

Lower Neuse Bird Club

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May Monthly Meeting

by Les Coble

On Tuesday, May 3, our monthly meeting will be held at the Ministry Center at Garber United Methodist Church (enter at the first floor and go to the room on the right). The address for the church is 4201 Country Club Rd., New Bern, NC 28562. Refreshments will be served before the meeting. (Directions to the Ministry Center: [Google Maps link](#))

The meeting will begin at 7 PM and be highlighted by a presentation by Kathleen Mahoney, Wildlife Biologist on the Uwharrie and Croatan National Forests working the monitoring and management of wildlife in the forests. Her background in management will broaden our knowledge as we begin to understand the valuable activity to preserve the heritage our forests hold.

May Bird Walk – Saturday May 7, 2022

by Les Coble

This May we will travel to two birding sites with very similar names. Goose Creek State Park has a 911 address: **2190 Camp Leach Rd, Washington, NC 27889** (Click for directions)

Early May – Warbler migration season! LNBC will venture to Goose Creek State Park for the wooded trails that give us an opportunity to seek migrating birds, and several residents. Views into 2 creeks may have us find a few waders. After a few active hours we will drive to east of Aurora to the Goose Creek/Spring Creek Game Lands for marsh birds and shorebirds.

Goose Creek State Park is located about 15 miles east of Washington, NC and south of Hwy 264, on the shores of the Pamlico River. We will meet at the Park Office at 7:30 A.M. (911 address shown above). It is on the left a short distance after entering the park. There is ample parking and well-maintained restrooms.

We will walk the Palmetto Boardwalk. There is an excellent transition from upland to swamp to floodplain and we should see a variety of species including three species of Vireos, Prothonotary Warblers, and most of the woodpecker species (no RCWs) of eastern NC.

Website - [Goose Creek State Park | NC State Parks \(ncparks.gov\)](https://ncparks.gov)

Our second stop, the Goose Creek Game Lands, is another site on the NC Birding Trail. It has remnants of a flooded forest, loblolly pine forest edges and wetlands managed by NC Wildlife for winter duck hunting. At several places access to the interior of the east side impoundment is available. Several species of Rails are on the list of potential species. The Impoundments border the intercoastal waterway and allow for terns and gulls to be seen. Several of these species also use the impoundments as hunting and resting zones. An interesting birding site for sure. At this time of year the impoundments often holds shorebirds bulking-up for another trek to northern North America breeding grounds. Directions to parking at the game lands: [Google Maps Link](#).

We will likely finish just after the lunch hour.

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Lower Neuse Bird Club

May Bird Walk – Saturday May 7, 2022

by Les Coble, continued from Front Page

There is no 911 number along NC 33 East for the Game Lands. They are just over 10 miles from Aurora going toward Hobucken. The impoundment dikes vegetation was cut late last fall and the spring growth of this vegetation is up to about 1.5 feet. On this uneven surface watch for a few holes by muskrats.

Both birding sites may harbor mosquitos, and the latter's vegetation may be damp.

LNBC Meeting Minutes – April 2022

by Jenni Ford

MINUTES: Lower Neuse Bird Club meeting of April 5, 2022
13 members were in attendance at Garber UM Church.

Ronnie Hewlette opened the meeting. Significant recent sightings were discussed.

Upcoming events/walks (Emails with additional details will be provided in advance of the walks):

May 7th Beaufort County – exact location(s) to be determined

May – bonus trip to Camp Brinson will be scheduled sometime in May after (April) hunting season ends

June 4th – North River Wetlands Preserve

Several members shared book recommendations:

The Feather Thief: Beauty, Obsession, and the Natural History Heist of the Century by Kirk Wallace Johnson – The book took Olwen Jarvis by surprise since it's a genre she would not normally read, but found she couldn't put the book down.

Field Notes from an Unintentional Birder by Julia Zarankin which includes uplifting essays about the joys of birding is recommended by Al Gamache.

A Birder's Guide to Coastal North Carolina by John O. Fussell III is recommended by several of the participants at this meeting. It can be checked out of the library for those deciding whether to purchase this hefty but valuable resource.

Attendees also discussed some of the apps that they use in the field. Several were helpful in presenting the evening's program. All are rich with features, such as bird calls, identification assistance, and more. Many are linked to Cornell Lab of Ornithology or with one another. Most are free.:

eBird – used for tracking bird lists, reporting to NC Bird Atlas, finding out what other birders are reporting at desired locations.

Merlin – helps identify birds by characteristics and/or songs and calls.

iBird – songs/calls, descriptions, photos, and more. Has a one-time cost of about \$15

Audubon – Al uses this for birdsongs; it's an older app (like iBird) but is free.

