

Birding at Burden and Beyond

By Emma Penegy

I'll let you in on a little secret: I am not a bird expert. I know almost nothing about birds, aside from the fact that they are pretty, can fly and seem to view my Honda Civic as a target in some sort of sick game involving fecal matter. Birds: 1 Emma: 0.

However, upon being tasked with writing this article by our master procrastinator of a leader, Jeff Kuehny, I quickly launched into research mode, intent on becoming an avian expert. While I may have fallen short of that goal, I hope this article will be at least somewhat entertaining while providing an accurate summary of both the Audubon Christmas Bird Count as well as how you can make your garden more appealing to our avian friends.

This year's Christmas Bird Count, America's longest-running community science bird project, yielded remarkable results! The count, which was conducted on Jan. 2, detected the third highest species count on record for Baton Rouge! Based on lists compiled by Audubon's Katie Percy, participants detected 147 species in the Baton Rouge count circle. The highest count ever recorded was in 1998, when 151 species were reported.

Multiple rare birds were recorded in record high numbers for our area, including five brown pelicans, 24 Vaux's swifts, eight common gallinules, four vermilion flycatchers, three indigo buntings, three American redstarts and three ash-throated flycatchers. Other rare species that were spotted in our areas in non-record-breaking quantities include three calliope hummingbirds, one painted bunting, one black-and-white warbler, one greater scaup and one Baltimore oriole.

Additionally, high count records were also noted in multiple common species, including 1,269 black-bellied whistling ducks (nearly three times last year's quantity), 199 hooded mergansers, 236 downy woodpeckers and 488 white-winged doves (somewhere, Stevie Nicks is jumping for joy). Additionally, while not a record high, it is worth noting that the rufous hummingbird was back to double digits for the first time in four years. Welcome back, buddy! For a complete list of species found in our area, visit the Audubon website at <https://bit.ly/BirdCount2021>.



Blue jay

The LSU AgCenter Botanic Gardens at Burden was an integral part of the Christmas Bird Count, with over 55 species and almost 700 individual specimens spotted at our facility alone! Among them were 34 northern cardinals, 38 American robins, 59 Carolina chickadees, 21 blue jays, seven turkey vultures and one barred owl (whooo dat)!

With so many unique species calling Baton Rouge home, now is the perfect time to transform your garden into a haven for birds of all varieties. Hummingbirds are particularly attracted to red, tubular flowers with high nectar content, including pineapple sage, red hot pokers and coral honeysuckle. During springtime, feeders can be placed in a shady area and filled with a mixture of one part cane sugar dissolved in four parts boiling water. Maybe this goes without saying, but please wait until the mixture cools before putting it in your feeders! Blue jays, another bird common to our area, feed on trees like pine, paper mulberry, holly and flowering dogwood, as well as plants like sunflower, blackberry and dewberry. Red-headed woodpeckers love oak, Southern magnolia and roses. The boldly colored scarlet tanager feeds on blackberries and dewberries as well, in addition to grape and red mulberry. If you prefer a less hands-on approach, consider installing a feeding station or bird bath. These are simple yet effective additions to your garden that will be appreciated by a variety of wild bird species. For more information on how to attract birds to your

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Reflections From the Chair

Leigh Harris

Chair, Friends of LSU AgCenter Botanic Gardens

Dear Friends,

Change — it’s inevitable. Some change is welcomed, wholeheartedly even. As winter turns to spring and we watch the LSU AgCenter Botanic Gardens at Burden change and burst into greener and brighter colors, we celebrate the excitement that seasonal change brings. Our own gardens begin urging those of us who spend time there to come outside and play in the dirt. It’s a lovely change we always welcome.

Other change can be less welcoming. We don’t always appreciate adjusting our comfort to learn new computer skills or to make adjustments for lifestyle or health restrictions, for example. Such changes can be annoying or uncomfortable.

In the new year, the Friends of the LSU AgCenter Botanic Gardens board of directors embraced change heartily with the addition of five new member directors. They are Dr. Elmo Dean, Ramona Hill, Reneé Major, John Hough and Camm Morton. Each of these individuals brings skills and interests that will enhance the projects and activities of the Botanic Gardens into the future. They range from expertise in particular plant species to a history of service in various garden areas and programs. They have a simple love of the property and a desire to support communication and outreach to the community. To each of them, we say, “Congratulations and welcome.”

