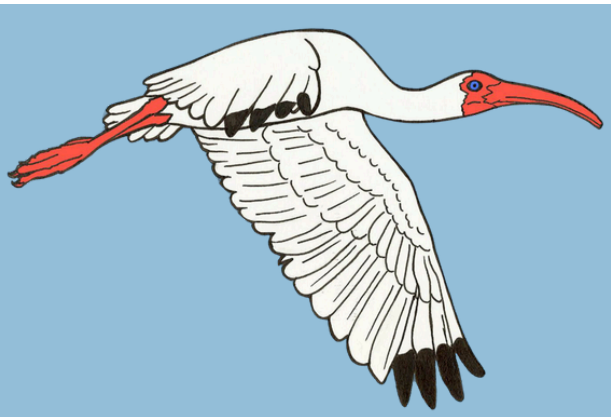
the Ibis



Newsletter of the Orleans Audubon Society
Volume: XX Issue: 2

A Chapter of the National Audubon Society
December 2026 to January/February 2027

Winter Programs



OAS Holiday Potluck!

Tuesday, December 15th
6:30 to 9:00 p.m.
Community Church Unitarian Universalist, 6690 Fleur de Lis (Lakeview)

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

How flight shapes the ecology and evolution of birds

Speaker: Santiago Claramunt
Tuesday, January 19th
6:30 p.m. social, 7:00 p.m. program
Community Church Unitarian Universalist, 6690 Fleur de Lis (Lakeview)



The capacity to fly likely transformed the ecology and evolution of birds. In this talk, Dr. Claramunt will provide an overview of avian flight evolution and show how bird flight is special among vertebrates. He will also discuss how we can use wing morphology to estimate flight performance across species. Finally, he will demonstrate how the effects of flight performance can be seen across multiple phenomena relevant to ecology and conservation, such as gap-crossing ability, dispersal distances, and even population sizes.

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.

W. Ravena Road, Diamond and Fort Jackson –All Day Trip
Saturday, November 7, 8:00 a.m.
Cross the Crescent City Connection, On Westbank Exp. exit Hwy 23 (Lafayette St/Bell Chase Hwy), drive 5 miles and meet in the Breaux Mart parking lot, 7902 LA-23, Belle Chasse, LA 70037, on the right just past the intersection with Hwy 406 (Woodland Hwy). Lunch at a Subway.
Leaders: John Nelson 504-258-1009, johnnygnelsoniv@gmail.com
and Ken Harris, kenharris43@gmail.com

Joe Brown Park - Half-day Trip
Saturday, November 14, 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

Sankofa Wetlands - Half Day Trip
Sunday, December 6, 8:00am
Meet at Sankofa Wetland Park, 6401 Florida Ave, New Orleans,LA 70117
Leader: Shae Freeman 504-339-3055, 23joules@gmail.com

LaFreniere Park - Half Day Trip
Saturday January 9, 8:00am.
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

Audubon Park and the Fly - Half-day Trip
Saturday, February 20, 8:00 a.m.
Meet inside the parking lot off Magazine St. near the Audubon golf clubhouse.
Leader: John Nelson 504-258-100, johnnygnelsoniv@gmail.com

Winter Birding Events

Wings Over the Delta: First Plaquemines Parish Birding Festival!

When: November 21, 2026, 6:30 AM – 2:00 PM
Where: Woodlands Conservancy, 449 F Edward Hebert Blvd, Belle Chasse, LA 70037

Whether you're an experienced birder, a nature enthusiast, or picking up binoculars for the first time, this family-friendly festival will offer something for everyone.

The festival will begin as the forest comes alive with a 6:30 AM Sunrise Birding Walk through Woodlands Conservancy. Activities will include guided birding walks, bird banding, kids' activities, art vendors, and more!

For more information, visit https://www.plaqueminesparishtourism.com/plaquemines-parish-birding-festival.

Wings over Woodlands

When: December 5, 2026, 1:00PM — 5:00PM
Where: Woodlands Preserve, 449 F Edward Hebert Blvd, Belle Chasse, LA 70037

Join Woodlands Conservancy in celebrating our twenty-fifth anniversary as an environmental nonprofit serving Plaquemines, Jefferson, and Orleans Parishes. This year, Woodlands Conservancy was officially recognized as a Nationally Accredited Land Trust and hopes to expand the reach of land conservation in south Louisiana through land donation and conservation servitudes.