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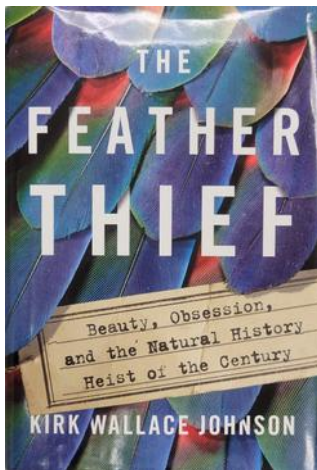
Birding Calendar Winter-Spring 2022

May 3rd: Monthly Meeting
(Garber UMC)

May 7: Goose Creek SP

May (TBD): Camp Brinson
Game Lands (migratory
warblers)

June 4th: North River
Wetlands Preserve



LNBC Meeting Minutes – April 2022

by Jenni Fod, Continued from Page #2

Program: Spring Bird Walk Preparation: A preview and review of special birds we hope to enjoy this Spring.

Birds are now coming into full song. Each bird has a unique pattern of tonality and rhythm. Hearing these birds is definitive. Wade Fuller recommended that birders focus on one bird and match the sound with the visual. Wade and Al Gamache presented a lively, informative, and entertaining program featuring 15 of the most common spring warblers and 4 other species (Indigo Bunting, Blue Grosbeak, Summer Tanager, Yellow-Breasted Chat). They provided descriptions of significant identifying characteristics, behaviors and habitats peppered with anecdotes from Al about how he remembers vocalizations.

Thank you to Dick Barmore and Elizabeth White who provided refreshments for the meeting. Members that would like to provide snacks for future meetings should contact Sally Rowe (contact information on page 1 of newsletter.)

LNBC Bird Walk – Patsy Pond / Cedar Point, April 2, 2022

by Ronnie Hewlette

The Lower Neuse Bird Club had a beautiful day for its April Bird Walk. Seventeen birders gathered in the small parking lot at Patsy Pond Nature Trail, on Highway 24, about 7 miles East of Cape Carteret. Getting an early start (7:30 a.m.) we were trying to avoid the crowds as well as find the birds when they are most active.

The Patsy Pond Nature Trail is part of the Croatan National Forest and is managed by the North Carolina Coastal Federation. The trail winds through an area referred to as Longleaf Pine Flat Woods, which is an open woodland of longleaf pines with low growing herbs and shrubs. Beautiful habitat and perfect for the two target birds for the morning – Red-cockaded Woodpeckers and Bachman's Sparrows.

The Bachman's Sparrow was named after John Bachman, a clergyman from Charleston, South Carolina, who hosted John James Audubon during his expedition in 1832 when he first described this species. The Bachman's is easiest to locate when the male is signing during it's early spring breeding season. You will find them in pine forests with a grassy understory, well-spaced trees, and little to no shrubs. (Patsy Pond, exactly!) They like to perch on a low pine limb to sing and may stay for several minutes. Their song is described as a single whistle followed by a rapid trill and that is what we walked into as we got away from the road noise and moved along the trail. With the light winds, their song was clear and distinct, leading us off the trail to follow the sounds until we located a bird perched on a pine limb, singing its heart out. We counted as many as eight singing birds right there in one spot.

*LNBC Members at
Patsy Pond
April 2, 2022
©Ronnie Hewlette*



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Lower Neuse Bird Club

LNBC Bird Walk – Patsy Pond / Cedar Point April 2

by Ronnie Hewlette, continued from Page #3

We are fortunate to have this bird right here in Eastern NC. The Bachman's Sparrow requires habitat with a high volume of grasses and forbs, some scattered trees and shrubs, and an open understory on dry, upland sites. Due to development and land management practices, this habitat is dwindling across the Southeast but areas in Croatan NF that are managed for Red-cockaded Woodpeckers can provide the habitat that is needed for the Bachman's Sparrow.

As we returned to the trail, there was a flurry of birds in the pine trees near the trail and they turned out to be Red-cockaded Woodpeckers. I've never seen so many at once! A couple of RCW's had been seen earlier at a distance but these were right in front of us, chasing each other around the tree. There were at least five, maybe six in the group. Everyone with a camera in our "Band of Birders" was clicking away. It is so unexpected to find this many individuals in such close proximity. Red-cockaded Woodpeckers were officially classified as an endangered species in 1969 (U.S. Department of the Interior) and protected under the Endangered Species Act of 1973. In October 2020, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service proposed to reclassify the red-cockaded woodpecker (RCW) from endangered to threatened, with a 4(d) rule, under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). However, this has not been finalized and as of today, the RCW remains listed as an endangered species under the Endangered Species Act.

