORM BEFORE MAY 6th!

Join Jane Patterson for an engaging and informative presentation on one of North America's most beloved songbirds—the Eastern Bluebird. Once in serious decline, these vibrant birds have made a remarkable comeback thanks to the efforts of backyard conservationists. Whether you are a seasoned birdwatcher or a curious homeowner, this talk will provide everything you need to know about welcoming these "bluebirds of happiness" to your property. We'll cover their preferred habitats, nesting habits and lifecycle, and the timeline of typical nesting season in Louisiana. We'll also offer pointers for bluebird landlords, including how to choose (or build) a nest box and how to protect the birds from predators.



Jane Patterson is an avid birder and amateur photographer who loves to share her love of birds with others. She is currently president and education chair for Baton Rouge Audubon Society. She has been teaching birdwatching classes since 2007 and has introduced hundreds of people to the pastime. Jane has been honored by the National Audubon Society, the Baton Rouge Audubon Society, the Louisiana Wildlife Federation, and the Louisiana Ornithological Society for her volunteer efforts for conservation and education. Jane also earned her certification as a Louisiana Master Naturalist in 2018 and Master Gardener certification in 2024. She is especially fond of gardening with native plants to support birds, butterflies and insects and other wildlife.

Audubon Abita Bird Club Events

Bluebirds of Happiness; the Life and Times of the Eastern Bluebird

Presenter: Jane Patterson

Tuesday, March 31st, 6:00-7:30 p.m.

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

Quilts of Many Colors: Birds in Fabric Arts

Presenter: Becky Hill

Tuesday, April 28th, 6:00-7:30 p.m.

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

Join local nature-lover, savanna restorer, and leader of the Ozone Quilters Guild, Becky Hill, as she explains how she observes and recreates birds in quilts and other fabric arts. She will share her process and show us her beautiful creations, and then lead us in our own bird crafting activity. No artistry required, just a little imagination and a lot of love for birds!



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.

Bayou Sauvage National Wildlife Refuge - Half Day Trip, Saturday March 28th, 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

Southeast Louisiana National Wildlife Refuges Complex - Half Day Trip, Saturday April 4th, 7:30 a.m.

Meet at the Big Branch Marsh National Wildlife Refuge's Boy Scout Road parking lot off of Bayou Paquet Road in Lacombe. Join The Abita Bird Club and Orleans Audubon Society for an in-field presentation by Becky Larkins, Visitor Service Manager of the Southeast Louisiana National Wildlife Refuges Complex. Becky will discuss the refuges in general, and focus on how they are managing the Red-cockaded Woodpecker colonies in the refuge. After the presentation, there will be a birding field trip around the boardwalk.

Leaders: Becky Larkins and Holly Morales 985-264-4406 holly@moralesmusic.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 and Marcie Blanchard 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 and John Nelson-504-258-1009 johnnygnelsoniv@gmail.com

Bonnet Carre Spillway - Half day trip, Saturday May 9th, 8:00 a.m.

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

Leaders: Chris Brantley 985-237-5399 chrisbrantley@charter.net and John Nelson 504-258-1009 johnnygnelsoniv@gmail.com

2026 Spring Birding Festivals

Grand Isle Migratory Bird Festival: April 17th and 18th, 2026

2026 is the 28th year of the Grand Isle Migratory Bird Festival! This festival began as a way to pull the birding community together to observe changes in local bird populations and migratory patterns. Year-after-year it has contributed to Grand Isle's local economy, to education about the importance of barrier island habitats, and to a better quality of life for residents and visitors. The event will be headquartered at Grand Isle School on Ludwig Lane, and craft and information booths will be available. Parking will be under the gym and inside the fenced area. For more information and tour tickets, visit: grandisleevents.org/bird-celebration/



Louisiana Waterthrush. Photo by Chloe St. Germain-Vermillion

Friday, April 17, 2026: Queen Bess Island Pelican Rookery Boat Tours only. Participants will meet the captains and board the boats at the LA Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Grand Isle Research Facility at 194 Ludwig Lane.

Saturday, April 18, 2026: Queen Bess Island Pelican Rookery Boat Tours and guided birding tours of The Grand Isle East End State Park, Cox/Exxon Fields, Elmer's Island, Amiris Isle Photography Opportunities, and The Nature Conservancy's Grand Isle Maritime Forest Tracts and Nature Trails. Participants will meet at the Grand Isle School to check-in at the registration tables and meet their guides. Some tours will require carpooling to the sites and some will include walking on TNC trails. On tours, visitors can expect to see some of the numerous, colorful neotropical migrants that pass through the island each spring, such as Blackburnian Warbler, Scarlet Tanager, Baltimore Oriole, and Painted Bunting. If you're lucky, you may even snag some local rarities like Black-whiskered Vireo or Gray Kingbird for your life list! If you need a break from the island sun, there will also be a guest speaker at 1 PM on Saturday in the school cafeteria (speaker TBA).

Each day to close out the festival, there will be "Evening Calls" where a bird count and social with light refreshments will be held. This will be hosted by the Grand Isle Community Development Team on the Grilletta/LOSCO/Wellman-Baus Tract at 5:30 to 7:00 PM.

St. Bernard Bird Festival: May 1st and May 2nd, 2026

The St. Bernard Bird Festival will be held at the Los Isleños Museum Complex at 1357 Bayou Road, St. Bernard, LA 70085.

The Festival will begin at 9AM and close at 4PM on both days. Events will include continuous remote capturing and banding of birds by experts. This group will be led by Dr. Erik Johnson. Dr. Johnson will also give a presentation.

Other events include expert guided birding trips and native plant walking tours. It is also anticipated that guided airboat tours to the Big Mar will be available.



Scarlet Tanager banded at St. Bernard Bird Festival.
Photo by Chloe St. Germain-Vermillion

Human Tolerance and the Southern Bald Eagle's Recovery in Louisiana

By Dr. Jennifer Coulson



With the fate of so many bird populations hanging in the balance, the recovery of the Bald Eagle stands out as an amazingly successful and heartwarming conservation story. The recovery demonstrates the conservation value of banning harmful pesticides (DDT) and protecting eagles

from persecution (shooting). More recent population recovery also highlights this eagle's adaptability and resourcefulness. Once thought to breed only in large areas of pristine wilderness, and needing large buffer zones to prevent human-caused disturbance, at least some Bald Eagle pairs are now accustomed and adapted to human activities. Not only are Bald Eagles nesting on human structures, such as cell phone towers and energy transmission towers, but they are also nesting in suburban and sometimes even urban areas.

While Louisiana's Bald Eagle population is thriving now, this wasn't always the case. The population in the lower 48 states reached an all-time low of 417 known breeding pairs in 1963 (Buehler 2022). In 1938, Oberholser considered the southern subspecies as a permanent resident of Louisiana, being fairly common in the southern part of the state. However, he noted then that the Louisiana population was probably declining. In 1960, only four eagle pairs were known for the state (Seymour 2018). In 1972, Ray Aycok of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service had reports and documentation of only 6 to 7 Louisiana nests (Lowery 1974).

During the latter part of World War II, the use of DDT became widespread. Range-wide and here in Louisiana, DDE, a metabolite of DDT, was probably the main cause of reproductive failures, contributing to Bald Eagle population declines (Buehler 2022). Dieldrin and persecution (shooting) may also have contributed. The Environmental Protection Agency banned the use of DDT in 1972.

The southern subspecies, which occurs in Louisiana, was listed as Endangered in 1966 under the Endangered Species Preservation Act (Buehler 2022). In 1978, Bald Eagle populations in most of the remaining states were listed as Endangered under the 1973 Endangered Species Act. Since 1980, Bald Eagle populations have increased and even recovered, corresponding with decreasing DDT levels, and reduced human persecution. Accordingly, the Bald Eagle was down-listed from Endangered to Threatened in 1995, and the species was delisted in 2007. While no longer Threatened or Endangered, the species remains protected under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act as well as the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF), in partnership with other agencies, conducted a statewide survey during the 2014-15 breeding season and found 355 active nests (Seymour 2018). LDWF conducted another survey during the 2017-18 breeding season, covering a fraction of the former survey area. This survey, restricted to the New Orleans metro area through west of Morgan City, revealed 264 active nests, with the highest nesting densities being in Terrebonne and St. Mary parishes.