At the same time, in January we bid farewell to our outgoing board members, with most having served two terms in various leadership positions. Their contributions have meant so much over past years. Leo Broders, Julie McCarthy, Kathleen Meares, Cynthia Nobles, Richard Oliver and Mary Tauzin contributed their talents, leadership skills, time and energetic willingness to serve in so many capacities. Though no longer board members, these folks continue supporting and participating in Friends activities. To them, we say, “Thank you for sharing your gifts with the Friends.”

To all Friends members, thank you for sharing your gifts with the Botanic Gardens through your support for the programs and fundraising activities that benefit this special place in the heart of the city.

If you’re not a member of the Friends of the Gardens, won’t you consider joining? I can promise you many opportunities to learn a lot, work hard (should you choose to do so) and have a lot of fun! You’ll meet new likeminded friends as well.

I hope to see you in the Gardens as we welcome spring 2022!

Leigh Harris

If you would like to only receive this newsletter electronically, please email: friends@burdengardens.com.

Friends of LSU AgCenter Botanic Gardens at Burden

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The newsletter is a quarterly publication of the Friends of LSU AgCenter Botanic Gardens at Burden, which is part of Burden Museum & Gardens.

LSUAgCenter.com/BotanicGardens

4560 Essen Lane

Baton Rouge, LA 70809

Louisiana Can Solve Its Litter and Flooding Problems Stormwater Management Is the Solution

By Jeff Kuehny

Almost one year ago, Marie Constantin called to schedule a tour of our wetlands. She had heard that there were over 81 tons of litter that had accumulated in the borrow pit and wetlands at Burden Museum & Gardens and was curious as to how this had happened and what was being done about it. Constantin had embarked on a mission to clean up the Capitol Lakes next to the Louisiana Capitol and the Spanish Town neighborhood where she resides. As she began to recruit volunteers and visit other concerned citizens, she soon became aware of many other locations in East Baton Rouge Parish watersheds with similar issues that have long been ignored.

Litter, trash, solid waste, organics, sediments — or whatever one decides to call them — have been accumulating in our parish's watersheds for years. What used to be metal cans and glass bottles, or what Constantin calls our grandfathers' litter, has changed to plastic bottles, aluminum cans and plastic foam, what is classified today as single use items. Single use items continue to increase exponentially as society continues to increase purchases of single use products that do not decompose readily and are not recyclable.

Another significant reason for this accumulation of litter in our watersheds is that the state of Louisiana has one of the highest annual average rainfalls of any state, approximately 60 inches per year. Stormwater carries the litter that accumulates on our streets into storm drains that empty into our canals, creeks, bayous, lakes and wetlands. It collects in all these parts of our watersheds or continues to be carried downstream. Downstream of East Baton Rouge Parish, the stormwater flows primarily to Bayou Manchac to the Amite River to Lake Ponchartrain to the Mississippi River and, finally, to the Gulf of Mexico. This litter is not



Over 81 tons of garbage have accumulated in the wetland of Burden Museum and Gardens.

only unsightly, but it also contributes to the peril of the ecology of our watersheds and oceans, increases flood risks by plugging the storm drains, creates litter dams at the outfalls of the storm drains, and decreases the permeability of the retention basins that help absorb stormwater during and after a storm event.

Constantin visited some of the stormwater management experts in

Florida, which has a similar amount of rainfall. She found that 34 years ago Florida created a funding source to reduce litter in their watersheds (lakes, bayous and wetlands) by declaring stormwater a utility. The goal was to reduce litter by 50% and protect tourism, one of their primary economic engines. This legislative act (FSA 403.0893) set them on a two-pronged approach to manage litter by keeping it