According to The Cornell Lab's "All About Birds" website, The Red-cockaded Woodpecker is a cooperative breeder: it lives in small family groups of one breeding pair and several helpers. The extra birds usually are sons from previous breeding seasons (daughters rarely stay with their parents). The helpers assist in incubation, brooding, and feeding. Maybe this was a family group!

What a way to start the day with good looks at both our target birds for this location! With that accomplishment, we returned to the parking area, continuing on for Part-2 of our outing. We caravanned over to the Cedar Point Tideland Trail which is also part of the Croatan National Forest. This trail meanders through and around a salt marsh, skirting one arm of Dudling Creek, which feeds into the White Oak River, and then returns through the forest, back to the trailhead at the Parking Area / Boat Landing.

The Target Bird for this location was a Clapper Rail, but you never know what will turn up. Starting out from the parking area was like pulling kids out of a candy store. We were seeing such a variety of birds, right there in the parking area -- Gray Catbird, White-eyed Vireo, Osprey, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Cardinals, nobody wanted to leave. It truly was a great opportunity to study field marks and mannerisms, of the various birds at close range as they flitting in and out of the trees and bushes.



Black-crowned Night-Heron
March 5, 2022
©Ronnie Hewlette



Black-crowned Night-Heron (immature)
March 5, 2022
©Ronnie Hewlette

LNBC Bird Walk – Patsy Pond / Cedar Point April 2

by Ronnie Hewlette, continued from Page #4

Finally, we all regrouped further down the trail where the marsh and open water provided a different habitat and therein a different mix of species. A flock of White Ibises flew over and the count was estimated at 20, 30, 40, two dozen and “Two Thousand” (kidding!?!), depending on who you talked to. Wow! How does eBird sort out all this data? Oh well, just keep on Birding – it’s a grand Day to be out here!

Several Ospreys were observed: one in a nest, one carrying nesting material, two exhibiting courtship near a nest and a couple others soaring overhead. Great Egrets were observed on the far side of the creek and we spotted a Little Blue Heron joining them. It was originally thought to be a Great Blue Heron, but with a closer look it was identified as an adult Little blue Heron (purple-maroon head and neck with a dark gray-blue body, and a bill that is pale blue at the base, black at the tip). In the open water near these herons, we identified three Red-breasted Mergansers.

We tried to call a Clapper Rail but got no response. Our situation was not the best, as the water was a little high in the marsh and the wind was subduing our calls, but we will have another opportunity. Moving on.....

Looking back over the marsh, a pair of Northern Rough-winged Swallows were spotted as we headed into the woods. Lots of Northern Cardinals were heard along this section, along with Yellow-rumped Warblers and several Tufted Titmouse.

At the head of the marsh, the trail skirts the marsh for a short distance, a perfect place to try and raise a rail! On the second round of calls, we had THREE Clapper Rails sound off! It was terrific; almost deafening. There’s our Bird of the Day for this location!

Making our way back toward the trail we came in on, we encountered the raised walkway over the middle of the marsh, whereupon we spotted several kayakers out in the marsh. Well, that should quieten things in the marsh but let’s give this a try. Wade, play a Sora for us. Low and behold we immediately had a Sora respond from out in the marsh. According to The Cornell Lab’s “All About Birds” website, the Sora is the most abundant and widespread rail in North America. Their winter range includes Eastern North Carolina but they are migrating north to their breeding grounds, so there may be more in our area right now. Whatever the reason for it being here, it was exciting to find this bird.

Returning to the parking area, we set out for our third stop of the day – Haywood Landing in Jones County, just off Highway 58. Actually, we are headed to a specific clearcut area on Long Point Road to look for a Lincoln’s Sparrow that was reported in the area about two weeks ago. This is a rare bird for our area but it is reported from time to time. It’s worth stopping to see what we can find. The reported area of interest was a cutover area that has been controlled burned earlier with early successional grasses, flowers and plants coming back. The ditch cuts are full of water and are thick with woody vegetation and trees. Away from the ditches, there are lots of briars and charred (blackened) stalks/whips that mark our pants cuffs with every step.



*Red-cockaded
Woodpeckers at
Patsy Pond
©Mike Creedon*

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Lower Neuse Bird Club

LNBC Bird Walk – Patsy Pond / Cedar Point April 2

by Ronnie Hewlette, continued from Page #3

No Lincoln's Sparrow was heard or seen but we gave it every opportunity. We saw or heard a handful of birds but nothing new to report at this stop, so we turned around and proceeded back to Haywood Landing Road. This area was also control-burned earlier, making the drains and wet areas stand out in contrast. