

A Studio in the Woods, Tulane biologists to recycle Mardi Gras beads, raise awareness

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Artist and printmaker Pippin Frisbie-Calder, scientists from Tulane's Karubian Lab and community volunteers will be out on the uptown parade route on Sunday, Feb. 23, exchanging beads for handmade, eco-friendly throws and spreading awareness about urban birds and lead contamination in the city of New Orleans. (Photo via A Studio in the Woods)

Artist and printmaker [Pippin Frisbie-Calder](#), scientists from [Tulane's Karubian Lab](#) and community volunteers will be out on the uptown parade route, on Napoleon Avenue between Magazine Street and St. Charles Avenue, Sunday, Feb. 23, to

recycle beads and raise awareness about lead contamination in the city of New Orleans.

Frisbie-Calder has created a giant mockingbird sculpture that will travel up and down the parade route, exchanging beads for handmade, eco-friendly throws and spreading awareness. Frisbie-Calder has been in residence at [A Studio in the Woods](#) over this winter, working in collaboration with Jordan Karubian, PhD, Tulane biologist, and PhD student Annelise Blanchette to organize the effort. The team along with volunteers were on the parade route recycling beads on Saturday, Feb. 15.

As in many older cities around the world, lead contamination represents an important health risk to both human and animal inhabitants of New Orleans. Ongoing work by Karubian Lab suggests that high levels of lead in New Orleans neighborhoods may impact the behavior and reproductive success of mockingbirds. In this way, these songbirds serve as “canaries in the coal mine” for the risks to humans and our communities associated with lead contamination.

The team has worked together to understand the effects of lead and develop this community engagement initiative, using the shared platform of Mardi Gras as a vehicle to reach a broad swath of local residents. A key component of the project is getting toxic beads out of the trash and into recycling programs. High levels of heavy metals in Mardi Gras beads contribute to already alarming levels of lead in New Orleans from historic contamination.

Beyond toxicity, objects tossed from Mardi Gras parade floats comprise approximately 25 million pounds of trash produced annually. The project incentivizes people to recycle their beads by exchanging them for a beautiful, eco-friendly, handcrafted throw, and to take a moment to think about where all their throws end up. The beads will be recycled thanks to [GroundsKrewe.org](#) and [ArcGNO.org](#).

About A Studio in The Woods: A Studio in the Woods, located in 7.66 forested acres on the Mississippi River in New Orleans, is dedicated to preserving the endangered bottomland hardwood forest and providing within it a peaceful retreat where artists and scholars can work uninterrupted. A program of Tulane University's ByWater Institute, A Studio in the Woods focuses on interrelated areas of programming including artistic and scholarly residencies, forest restoration, and science-inspired art education for children and adults. More information at www.astudiointhewoods.org.



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