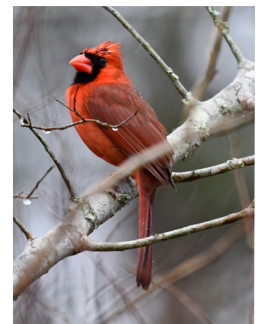
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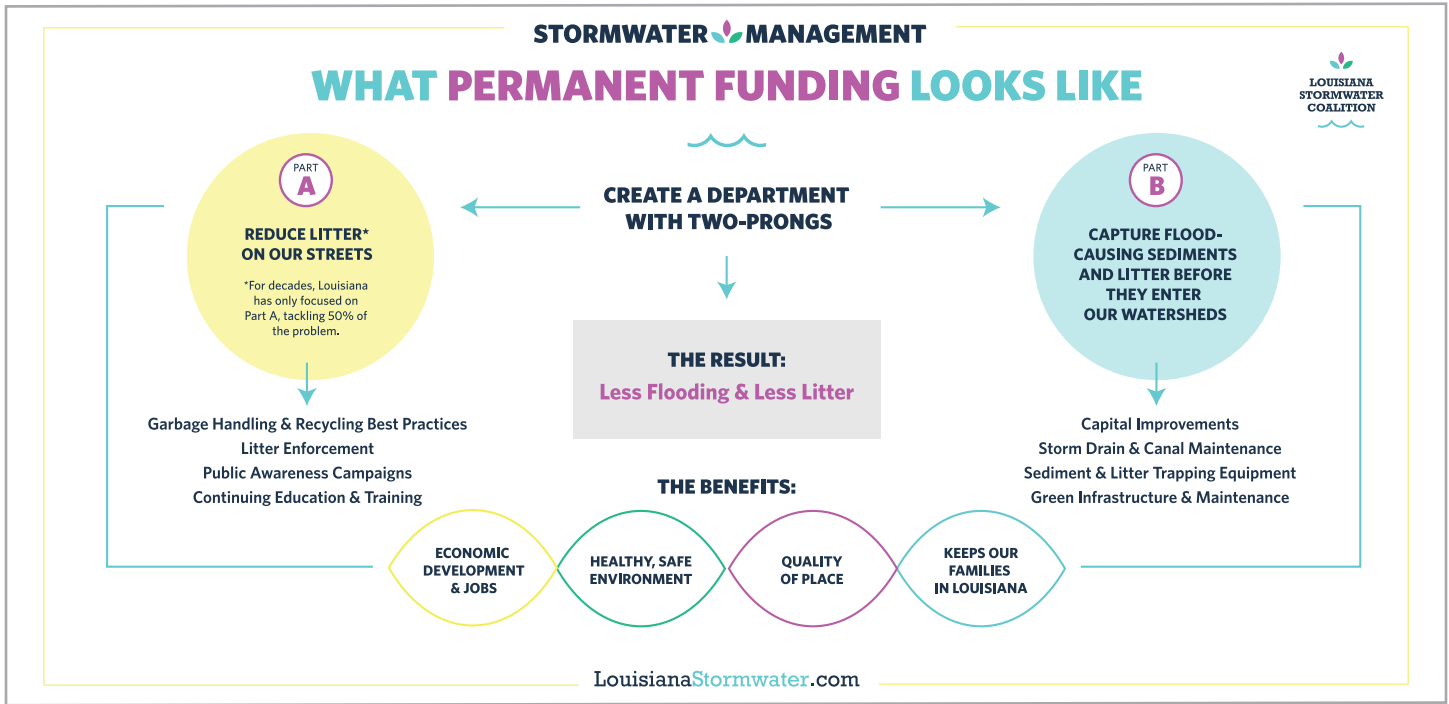
yard, "Attracting Birds to Southern Gardens" by Pope, Odenwald and Fryling is an excellent resource.

Although the excitement of the Christmas Bird Count has ended, there are still plenty of opportunities to spot rare birds right here in Baton Rouge! With over 3 miles of trails, the Botanic Gardens at Burden is a great place to put your birding skills to the test! We have a birding pamphlet available in the Ione Burden Conference Center or online at <https://bit.ly/BirdingPamphlet>. Additionally, we are proud to host Birding at Burden, a guided bird walk suitable for beginner and advanced bird nerds alike! There

is always something new to discover on one of our six birding loops, which range from 0.7 to 3.4 miles in length. To sign up for a guided bird tour, visit <https://bit.ly/BirdingMarch2022>. All you need to bring is your hiking boots, your binoculars and your sense of adventure. See you on the trails!



Northern cardinal



off the streets and out of the watersheds.

Fast forward to today and over 185 Florida communities have stormwater management programs. Tourism flourishes, their streets and watersheds are nearly litter-free and we now have a 34-year-old case study on what works.

But there is more to the story. There was an unintended consequence. What began as litter reduction turned into programs that prevent flooding. That's because the programs that funded the sediment and litter-grabbing equipment also worked to reduce flooding. Today when stormwater programs come online, communities across the country now call them flooding and water quality programs.

The unfortunate fact is that almost all of us — many times unknowingly — litter the streets through improper garbage handling or other means, and cities without stormwater programs almost exclusively litter watersheds. In effect, cities that don't treat stormwater are litterbugs.

Meanwhile, other cities across the U.S. implement and fund stormwater management programs that provide the equipment, dedicated personnel and public-private partnerships to remediate litter and flooding. These stormwater programs are funded by the citizens so that cities can properly manage and sustain stormwater management

programs. Furthermore, these cities are reaping the economic, environmental and quality of life benefits because they are clean, safe and don't flood. Louisiana is most often No. 1 in rainfall. If we don't strive to be No. 1 in stormwater management, we will continue to have flooding and litter issues.

After doing this research, Constantin decided that something must be done to clean up our city, parish and state. While leading volunteers to clean up the Capitol Lakes, she met Renee Verma and Kelly Hurtado, who were equally concerned with the issue of litter and flooding. Together, Constantin, Verma, Hurtado and I created the Louisiana Stormwater Coalition (LSC), an all-volunteer, grassroots group advocating for permanently funded stormwater management programs to help solve Louisiana's litter and flooding problems.

Since the inception of the LSC almost one year ago, this small but mighty coalition has made great headway in working with local and state governmental and nongovernmental organizations to move forward the solution

to litter and flooding — stormwater management.

A resolution to conduct a feasibility study to determine the potential for funding stormwater management in the state of Louisiana was unanimously passed in the 2021 legislative session. A litter-catching device, a litter boom, was installed in Bayou Fountain just above the kayak launch at Highland Road Park through a cooperative agreement between the BREC park system and the Baton Rouge Area Foundation. This paddle trail is now litter-free, enhancing the health of our community and the health of that ecosystem.

Mayor Sharon Weston Broom and her administration recently completed

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Governor John Bel Edwards announces the creation of a statewide taskforce on litter abatement and beautification.

Meet Bert, Our New Extension Agent

Albert Hammett, whom we all know as Bert, has recently been hired as the new assistant extension agent in the Agriculture and Natural Resources program for East Baton Rouge Parish. He began his position with the LSU AgCenter in January. Hammett is a native of Louisiana and has lived in many different areas throughout the state, most recently in Carencro.

Hammett enjoys all things outdoors but finds the most satisfaction in sharing his knowledge and experiences with new people. When not outdoors, you will find him studying new topics because he has a passion for research and continued education. He received his undergraduate degree from The Citadel, The Military College of South Carolina in Charleston, South Carolina. While there, he took part in and led many programs that helped build relationships between the college and the community. He later continued his education and earned a master's degree in biology from Mississippi College in Clinton, Mississippi. Before accepting the position as an extension agent, he worked with landscape services at the LSU AgCenter Botanic Gardens at Burden.

As an ANR extension agent, his focus will be horticulture. He is excited about building new relationships between the AgCenter and the people of East Baton Rouge Parish. He hopes to aid the community in their continued education with horticultural practices and provide support and encouragement to engage new individuals. Although he says he still has much to learn, he is excited and eager to help the East Baton Rouge Parish community answer all their horticultural questions and concerns.

Hammett can be reached via email at ahammett@agcenter.lsu.edu or by contacting the local parish office at 225-389-3055.



Bert Hammett, LSU AgCenter extension agent

Litter *continued from page 4*



Tons of aquatic trash accumulated on the Burden property.

a stormwater master plan for East Baton Rouge Parish and announced plans to develop a stormwater management program, which would be the first in our state!

On Jan. 18, Gov. Edwards, Lt. Gov. Nungesser, Mayor Broom and the executive director of Keep Louisiana Beautiful, Susan Russell, announced the formation of a task force on statewide litter abatement and beautification, which will work to find policy solutions for Louisiana's litter problem, educate the public and promote community litter abatement activities.