The event includes:

- free alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks
- a live raptor show
- presentations including featured keynote speaker David Muth
- a holiday market with local artisans
- guided hikes

For more information and to purchase tickets, please visit https://woodlandsconservancy.networkforgood.com/events/106380-wings-over-woodlands-25th-anniversary-party .

LOS Winter Meeting



When: January 29th-30th
Where: Abita Springs, LA

The Louisiana Ornithological Society's 2027 Winter Meeting will be in Abita Springs, January 29th-30th. All evening events will be at the Abita Springs Town Hall, located at 22161 Level Street. David Muth will speak Saturday night on developments over the last 50 years of Louisiana birding, and Tulane University graduate student Meirun Zhang will speak Friday night on her research on loons.

LOS is working closely with the Orleans Audubon Society and the Abita Bird Club on a slate of field trips for Saturday, to include visits to Fontainebleau State Park, Big Branch National Wildlife Refuge, Northlake Nature Center, the Pearl River Wildlife Management Area, Bogue Chitto National Wildlife Refuge, and perhaps Bayou Sauvage, depending on the availability of field trip leaders. If anybody is interested in leading or assisting with a Saturday field trip, please contact LOS President Shae Freeman at 23joules@gmail.com.

LOS is also planning excursions to private properties on the Northshore for Friday before the meeting formally starts, a recent LOS Winter Meeting tradition that has proven remarkably popular.

The event hotel will be the Holiday Inn in Covington at 45 Louis Prima Drive. Ask for the LOS group rate, $119.00 plus tax per night for a single king room or $129.00 plus tax per night for a double queen, which is available from Thursday the 28th through Sunday the 31st. Registration for the weekend will be $25.00 and if you'd like a Saturday dinner it may be reserved for an additional $25.00.

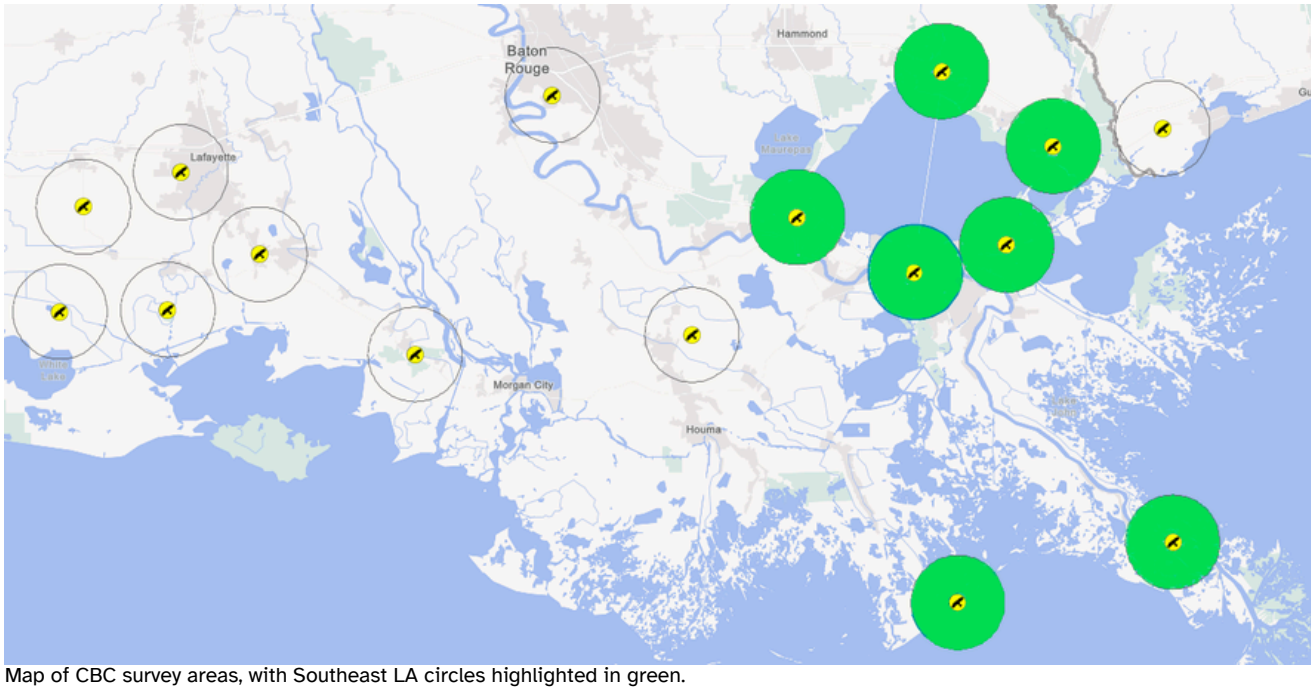
Information about registration and dinner orders will be available in early November on the LOS website, www.losbird.org. Please join us as we explore the natural wonders Lake Pontchartrain's surroundings have to offer.

Audubon's 127th Christmas Bird Count

The 127th Christmas Bird Count will be held from December 14th, 2026 to January 5th, 2027! if you are interested in joining a count near you, please contact the count compiler to participate.

Christmas Bird Counts in Southeast Louisiana:

Slidell CBC - Saturday, December 19th : *Compiler* - Wendy Rihner, wrihner@gmail.com, 330-348-3810
Grand Isle CBC - Tuesday, December 22nd : *Compiler* - Chris Brantley, chrisbrantley@charter.net
Reserve-Bonnet Carré Spillway CBC - Saturday, December 26th: *Compiler* - Chris Brantley, chrisbrantley@charter.net
New Orleans CBC - Sunday, December 27th: *Compiler- Shae Freeman,* 23joules@gmail.com
St. Tammany Parish CBC - Tuesday, December 29th : *Compiler* - Chris Brantley, chrisbrantley@charter.net
Venice CBC - Wednesday, December 30th: *Compiler* - John Nelson, johnnygnelsoniv@gmail.com
Crescent City CBC - Sunday, January 3rd: *Compiler* - Shae Freeman, 23joules@gmail.com



Map of CBC survey areas, with Southeast LA circles highlighted in green.

Reflecting on Orleans Audubon's Accomplishments of 2026

By Dr. Jennifer Coulson

The end of 2026 presents an opportunity to look back on this year and sing OAS's praises. Please imagine a chorus of Wood Thrushes proclaiming their nesting territories on the Fischer Wildlife Sanctuary as you read this report about OAS's many accomplishments. We have so many worthwhile projects happening now!

OAS's dedicated leadership consists of four officers and 12 directors. I most sincerely thank my co-leaders: officers Chloe St. Germain-Vermillion, Mary Joe Krieger and Sherry DeFrancesch, and directors Byron Almquist, Marcie Blanchard, Joan Garvey, Donata Henry, David Muth, John Nelson, Glenn Ousset, Charlie Pfeifer, Wendy Rihner, Mike Tifft, Andrew Wilson, and Peter Yaukey. In 2026 we honored our past leader, Joelle Finley, with a memorial bench in Couturie Forest and the initiation of the Joelle Finley Memorial Education Fund.

Our membership is growing thanks to the fun and welcoming things Joan Garvey does for our members. Hospitality at meetings is delicious, and the new Limpkin and American Avocet membership prints are stunningly beautiful. Editor Chloe St. Germain-Vermillion produced four issues of The Ibis newsletter, with content ranging from events and birding festivals to avian research and monitoring to environmental legal battles. The Ibis was distributed to OAS's 2,465 members and supporters.

OAS now offers lectures and events in two locations: New Orleans and Abita Springs. Thanks to Program Chair, Dr. Donata Henry, OAS held nine program meetings and socials. Donata also is the Director of the Abita Bird Club, an OAS affiliate, and she organized six program talks in Abita Springs in 2026 thus far. Our speakers all did a wonderful job, and OAS is especially grateful to all of them: Dr. Agnieszka Czeblakow, Ben Henry, Donata Henry, Becky Hill, Doug Hill, Glenn Kincaid, David Muth, Jane Patterson, Jed Pitre, and Kiara Valentine. David's talk "Fifty Years of Change in Louisiana's Birdlife" was OAS's most popular to date: more than 100 folks attended!

Thanks to Field Trip Chair John Nelson, OAS offered 16 birding field trips in 2026! OAS thanks our many birding trip leaders this year, including: Marcie Blanchard, Chris Brantley, Shae Freeman, Ken Harris, John Keegan, Becky Larkins, Holly Morales, John Nelson, Glenn Ousset, Liz Sigler, Helen Sierminski, Chloe St. Germain-Vermillion, and Dr. Peter Yaukey.

Education Chair Wendy Rihner spearheaded OAS's Environmental Education program, giving talks to Xavier University biology students, Wild Ones, Urban Conservancy and the Sierra Club. OAS also participated in the Bartram Bio Bash and has two upcoming events with Woodlands Conservancy. In April I gave a presentation to the Louisiana Master Naturalists of Greater New Orleans on Swallow-tailed Kite Movement Ecology. I am also speaking about raptors to Tulane's Vertebrate Biology class in November. In addition, Dr. Peter Yaukey offered two of his popular virtual birding course series, with 36 participants.

The Native Plants for Birds campaign had an active year. Wendy grew an incredible number of plants and held native plant sales at a variety of locations: Destrehan Plantation's Spring Garden and Pet Show; Big Bass Fishing Rodeo, City Park; Northshore Garden and Plant Sale, St. Tammany Parish Fairgrounds; OAS meetings, and elsewhere. Common Yarrow was one of the most popular natives. It sold out quickly this because its flat-topped bloom, called a corymb, makes for a safe landing for many different species of pollinators, and also because herbalists like Yarrow for its medicinal properties.

Seven New Orleans area 2026 Christmas Bird Counts will be happening soon. CBC compilers Shae Freeman, Chris Brantley, John Nelson and Wendy Rihner, as well as the birders who plan to participate.

Sanctuary Chair David Muth and John Nelson are administering a grant from the Barataria Terrebonne National Estuary Program (BTNEP) to rebuild and extend the boardwalk at the Marguerite Moffett Audubon Sanctuary in Terrebonne Parish. Beginning in October, a Bald Eagle has been perching on one of the newly restored nest platforms at the sanctuary!

OAS's youth scholarship program is really making an impact! Thanks to donations from our members to the Joelle Finley Memorial Education Fund and a matching grant from the McDaniel Charitable Foundation, we were able to expand the youth scholarships program in 2026. These experiences are inspirational and life changing. OAS sent Ezra and Oliver Garber to an ornithology and birding camp in southeast Arizona and sponsored the Minden High School Nature Club led by John Dillon. Also of note, one of last year's scholarship recipients, Juniper Falterman, who was a 2025 delegate at the Washington Youth Summit on the Environment, served as an intern for the program in 2026.

Swallow-tailed Kite research, monitoring and conservation work continued in the Barataria-Terrebonne and Pearl River basins. Kite work in the BTNEP area included aerial and ground surveys to locate roosts and nests and tracking of an adult. In February I presented the project's findings at the BTNEP Management Conference at the new Coastal Center on Nicholls campus.

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant to study kite use of working forests in the Pearl River basin concluded in October with the submission of the final report. International Paper and OAS initiated a partnership with the Molpus Woodlands Group. The enthusiasm of the Molpus staff for the kite project as well as their commitment to sustainable forestry are going to have big implications for bird conservation. Molpus manages nearly 2 million acres of timberlands in the U.S.! OAS began survey work on Molpus properties in Mississippi, Louisiana and Texas.

In October I presented an oral paper "Swallow-tailed Kite breeding home range characteristics: size, composition, and forest management" at the Raptor Research Foundation conference in Duluth, Minnesota. My co-authors are researchers from the Avian Research and Conservation Institute, EDM International, and International Paper.

Updates from Minden High School Nature Club

By John Dillon

Dear OAS members,

Thank you so much for your support of the Minden High School Nature Club! Donations like yours are the only way the Nature Club can continue to grow and operate each year.

This is the 20th anniversary of the Nature Club, and I can't believe it! In twenty years, we've had hundreds of student members, gone on tons of field trips in four states, been in "Birding Magazine," been interviewed on a natural history podcast, conducted several annual Big Day fundraisers, visited several NWRs and state parks and museums and zoos in Louisiana and Arkansas and Texas, and the kids have learned a LOT!



Minden High School currently has about 650 students, about 50 of whom are Nature Club members. We started this year with our annual Back-to-school pizza party and night hike, and the kids got to be entertained by some very vocal Barred Owls, and we celebrated with some special 20th anniversary cake. Then we celebrated National Astronomy Day at a Star Party hosted by the Shreveport-Bossier Astronomical Society. In a couple weeks, we'll take some kids to Hot Springs National Park and the Ouachita Mountains for four days of hiking and Halloween in downtown Hot Springs. In November, we return to Arkansas for our annual trip to beautiful Petit Jean State Park for hiking, rock climbing, horseback riding, a trip to the local rock shop, and more.

In January, local birder Dr. Charlie Lyon will take several club members onto Cross Lake to observe the large flocks of roosting gulls. February will be another outing with legendary Master Falconer Francie Forrester and her Harris's Hawks. Then, it's a four-day trip to Lafayette to visit the National Wetlands Research Center, indoor rock climbing, a special trip to see some endangered five-foot tall white birds, and banding some really tiny hummingbirds with Dr. Erik Johnson. In April, we'll make a trip to a Kisatchie National Forest district near Natchitoches to meet up with herpetologist Brad Glorioso to look for snakes, salamanders, lizards, and other creepy crawlers. And we'll round out this special year with an outing with the members of the LA Tech Wildlife Society so my kids can play with "big kids!"

Hopefully, this gives you a better understanding of our need for donations like yours. The club covers all transportation costs, all lodging costs, all costs of tickets to museums, shows, etc., all chaperone costs, and on some trips, the cost of food. If students had to pay their own way, it would cost on average about $400 to $450 per student for each four-day trip. With your donations, for a four-day trip, we charge on average $50 per student and they bring money for their food, and that's it. Minden High is a Title I school, and many club members qualify for free or reduced lunch. For some of them, school clubs or athletics provide the only travel they ever get. THANK YOU for helping to make that happen!!

Maguerite Moffett Sanctuary to Re-open Soon

By David Muth

Few members may realize that OAS owns and manages the 108 acre Marguerite Moffett Sanctuary in Terrebonne Parish, along Bayou Petite Caillou, between Chauvin and Cocodrie. It was donated to us in 2003 by the Marcel Family, and named in honor of their beloved aunt. The habitat is primarily open shallow estuarine water bordered by brackish marsh. Nesting birds include Clapper Rail, Least Bittern, Bald Eagle and Seaside Sparrow.

In 2009 OAS completed a 625' boardwalk and observation deck, primarily with a grant from the Louisiana Recreational Trails Program financed by the Federal Highway Administration. It became a stop on America's Wetland Birding Trail and an EBird Hotspot, providing access to estuarine wetlands in a part of the state with few places where visiting birders and nature lovers can leave the shoulder of the road without a boat. We placed nesting poles, one of which was occupied by a pair of eagles, in view of the boardwalk.

On August 29, 2021, Hurricane Ida swept away much of the boardwalk decking, and the nesting poles.

We are excited to announce that we have completed the first phase of a rebuilding project, funded in large part by an EPA grant through the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program, a partner with OAS from the beginning. Instead of treated wooden boards, which deteriorate when exposed to the elements, the rebuild utilizes open mesh composite decking, which won't rot and is more resistant to sunlight and storm surge. Over 600 feet of boardwalk, a raised observation platform, a new dock, and two nesting poles are complete.

The next phase will be to add railings, interpretive waysides, improved parking, landscaping of the parking area and highway signage.

Shoreline Services LLC (John Freeman) completed the rebuild. OAS is entering into an agreement with our neighbors, the Price family, who run a live bait business next door, to provide a set of eyes on the resource and help with ongoing maintenance of the boardwalk and parking area.

Boardwalk condition in July of 2026 versus boardwalk progress as of October 2026:






The SE Louisiana Chapter of the

National Audubon Society

Orleans Audubon Society

3623 Nashville Avenue

New Orleans, LA 70125

Non-Profit Org.

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New Orleans, LA

Permit No. 1435

Giving Tuesday: OAS's Year-end Fundraiser

On GivingTuesday, December 1, 2026, the whole world comes together to give back in many ways: through gifts of time, talent, or treasure. GivingTuesday was created in 2012 as a simple idea: A day that encourages people to do good. Over 14 years, this idea has grown into a global movement that inspires millions of people to donate, volunteer, and spread awareness. GivingTuesday is an opportunity for people around the world to use their individual power of generosity to support their local communities. OAS needs your support to continue our education and conservation work. With your help we can expand the wild bird rescue and transport network and offer more youth scholarships and conservation training opportunities. Your donations will also help the Native Plants for Birds campaign reach more folks and will be used to landscape around the parking area with native plants at the Marguerite Moffett Audubon Sanctuary.

Ways to Donate:

To donate online, you can use either OAS's **PayPal** or **Zeffy** account. Using OAS's new Zeffy campaign link, you can select a donation amount or specify your own. Zeffy covers all transaction fees so OAS received 100% of your donation. During check-out, Zeffy will request an additional payment to cover transaction fees but this is optional, and you can specify a lower amount if you wish to help Zeffy. Both PayPal and Zeffy can be accessed here: https://jjaudubon.net/donate/.

You can also access the Zeffy campaign by scanning this QR code with your phone's camera:

Make **checks** payable to the Orleans Audubon Society and mail to: Orleans Audubon Society, Attn: Mary Joe Krieger, Treasurer, 3623 Nashville Avenue, New Orleans, LA 70125