

# Crab Lines

December 2017

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## Levron Retires, Fontenot and Landry Named New Management Conference Chair and Vice Chair

At the November BTNEP Management Conference (BTMC) meeting, Mr. Al Levron announced his retirement as Chairperson after serving many years. Dr. Quenton Fontenot and Ms. Jean Landry were elected as the new Chairperson and Vice Chairperson, respectively.



*Quenton Fontenot and Al Levron*

Dr. Quenton Fontenot, Head and Professor of Biological Sciences at Nicholls State University. Fontenot, has been a professor at Nicholls for over 17 years. He has been involved with the BTMC for the past 15 years. Ms. Jean Landry, Program Manager at The Nature Conservancy, has been involved with the BTMC for 16 years and has been with The Nature Conservancy for 17 years.

Levron has been involved with BTNEP since its inception. In 1986, as an ambitious young man, he recognized that it was possible to get the Barataria-Terrebonne area recognized as an estuary of national significance through Section 320 of the Clean Water Act. Levron remained actively engaged with the program throughout his career.

The BTMC, which originally convened in 1990 to develop the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP), has been the catalyst for producing open and frank discussions about some of the most critical coastal management issues of the nation for over 25 years. The BTMC's primary function is to encourage and oversee the implementation of the CCMP by coordinating and integrating the CCMP actions among agencies and stakeholders. In addition, the BTMC maintains an interchange with other similar federal, state and local planning efforts, and reviews and modifies the implementation of the CCMP as conditions change over time. Finally, the BTMC fosters and expands the use of participatory, voluntary and incentive-based approaches to decision-making in the estuary.

Over the years, the BTMC worked to build consensus in the development and implementation of the CCMP. Members of the BTMC have volunteered tens of thousands of hours determining the directions the journey must take to safeguard the estuary for future generations. Today, the BTMC meets quarterly to provide direction and oversight to the BTNEP program office as they implement the CCMP, a plan equally as vital today as it was when it was created.

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## Funds Received for Avian Monitoring

In October 2017, BTNEP entered into its third Inter-agency Agreement with Coastal Protection Restoration Authority (CPRA) entitled “Winter Shorebird and Benthic Surveys – Caminada Headland.” This agreement continues the long running work of BTNEP to collect data on the distribution and abundance of shorebirds and their use of the Caminada Headland. Beginning in the fall of 2012, even before the first agreement with CPRA was signed, BTNEP began an effort to document the numbers of Piping Plover, Wilson Plover, Snowy Plover, and Red Knots across the Caminada Headland between summer, through the winter period and into the following spring. At that time, the idea was to develop a baseline of data on the numbers and distribution of these birds along that stretch of beach. As the restoration of the Caminada Headland began, the focus of the survey efforts changed to look at the potential “takings” in the form of harassment of these birds. Now that the restoration project is complete across the entire 13 miles of the Caminada Headland, staff are continuing this work into the future to document the impacts to these birds of the restoration project itself. Once completed, the data will be statistically analyzed and a report developed to present the information gathered over that seven year period.