Most recently, we were notified that our proposal, "A Multi-Pronged Approach to Trash-Free Watersheds in Baton Rouge," was selected for funding by the Environmental Protection Agency Trash-Free Waters program. This grant was submitted in partnership with the LSU AgCenter Botanic Gardens, Southern University Ag Center, City of

Baton Rouge, Mississippi River Cities and Towns Initiative and Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality. The primary goals of this project are to:

- Reduce and prevent surface trash through engaging and empowering communities and businesses in economically challenged communities.
- Work with businesses and universities to implement water filling stations and replacement of unsustainable products.
- Implement demonstration sites for data collection, awareness and remediation of litter that does make its way into the watersheds through the use of innovative litter-trap systems or plastic pollution prevention and collection technology.

Why, you might ask, is all this important to Burden Museum & Gardens? Part of our mission is to conserve and demonstrate Louisiana's native landscapes and preserve the culture that evolves in response to these landscapes. Water has been and continues to be the common thread that binds together the history of our culture and how it develops as we adapt to the changes that occur in the landscape. Being part of the litter and flooding solution and being a location for research and learning about our history with water and how we continue to live with water makes Burden Museum & Gardens a valuable asset to our community and state. There are many more good projects and other organizations that are working toward the same goal, and I encourage you to support all these efforts for a healthy, safe and beautiful Sportsman's Paradise.

Please visit louisianastormwater.com for more information.

Campus Connections



Top: Members of the Alpha Tau Omega fraternity volunteered at Arbor Day. Above: Members of the Timber Tigers Society of American Foresters pose with Smokey Bear.



Arbor Day



LOUISIANA

Master Gardener™
An educational program of the LSU AgCenter

Master Gardener Plant Sale

March 26 | 8 a.m.-2 p.m.



LSU AgCenter Botanic Gardens
 128 Knapp Hall
 Baton Rouge, LA 70803

PHYSICAL LOCATION: 4560 Essen Lane, Baton Rouge, La. 70809 | 225-763-3990 | LSUAgCenter.com/BotanicGardens

Please check our website for up-to-date information on these events.

March 2022			
March 5	9 a.m.-Noon	StoryTime in the Garden	Storybook reading and imagination-themed activities for children ages 3 to 8. Free.
March 7	Noon-1 p.m.	Reflections in the Garden	Topic: "The Gardens of Rosedown Plantation" with Trish Aleshire, Rosedown Plantation's park manager.
March 26	8 a.m.-2 p.m.	Master Gardener Plant Sale	Shop from over 5,000 homegrown perennials and annuals specifically selected by the East Baton Rouge Master Gardeners for success in your garden!
March 26	7-9 a.m.	Birding at Burden	A guided tour led by different birding specialists through the birding loops at Burden. Admission is \$10. Capacity is limited to 15 guests. Register at Eventbrite.com.
April 2022			
April 2	9 a.m.-Noon	StoryTime in the Garden	Storybook reading and imagination-themed activities. Ages 3 to 8. Free.
April 4	Noon-1 p.m.	Reflections in the Garden	Topic: "Southern Arrangements for Your Eastertime Table" with James DelPrince, assistant professor, Coastal Research & Extension Center at MSU.
April 23	7-9 a.m.	Birding at Burden	A guided tour led by different birding specialists through the birding loops at Burden. Admission is \$10. Capacity is limited to 15 guests. Register at Eventbrite.com.
May 2022			
May 2	Noon-1 p.m.	Reflections in the Garden	Topic: "Botanical Garden Birds and a Spring Walk on the Burden Birding Loops" with Ashley Long, assistant wildlife ecology professor at LSU.
May 14	9 a.m.-Noon	StoryTime in the Garden	Storybook reading and imagination-themed activities. Ages 3 to 8. Free.
TBA	TBA	Go Public Gardens Days	An ongoing, evergreen initiative of the American Public Gardens Association meant to drive the public to visit, value and volunteer at public gardens in their area and when they travel.
May 21	7-9 a.m.	Birding at Burden	A guided tour led by different birding specialists through the birding loops at Burden. Admission is \$10. Capacity is limited to 15 guests. Register at Eventbrite.com.