The habits of Louisiana's Bald Eagles have only recently been established. Whether a southern Bald Eagle remains in Louisiana year-round or migrates may be age- and sex- dependent. Broley (1947), working in Florida, reported that southern adults usually remained year-round in the vicinity of the nest site. Also working in Florida, Mojica et al. (2008), placed satellite tracking devices on juveniles and sub-adults. They found that the immatures that migrated north in spring or summer returned to Florida from late July to late December. In Louisiana, 10 Bald Eagles (adults and sub-adults) captured in Louisiana and outfitted with GPS-satellite transmitters migrated to Canada for at least one summer, during the nonbreeding season (Smith et al. 2017). OAS volunteers have casually observed that some breeding adults, especially males, appear to stay in Louisiana year-round, sometimes remaining mostly on territory.

2025-26 Breeding Season Updates on Urban and Suburban Nests:

Many of the nests OAS is monitoring are in urban and suburban areas, near busy highways, or are on top of cell phone towers, water towers, or power transmission towers. What follows are highlights for a subset of these nests. Perhaps the most popular and visited is the Henican Place nest in Metairie, near the corner of Henican Place and Ithaca Street. At this writing you can actually see last year's nest on Google Earth when you use the "Street View" feature. Imagery from April of 2025 reveals the nest, in a pine tree, in the backyard of a house on Henican Place with at least 2 eagles perched above the nest!

This pair is incredibly tolerant of human activity. Elaine Jacobs reported a fireworks show was happening under the nest tree during New Year's Eve celebrations. One member of the pair remained on the nest, tending the eggs, in spite of this ruckus. One of our volunteers spoke with the home owners, asking them to please move the fireworks elsewhere. The good news is the eggs hatched! Amy Wing reported on February 14 that this pair was attending two nestlings.

John Nelson reported that the Marconi Drive nest on top of a cell phone tower at the mouth of the Orleans Canal has two nestlings. On February 15 Thomas Custard observed one six-week-old eaglet on the Algiers nest. This pair formerly nested on a light fixture at the Skelly-Rupp Memorial Stadium, but relocated to a yard nearby when the stadium was renovated. Check out Thomas Custard's wonderful photographs and eagle nest reports on Facebook.

OAS is monitoring three active nests on the Bayou Sauvage Urban National Wildlife Refuge, all nests that were also used during the 2024-5 breeding season. These three nests are located: 1) near South Point, 2) on a transmission line tower visible from I-10, and 3) north of the junction of Chef Menteur Highway and Industrial Road. Eagles started a fourth nest on private land immediately adjacent to the refuge that they later abandoned. This nest start was on the powerline transmission tower on the west bank of the Maxent Canal, immediately south of the railroad tracks, easily visible from Recovery Road. On November 25, 2025, Helen Sierminski observed a pair of Bald Eagles perched on this tower above the new nest start.



Adult incubating or brooding at the Tudor Avenue nest, River Ridge, on February 2nd. Photo by Cathy DiSalvo.

On January 17, Marci Blanchard discovered eagles nesting on top of a cell phone tower at Chef Menteur Pass near Fort McComb. On February 15, she observed an adult feeding a downy hatchling. The tower is near 4314 Marques Road, off of Chef Menteur Highway and across the highway from the UNO Shea Penland Coastal Education and Research Facility. It would be helpful if the next person who visits this nest recommends it as an eBird Hotspot (see instructions below).

Cathy DiSalvo reported that on February 2 she visited two active nests in River Ridge. The nest near Citrus Road had two well-feathered eaglets, and the nest near Tudor Avenue probably had small young. The Tudor Avenue nest, a new one, is probably the pair relocating from last season's Joy Avenue nest.