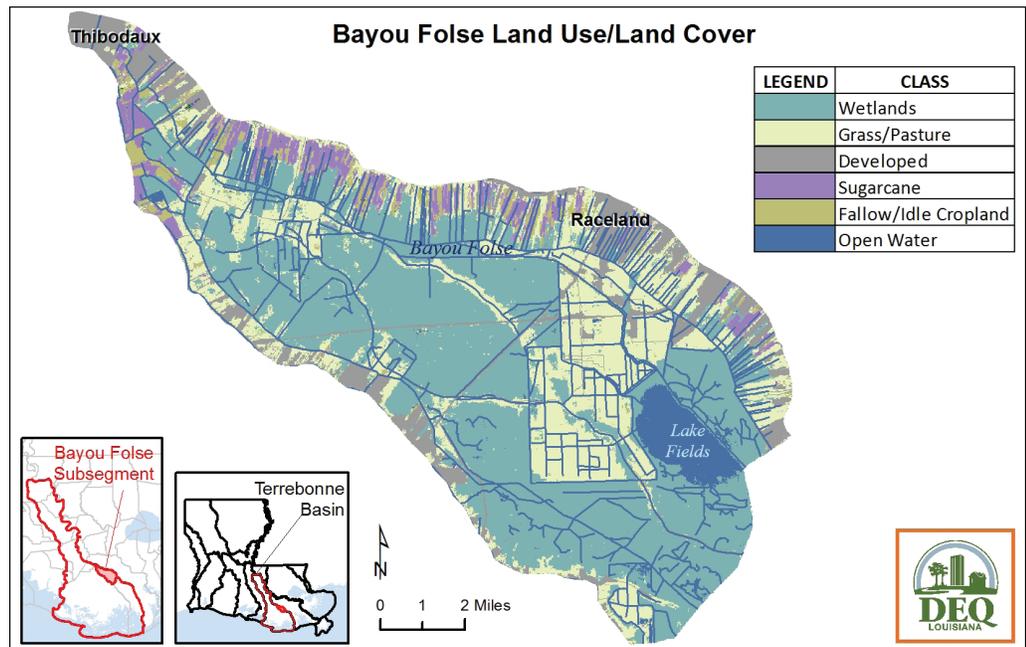


*Female Wilson's Plover*

## Water Quality Funding from GMP

Recently, the Barataria-Terrebonne Estuary Foundation (BTEF) received a grant from the Gulf of Mexico Program (GMP) for a home sewage assistance program in the Bayou Folse Watershed, located in the Barataria-Terrebonne Estuary System (BTES). Malfunctioning home sewage systems are a serious threat to Louisiana’s and the Gulf of Mexico’s waters. The project focuses on the repair of home sewage systems through a cost-share incentive and education program in the Bayou Folse Watershed of the BTES. The funds from the grant will be used as a cost incentive (50% of cost up to \$1000) to pay for repairing or replacing malfunctioning

“on site disposal systems (OSDS)” in targeted parts of the watershed. Targeted neighborhoods will be identified through the ongoing water quality sampling project being conducted by BTNEP and the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ). BTEF will also go to targeted neighborhoods, sign up residents for the volunteer program, and provide education on OSDS maintenance. The goal of the project is to provide water quality improvement to citizens living within the Bayou Folse watershed, which is located in Lafourche Parish. It is bordered on the north by the Bayou Lafourche ridge, on the south by the Bayou Blue ridge, and on the east by



Company Canal. The watershed is a mixture of row crop, pasture land, and urban and rural residential land use. The main drainage in the watershed flows through Bayou Folse. The headwaters of Bayou Folse begin in the City of Thibodaux on Nicholls State University campus. The bayou flows southeast through dog legs, highly hydrologically-modified waterways, and into Lake Fields. Lake Fields is a very popular waterbody for boating, camping, swimming, fishing, and hunting. Lake Fields is also experiencing water quality problems resulting from degraded water flowing into the lake from the upper watershed. The project is scheduled to begin in January 2018 and end in December 2019.

*Want to join our volunteer email list?  
Visit our website at <https://volunteer.btnep.org/join-us/>*

## Estuary Artworks Winners

BTNEP hosted its 4th Annual “Estuary Artworks” art contest in collaboration with National Estuaries Day in September 2017.

Students throughout the estuary were invited to draw their favorite Louisiana estuary scene and submit it for judging. Over 400 pieces of artwork were submitted from students who live within the estuary.

Division winners were selected and awarded gift cards to their favorite restaurant, and passes to any Audubon Nature Institute locations. This artwork is featured in the BTNEP 2018 Estuary Artworks calendar. Division winners were: Kindergarten – 2nd grade, Matthew Pierce (North Larose Elementary School), 3rd-5th grade, Cierra Smith (Lakewood Elementary School), 6th-8th, Caroline Dugas (St. Joseph Elementary School) and 9th-12th grade, Alexis Naquin (E. D. White Catholic High School).

Nine additional winners were selected and are also featured in the calendar. They also received passes to any Audubon Nature Institute locations. Those winners included: Sydney Zaner (E.D. White Catholic High School), Lexi St. Pierre (Golden Meadow Middle School), Clynest LeBouef, III (St. Joseph Elementary School), Natalie Angelette (E.D. White Catholic High School), Ella Luminais (St. Mary Nativity School), Anna Bell Diedrich (St. Joseph Elementary School), Alexis Becnel (E.D. White Catholic High School), Lexi Naquin (St. Joseph Elementary School), & Katie Himel (Chackbay Elementary School).

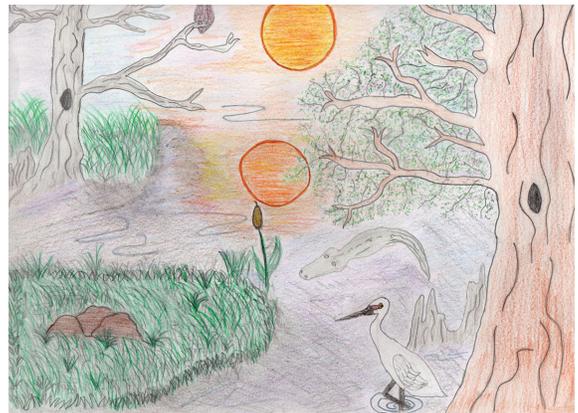
Four Honorable Mention drawings were selected and are featured on the back cover of the calendar. They also received passes to any Audubon Nature Institute locations. Honorable Mention winners included: Harley Bate (R.J. Vial Elementary School), Victoria Truxillo (E.D. White Catholic High School), Amalee Chiasson (Bayou Community Academy), and Emma Delaune (St. Joseph Elementary School).

BTNEP would like to thank its partners: The Purple Penguin Art Company, Audubon Nature Institute, local schools and teachers, and the Barataria-Terrebonne Estuary Foundation (BTEF).

The 2018 Estuary Artworks calendars are available at the BTNEP office. Stop by or call 985-447-0868 to get yours today!



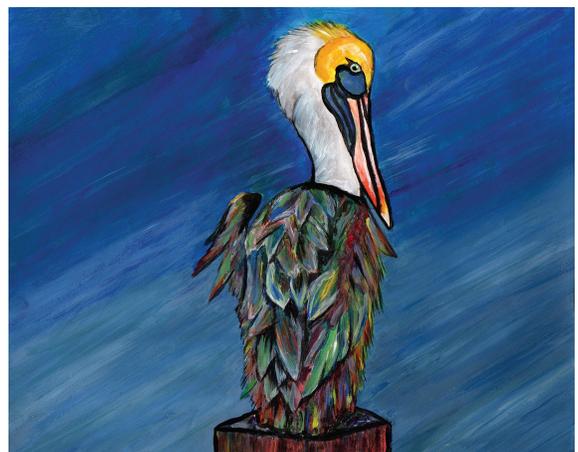
*Matthew Pierce - K-2nd Grade Division Winner*



*Cierra Smith - 3rd-5th Grade Division Winner*



*Caroline Dugas - 6th-8th Grade Division Winner*



*Alexis Naquin - 9th-12th Grade Division Winner*

## BTNEP Hosts 81st Management Conference Meeting

On Thursday, November 2, 2017, BTNEP hosted its 81st Management Conference Meeting at Nicholls State University. The meeting featured presentations given by BTNEP Director Susan Testroet-Bergeron, Curtis Walker, BTNEP Contractor, Lori Moshman of LSU, and Leslie Suazo, Coastal Restoration Coordinator for Ducks Unlimited/Conoco Phillips Partnership.

Testroet-Bergeron delivered an update on the BTNEP CCMP that is being revised. She stated that new actions plans have been developed. The revised CCMP will include BTNEP's mission, goals, 7 priority problems, habitats of BTNEP, Management Conference and why it is needed, maps, action plans, finance strategy, monitoring plan technical summary, and habitat protection and restoration strategy. She also reported that the revised document will be posted for two weeks for Management Conference review, and then 60 days for the public review. It will then go to EPA for their concurrence.

The agenda then moved on to selecting a new Management Conference Chairperson and Vice Chair after the retirement

announcement from Mr. Al Levron. Nominations were made for chairperson first, resulting in Dr. Quenton Fontenot's appointment. Ms. Jean Landry was then selected by consensus. Dr. Fontenot, at that point, took over in presiding over the meeting.

Presentations continued with Curtis Walker presenting on the Evaluation of Designed Microsite Use and Spatial Requirements for Focal Shorebirds: Utility Implementation of Automated VHF Telemetry Stations within the Lower BTNE. Walker focused on two species, Least Tern and Wilson's Plover, with the site location being the Exxon Fields – Energy 21 property. Lori Moshman gave a presentation focusing on the Evaluation of Crowding as a Management Strategy for Improving Giant Salvinia Biological Control Performance. Lastly, Leslie Suazo presented on the Terracing Program and Freshwater Enhancement Projects of Ducks Unlimited.

All presentations can be found on BTNEP's website at <https://btnep.org/about-btnep/management-conference/>.

### BTNEP Prothonotary Warbler Conservation and Monitoring 2017 Season Highlights



- ✓ Installed 70 new nest boxes within 3 new locations
- ✓ Recovered one geolocator previously equipped on a nesting female in 2016!
- ✓ Recorded 52 Prothonotary Warbler nest attempts within the nest boxes
- ✓ 153 Prothonotary Warbler live young were observed within the nest boxes
- ✓ Banded 141 Prothonotary Warblers



# Thibodaux's Christmas Bird Count – Citizen Science for the Birds



*Delaina LeBlanc, BTNEP  
Migratory Bird Coordinator,  
Contributing Writer*

Every year, about a dozen people meet up just before sunrise to search for and count all birds within a 7.5-mile radius that encompasses the area covered by the Thibodaux Christmas Bird Count (CBC). These groups of bird watchers are assigned areas that include different habitats such as wooded swamp, deciduous forest, sugar cane fields, grasslands, a lake, ponds and residential areas. While these bird watchers are on the ground recording what they hear and see in their assigned areas, there are other participants serving as feeder watchers to document birds in their back yards. At the end of the day, everyone is invited to meet up to go over a bird checklist to get a preliminary count of all species that were observed that day. After reading a list of expected birds that might be sighted, participants report any unexpected or rare birds that were encountered.

