



Prothonotary Warbler Conservation & Monitoring

Project Status

Project Year: 2016-Present **Status:** Ongoing

Category: Migratory Bird

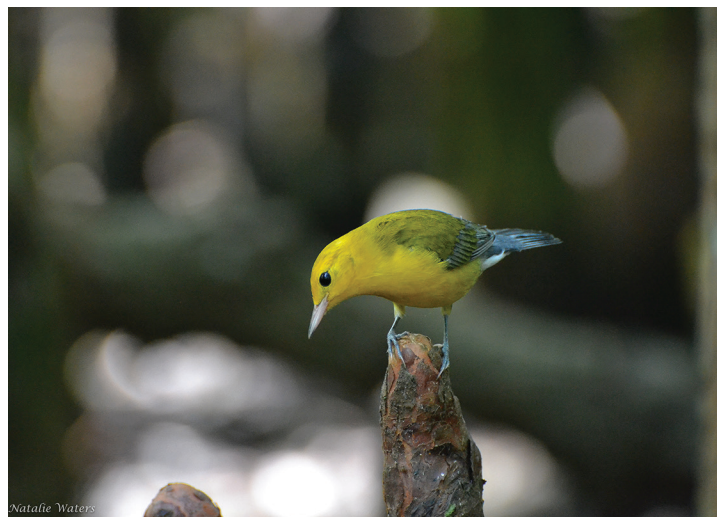
Location: Brownell Memorial Park, Morgan City, LA, Lake Palourde/Avoca Island Cutoff Canal, Morgan City, LA, Mandalay National Wildlife Refuge, Houma, LA, Lockport Elevated Boardwalk, Lockport, LA

Project Partners: Audubon Louisiana, Prothonotary Warbler Working Group, Brownell Memorial Park, Morgan City Department of Recreation & Tourism, Mandalay National Wildlife Refuge, Department of Justice, Wetland Tour and Guide Service, Barataria-Terrebonne Estuary Foundation, Lafourche Parish Parks and Recreation

Background and Problem Addressed:

The Prothonotary Warbler is a striking bird to see, its brilliant yellow plumage shines amid the trees, where its sweet song penetrates through the wooded swamps and bottomland hardwood forests that it favors. This Nearctic-Neotropical songbird breeds throughout the eastern United States and southeastern Canada. It is unique among warblers as it is one of only two species of warblers that nest in cavities. Its wintering grounds are located in Central America and northern South America primarily in coastal mangroves and swamps. The species prefers wetland habitat in both its summer and winter range, and its extreme habitat specificity make Prothonotary Warblers a well-suited indicator species of wetland habitat quality.

The Prothonotary Warbler is an iconic swamp and bottomland hardwood forest bird species that is included on the list of Birds of Conservation Concern. The species population has declined by 42% between 1966 and 2014. Louisiana supports 25% of the species breeding population, but in the last 50 years the State's breeding population has dropped by 40%. There are many causes for the decline. In order to reverse its declining population trends, collaborative conservation and monitoring efforts are underway throughout its entire range.





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Project Description:

The main goals of establishing a Prothonotary Warbler conservation and monitoring program within the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program (BTNEP) are to promote the conservation and education of the species, increase productivity of the species by establishing nest box trails, collect nest data, identify factors that limit population growth, identify migratory connectivity between breeding and wintering grounds, and engage the public in helping with conservation efforts.

Beginning in the spring of 2016, BTNEP initiated the project with a workshop dedicated to educating a local Boy Scout troop about the species and with the hands-on activity to construct a Prothonotary Warbler nest box to promote stewardship and bird conservation. The 16 nest boxes were installed along the nature trail in Brownell Memorial Park, Morgan City, Louisiana. The nest box trail allows for outreach and educational opportunities, as it provides visitors the chance to view and learn about the species first hand. The nests and adults are monitored during the entire breeding season and nest data is collected to determine productivity, nest site fidelity and migratory connectivity with the use of geolocators.

During the 2017 breeding season, BTNEP constructed and installed 70 new Prothonotary Warbler nest boxes in three new locations within the estuary. The nest boxes were installed at Mandalay National Wildlife Refuge, Northwest Lake Palourde/Avoca Island Cutoff Canal, and the Lockport Elevated Boardwalk. The nest boxes have provided a home for hundreds of Prothonotary Warblers since the projects inception in 2016. Habitat enhancement and research protecting native species is important to advance BTNEP's conservation efforts.

CCMP Action Items Addressed:

Protection of Habitat for Migratory and Resident Birds (Ecological Management #15)