On January 9, Tom and I followed an adult eagle in a suspected nesting territory because she was flying low and fast and appeared to be on a mission. She led us to the parking lot of the Trumpet in Zion Fellowship church off of Spartan Drive in Slidell where she flew into an adjacent woodlot to alight on a large, well-kept nest in a tall pine tree. At that point we believed the nest contained eggs. We then turns with Donna Bush in monitoring this nest. Then on Valentine's Day, we suspected that something was wrong. Tom observed the nest, while I ducked into the woods to search under the nest for possible signs of why the nest might have failed. In the meantime, several church folk approached Tom, curious about what he was looking at in the woods. As Tom was pointing out the nest, I ran out of the woods carrying two decomposing catfish heads. One lady dressed in her church service best, exclaimed, "I can't believe you went into those woods!" I smiled and shrugged, and then we started talking about the eagles. She said the eagles had nested there last year too. It didn't occur to me to explain why I was holding the rotting fish heads. She and the pastor were very kind and invited us to join them for service.



On February 5, I observed an adult at the Nunez Road nest in Slidell that was attending one or more young. There's a Great Horned Owl nest with two large owlets in a dead tree within a stone's throw of the Nunez nest. This is somewhat surprising and of interest because Bald Eagles and Great Horned Owls often compete for nest sites. Great Horned Owls do not build nests and instead use old nest built by other species, or they nest in tree hollows. Owls sometimes even take over an active Bald Eagle nest. This pair of owls is using an old, dilapidated Bald Eagle nest.

Knowing where nests are and monitoring them is important to Bald Eagle conservation in Louisiana. OAS is using the location and monitoring data to study nesting habitat, productivity, nest success and human tolerance. Monitoring also allows us to rescue young eagles when they get into trouble, work with power companies to retrofit power lines, and mitigate human-wildlife conflicts. OAS needs more volunteers to locate and help monitor nests near New Orleans and throughout the state.

How to Volunteer for OAS's Bald Eagle Nest Monitoring Program:

Bald Eagles are one of the few birds that nest in winter in Louisiana. Other notables include the Great Horned Owl, Neotropic Cormorant and Great Blue Heron. If you would like to get outside and help monitor nests, now is the time to do it! OAS's Bald Eagle nest monitoring program is largely dependent upon citizen science.

Many of the nests that OAS is monitoring are visible from public roads and are listed as eBird Hotspots. Anyone using eBird can enter their nest observations for those nests. If you observe a nest that is visible from a public access point, please determine if it is already in eBird as an eBird Hotspot and report your observations using the hotspot. For example, the eBird Hotspot for the Bald Eagle nest near the Walmart in Chalmette, visible along Patricia Street, is named "BAEA Nest--Patricia Street, Chalmette". You can determine whether the nest is already listed in eBird using two methods. From the eBird app on your phone, see if it is listed as a nearby location when you are near the nest. This feature is available when you map your checklist location. Alternatively, with an internet connection, you can sign into the web-based eBird and use the "Explore Hotspots" feature. On the upper left hand corner you have the option to enter a Hotspot name. Just type in "BAEA nest" to view the list. Clicking on any of the hotspot names will show the location on a map. There are a few nests that have "BAEG Nest" in the name instead, so if you cannot find the Hotspot, you may also wish to search for this.

If you observe a nest that is not yet listed as an eBird Hotspot, please consider recommending it as a Hotspot. And if you do so, please name the location beginning with "BAEA Nest" followed by two dashes and then a unique street, canal or other location descriptor followed by a comma and then the name of the nearest town. Just follow the convention used for the Patricia Street nest example above. If you have any difficulties or have questions, please contact Jennifer Coulson or David Muth.

If you would prefer to report your nest observations directly to me, you are more than welcome to do so. You can text or leave a message on my cell phone: (504) 717-3544 or email me at jenniferocoulson@gmail.com. Please be sure to provide the location description, approximate coordinates (or drop a pin in Google Earth or Google maps), the date of the observation, and notes about what you observed (e.g., how many nestlings or fledglings, how many adults, nest-building, incubating, feeding young, etc.)

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Bald Eagle Head photo by Jennifer Coulson

Great Horned Owllet photo by Jennifer Coulson

Summary of 2025 Coastal Bird Nesting Season in Southeast Louisiana

By Chloe St. Germain-Vermillion

As we prepare for our breeding birds to return from their southern wintering grounds, let's take a short look at how they fared during last year's nesting season. If you are interested in learning about volunteer opportunities related to this work, please contact me at chloe.sgvermillion@audubon.org.

Grand Isle Beach-nesting Birds

In 2025, a total of four sites (Grand Isle State Park, Grand Isle Beaches, Exxon Fields, Elmer's Island) and three focal species (Wilson's Plover, Common Nighthawk, Least Tern) were monitored for breeding activity.

Elmer's Island

Wilson's Plovers began claiming territories in mid-March on Elmer's Island. Our earliest established nest based on age hatched April 26th with three chicks. This puts the estimated first egg date at approximately March 30th, one of the earliest confirmed nesting dates at this site! The sand fencing installed by LDWF has built up sizeable dunes since it was installed last year, and Wilson's Plovers continue to favor the shell hash banks between these new dunes and the natural dunes further north. The vegetation cover in the flats behind the northernmost dunes has increased steadily since 2021, making it less suitable for Wilson's Plover and Least Tern nesting, though mudflats along the bay area still provide good foraging habitat. Most breeding activity was observed in on the eastern end of Elmer's. However, the parking lot of the refuge maintained a high concentration of breeding pairs in a much smaller area, with at least 4 nests being found in an area only about 250 meters wide. In total, 44 pairs of Wilson's Plovers nested on Elmer's Island in 2025, with an apparent nest success rate* of 60% and a fledgling survival rate of 0.25 per breeding pair.



Wilson's Plover nest at Elmer's Island

Common Nighthawks began establishing territories mid-April on Elmer's, and a 2-day-old nighthawk nest was found May 12th, putting the first egg date at May 10th, though it's highly probable earlier nests were laid but went undetected by the seasonal technician. In total, 15 pairs of Common Nighthawks nested on Elmer's Island in 2025, with an apparent nest success rate of 83% and a fledgling survival rate of 0.47 per breeding pair.

A small Least Tern colony of about 12 pairs was confirmed nesting in the parking lot on April 30th as well as a separate smaller colony on the eastern end of the refuge around the same time. Both colonies made nesting attempts through May, but due to high rates of nest failure abandoned the sites by June. In total, 22 pairs of Least Terns nested on Elmer's Island in 2025, with an apparent nest success rate of 7%. No fledglings were confirmed at this site.

In addition to our typical focal species, one pair of American Oystercatchers was also found nesting on Elmer's Island in early June. Considering the timing and that only 1 egg was laid, this was likely a re-nesting attempt by this pair after previous failures earlier in the breeding season at other locations. The technicians did fence the area around the nest to reduce disturbance, but unfortunately this nest also failed, likely due to predation.

*The number of nests producing at least one young.

Grand Isle Beaches

This year, for the first time in almost a decade, Least Terns nested on the Grand Isle public beaches. This is most likely a result of the 2024 dune renourishment project in the area, which left large areas of disturbed, sparsely vegetated, open beach habitat. Approximately 28 pairs were found nesting in King Tarpon Park April 30th, which is located at the eastern end of the island near the state park. A separate, larger, colony was discovered near the town of Grand Isle in late May, though it was likely established late April based on the age of the oldest nest found. This colony housed around 95 pairs and spanned nearly 1.5 miles of beachfront. Due to concerns related to ATV traffic on the public beach, Audubon Delta met with Mayor Camardelle's office, and with the town's permission posted symbolic fencing at crossovers 4.2 through 5.4 to direct traffic away from the tern colonies. Overall, beachgoers supported this fencing, which reduced unnecessary disturbance. The Least Terns nesting on the public beach in 2025 appear to have had relatively high rates of nesting and fledging success. This may be a result of smaller predator populations at this site compared to sites more isolated from human development. In total, 123 pairs of Least Terns nested on Grand Isle Beaches in 2025, with an apparent nest success rate of 46% and a fledgling survival rate of 0.68 per breeding pair. In addition to the tern activity, two pairs of Wilson's Plovers also showed prolonged signs of breeding behavior in King Tarpon Park, but nests and chicks were never found, so it could not be confirmed.