## ***How did the Christmas Bird Count start?***

In the 19th century, there was a Christmas Day tradition called a “Side Hunt” that included teams of hunters that would compete to see which side would have the biggest pile of prey (both furry and feathered). Ornithologist, Frank M. Chapman, proposed a bird census rather than a hunt in 1900, launching the Christmas Bird Count. That first year, 25 counts were carried out with the majority held in New England towns. Louisiana was the only southern state represented with a census that took place in Baldwin, a town that borders Bayou Teche in St. Mary Parish. This year represents Audubon’s 118th Christmas Bird Count and Thibodaux is one of 118 circles that are being conducted in North and South America.

## ***Why count birds?***

A decline in bird populations was a motivating factor from the very first Christmas Bird Count. That trend continues to the present day and in 2016, the first ever comprehensive report on bird populations in the United States showed that one third of U.S. birds are declining as a result of habitat loss, invasive species and other threats. The report from the North American Bird Conservation Initiative, “State of the Birds,” also highlighted instances where conservation efforts have worked to reverse decline for some species. Historically, bird censuses such as the CBC and Breeding Bird Surveys (BBS) give scientists a window into changes in bird populations over time. Birds are important indicators of environmental quality, much like the proverbial canary in

a coal mine. Studying birds can help monitor the effects of pollution, disease outbreaks and changes in biodiversity on bird populations. Birds also benefit humans in a variety of ways, including controlling insect populations, dispersing seeds, and pollinating plants. In addition, bird watching has been shown to boost mental alertness and lower stress.

## ***What do I need to do to participate in this year’s Thibodaux Christmas Bird Count?***

This event relies on the dedication and commitment of volunteers. All are welcome to participate! Thibodaux’s 2017 Christmas Bird Count takes place from sunrise to sunset on Saturday, December 30th. Anyone that wishes to contribute to the effort must contact BTNEP. For those who are beginners, you will be matched up with at least one other experienced birdwatcher. Anyone wanting to count birds in their back yards will need to make sure their home falls within the parameters of the CBC circle.

For more information about the Thibodaux Christmas Bird Count or if you wish to participate, please contact Delaina LeBlanc at [delaina@btnep.org](mailto:delaina@btnep.org)



*Photo Credit: Neil Clark  
Top left going clockwise: Common Yellowthroat,  
Red-bellied Woodpecker, and Ruby-crowned  
Kinglet*



*Photo Credit: Dr. Gary LeFleur  
Past Thibodaux Bird Count Participants*

## Students from Two Out-of-State Universities Scheduled to Volunteer with BTNEP in Beginning of 2018

The University of Buffalo's Alternative Breaks Program will be visiting Louisiana and volunteering with BTNEP for the week of January 22 through January 26. This is a group that comes down from Buffalo, NY, to volunteer with BTNEP annually for a unique coastal education and stewardship opportunity. During their visit, students will get a hands on education of coastal issues and habitat restoration in Louisiana. Two to three days will be spent planting native Louisiana trees and plants to improve habitat in coastal Louisiana.

The University of Missouri's Alternative Breaks Program will be visiting Louisiana and volunteering with BTNEP for the week of March 26 through March 30. From Columbia, Missouri, this will be an inaugural and hopefully annual coastal stewardship opportunity for the University of Missouri. During their visit, they will get to learn about a variety of coastal issues and habitat restoration in Louisiana. Two to three days will be spent planting native Louisiana trees and plants to improve habitat in coastal Louisiana.



*University of Buffalo visited this year as part of their annual coastal restoration volunteer effort.*

### *Upcoming Management Conference Meetings:*

*February 1, 2018*

*May 3, 2018*

*August 2, 2018*

*November 1, 2018*

*All meetings begin at 9:30 AM and are tentatively scheduled to be held on the NSU campus.*

## **BTNEP and the Minnesota Department of Ag Under Agreement**

BTNEP and the Minnesota Department of Agriculture now have a formal Letter of Understanding recognizing the importance of coordinating pollution-prevention efforts throughout the Mississippi River watershed, locally in Minnesota and in distant downstream areas including the receiving waters of the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary and the Gulf of Mexico.

The Letter of Understanding recognizes that pollution does not stop at state boundaries and that a multi-state perspective should be considered when addressing pollution problems. In addition to the expanded eligibility options and guidance, the understanding establishes regular reporting and communications between the two organizations.

The memorandum expands the Agricultural Best Management Practices, better known as AgBMPs. It also provides low-interest loans for projects that help prevent pollution are being expanded by Minnesota to include larger livestock operations. Livestock operations holding National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits or those with more than 1,000 animal units, can now apply for the loans.