Winged wanderers wintering in Louisiana keep local birdwatchers busy

By JUDY BERGERSON

No matter where you look, there’s a bird to catch your eye. It’s a birdwatcher’s paradise, and the state of Louisiana definitely has its share of birds. But what do you do if you’re new to the scene? Here are some tips on how to get started.

1. Start with the Basics: Before you start birdwatching, make sure you have the basic equipment. You’ll need a good pair of binoculars and a field guide. You can buy these at most sporting goods stores or online.

2. Take a Walk: Louisiana is home to a variety of habitats, from coastlines to swamps to forests. Take a walk in one of these areas and see what birds you can spot. Look for signs of migration, such as flocks of birds flying in the sky.

3. Join a Group: Joining a birdwatching group can be a great way to learn more about birds. Many local organizations sponsor bird walks and workshops. You can also join national groups like the American Ornithologists’ Union.

4. Keep It Simple: Don’t get discouraged if you don’t see many birds at first. Simply enjoy the experience and learn as you go. Over time, you’ll start to notice patterns and characteristics of different species.

5. Be Patient: Birdwatching can be a patience game. Sometimes you have to wait for hours to see a particular species. But the wait is worth it when you finally spot that bird you’ve been waiting for.

6. Stay Safe: Always be aware of your surroundings when birdwatching. Be careful of your footing in marshy areas and watch out for insects, especially when birdwatching in the fall.

7. Learn About the Birds: Take the time to learn about the birds you see. Look up their habitats, diets, and migration patterns. This will help you better appreciate them and their behaviors.

8. Share Your Experience: Don’t be afraid to share your passion for birdwatching with others. You never know who might be inspired by your stories.

9. Take Pictures: Photography is a great way to document your birdwatching trips. You can share your photos on social media or use them for educational purposes.

10. Continue Learning: Birdwatching is a never-ending learning experience. Always be on the lookout for new species and new information.

By following these tips, you’ll be well on your way to becoming a birdwatcher. Happy birdwatching!

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**Upcoming Events**

- **March National Wildlife Refuge** in African at 4:30 p.m. This event will offer a guided tour of the refuge’s birding trails.
- **April Louisiana Birding Festival** at 9 a.m. This festival will feature a variety of birding activities and educational workshops.
- **May Louisiana Wildlife Festival** at 10 a.m. This festival will feature birding activities, music, and food.

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**Birds of Louisiana**

- **Scarlet Tanager**
- **Great American Egret**
- **Hooded Warbler**
- **Tricolored Heron**
- **Long-billed Curlew**
- **Magnificent Frigatebird**
- **Bonneted Plover**

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**Birdwatching Tips**

- **Use binoculars**
- **Learn bird songs**
- **Observe the environment**
- **Stay patient**
- **Stay safe**
- **Learn about the birds**
- **Share your experience**
- **Take pictures**
- **Continue learning**