Least Tern chick (above) and banded adult Least Tern (below) on Grand Isle Beach

Exxon Fields

At Exxon Fields, two Least Tern colonies were observed. As the birds were on private property, walking surveys could not be completed, therefore all observations were made from public roadways adjacent to the colonies. The first colony was found nesting near the A-Port Energy retention ponds on April 25th with approximately 20 pairs. The second colony was much smaller, about 6 pairs, and was found May 5th near the corner of Bunkhouse Road and Yacht Harbor Avenue. One pair of Wilson's Plovers was observed multiple times in this area as well, suggesting potential nesting behavior.

Grand Isle State Park

The eastern half of Grand Isle State Park past the boardwalk remained closed for the 2025 breeding season. This was also the only area of the park with an active Wilson's Plover pair, whose nest was estimated to have been laid April 9th. Unfortunately, the nest failed due to unknown causes approximately one week prior to the estimated hatch date, and no further plover breeding behavior was observed at the park for the rest of the season. No tern colonies established at the park in 2025, and no nighthawk breeding activity was observed.

Banding

We banded adult and juvenile beach-nesting birds to better understand breeding populations at our study sites in Grand Isle. Coupled with re-sighting efforts, this allows us to better understand both chick survivorship and return rates for breeding adults banded in previous years. In Southeast Louisiana, 22 Wilson's Plovers (4 adults and 18 chicks) and 15 Least Terns (10 adult and 5 chicks) were banded. No Common Nighthawks were banded in 2025.

New Orleans Rooftop-nesting Birds

In 2025, a total of 2 sites (Port of New Orleans, Susitna Drive) and three focal species (Least Tern, Gull-billed Tern, Black Skimmer) were monitored for breeding activity. At two of our historic sites, Chalmette Super Self Storage and General de Gaulle Storage, evidence of nesting attempts were discovered, but no successful colonies established in 2025. At Chalmette, several Least Tern pairs were observed at the site from May through mid-June. Despite birds showing signs of breeding behavior (pair flights and fish exchanges between pairs), as well as territorial behavior (mobbing starlings and crows), no active nests were ever confirmed. However, one broken Least Tern egg was discovered by the technician, suggesting nesting attempts were being made but were unsuccessful. Adult terns were never observed at General de Gaulle Storage, but an abandoned egg was also discovered at the site late in the season.

Port of New Orleans

Breeding activity was first observed May 13th, and the first rooftop survey was conducted May 22nd. During this survey, 510 adult Gull-billed Terns were counted, along with 240 nests. The construction of nests at this site was especially interesting. Adult Gull-billed Terns seemed to favor using bones as nest decoration, most of which were avian in origin, but use of a fish jawbone was also observed. Other industrial items (screws, nails, metal debris) were also utilized. Nineteen downy chicks were already present at the site during this survey. Most downy chicks were still nest-bound or only weakly mobile, which aged them at 1-4 days old. This indicates the colony likely laid the first eggs from April 28th through May 1st. Twenty Black Skimmers were also nesting at the site with 9 total active nests.

On the next rooftop survey on June 5th, five motion-sensitive game cameras were attached to the rooftop to help monitor the colony between survey periods. 405 adult terns, 72 active nests, and 142 chicks were counted during this survey. The high concentration of chicks led to numerous cases of conspecific aggression from adult terns towards chicks that were not their own. Some freshly killed chicks were found with injuries to the neck and head. Many desiccated dead chicks were found on the roof, though the cause of death could not be confirmed. A group of 16 skimmers with 6 nests and 2 downy chicks were also observed in the colony during this survey. During the post-survey perimeter check of the property, it was

noted that flightless chicks had fallen through the storm drains on the roof, which was also seen during vehicle surveys in 2024. Twenty chicks were collected and returned to the roof and further colony walkthroughs were delayed until more chicks were flight capable.



Gull-billed Tern nest at the Port of NOLA colony



Game camera photo of Black Skimmer pair on nest at the Port of NOLA colony

The second rooftop survey of June was conducted June 27th. The colony had diminished extensively, with only 120 adult Gull-billed Terns and 9 Black Skimmers remaining. The Gull-billed Terns had 15 active nests, 7 downy chicks, 9 feathered chicks and 24 confirmed fledglings counted during the survey. The skimmers no longer had any active nests, but 2 fledglings were confirmed! The first set of SD cards from the game cameras were recovered during this visit. Two of the five cameras helped confirm nest fates for two nests. One Gull-billed Tern nest was near a camera set to record video and successfully captured the nest hatching. A second camera monitoring a skimmer nest showed the pair abandoning the nest after the eggs failed to hatch. Additional cameras provided insight into prey adults were using to provision chicks. In one case, a pair of adult Gull-billed Terns were observed bringing a variety of items, including dragonflies, small baitfish, and crayfish to two chicks over several weeks. The chicks appeared to be using the game camera as a shelter, and the adults returned to the same rooftop “territory” each time to feed them. Their molt progression from natal down to juvenile feathered plumage could be directly followed with the game camera imagery, which helped to confirm that they were the same individuals.



Game camera footage of adult Gull-billed Tern provisioning young with baitfish (left) and dragonflies (*Libullela* sp., right)

Based on vehicle surveys done by our volunteers, nesting activity completely terminated by July 12th, which was subsequently confirmed by a rooftop survey completed July 14th. The last of the game camera footage was collected and all cameras were removed during this survey. Based on the game camera data, the colony seems to have almost completely dispersed by the first week of July. No definitive reason could be deduced, but the cameras did capture images of crows and raccoons scavenging through the colony, which was not observed in previous camera footage.

In total, we were able to age and track fates for 51 nests (9 Black Skimmer and 42 Gull-billed Tern). The relative infrequency of rooftop surveys and concerns regarding disturbance to chicks during colony walk-throughs resulted in a large amount of nest fates remaining unconfirmed. Of these nests, the technician was able to confirm fates for 23 Gull-billed Tern nests and 6 Black Skimmer nests with hatch rates of 95% and 67%, respectively.

Susitna Drive

As was the case in 2024, we were unable to make contact with the building managers, so this site was monitored entirely through vehicle surveys and flush counts by our volunteer surveyors in 2025. The first survey was conducted May 8th and the surveyor noted a max adult count of approximately 75 Least Terns. The site maintained comparable numbers throughout May. Additionally, the surveyor observed one dead skeletal chick on the ground near the building on May 29th, implying the presence of other chicks on the roof which could not be counted. Adult counts diminished by mid-June, with the surveyor counting only 18 adults June 12th. By June 25th, only 2 adult terns were detected, and by the beginning of July all breeding activity was complete.

GiveNOLA Day – OAS Needs Your Support!

When? Tuesday, May 5, 2026

Early Giving: April 29 – May 5

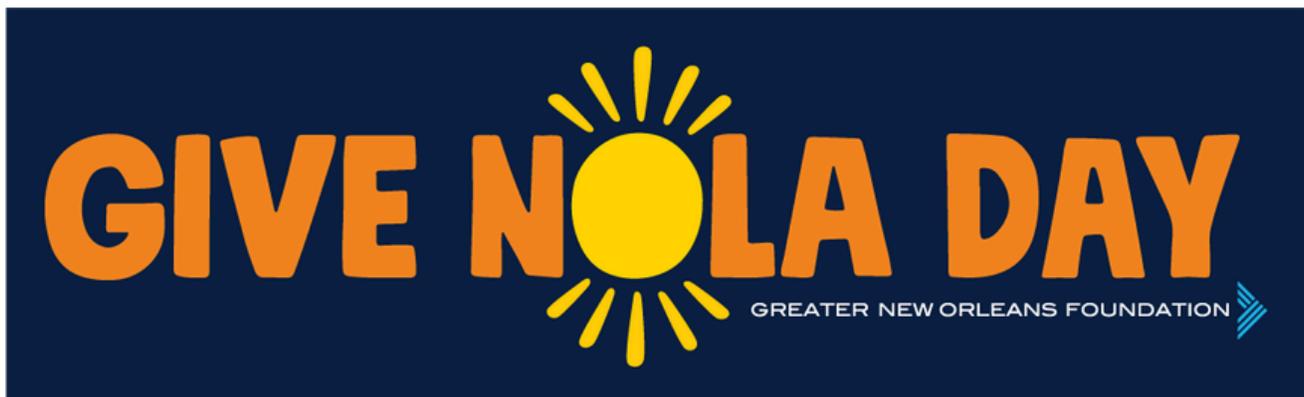
GiveNOLA Day, an initiative of the Greater New Orleans Foundation, is a one-day online giving event, and a great way to show your love and support for the Orleans Audubon Society. GiveNOLA Day provides a 24-hour giving event to support your favorite local causes by donating to participating nonprofit organizations within a 13 parish region, including the Orleans Audubon Society. GiveNOLA Day has raised over \$71.2 million for our region's nonprofits.

Your donations through GiveNOLA Day will have a lasting impact. Every dollar donated on GiveNOLA Day 2026 will be stretched with additional "Lagniappe Fund" dollars and prizes provided by the Greater New Orleans Foundation, its generous GiveNOLA Day sponsors, and donors.

CALLING ALL NIGHT OWLS! If you are in the habit of staying up late, please help OAS win the hourly "Rock Around the Clock" a \$500 prize that the GNOF and its sponsors offers for small, medium, and large nonprofits. Your donation of \$10 or more during an hour qualifies OAS for that hour's drawing. Every hour during GiveNOLA Day, three winning organizations (categorized as small, medium, or large based on budget) will receive a Rock Around the Clock prize.

In 2026, OAS is especially seeking donations for several of its conservation projects for which it has little or no funding. These include:

- Purple Martins are not a nuisance and need more human-provided housing, legal case and grassroots advocacy campaign
- Wild Bird Rescue – capture equipment, temporary housing, specialized diets, etc.
- Native Plants for Birds – planting tools and educational materials
- Bald Eagle Nest Monitoring – in Louisiana and Mississippi
- New Orleans Rooftop Nesting Birds – in partnership with Audubon Delta
- Audubon Coastal Bird Surveys in Louisiana – in partnership with Audubon Delta



The SE Louisiana Chapter of the
National Audubon Society
Orleans Audubon Society
3623 Nashville Avenue
New Orleans, LA 70125



MAY 19TH BANQUET RESERVATION FORM MUST BE RECEIVED BY MAY 6th

Clip and mail with check payable to Orleans Audubon Society to
Mary Joe Krieger: 3623 Nashville Ave., New Orleans, LA 70125
Phone: 504-258-3396, maryjkrieger@gmail.com

RESERVATIONS RECEIVED MAY 6-9 COST \$50/PERSON

NOTE: NO RESERVATIONS ACCEPTED AFTER MAY 9

Banquet: _____ persons @ \$45.00 \$ _____ TOTAL \$ _____
_____ persons @ \$50.00 \$ _____ TOTAL \$ _____

Names of Attendees: _____

Email Addresses: _____

**IF PAYING BY PAYPAL: PLEASE use the "Donate" button on OAS's website
(<https://jjaudubon.net/join/>) and select the option to ADD THE
TRANSACTION FEE.**

\$45 BECOMES \$46.41; \$50 becomes \$51.52. Thank you!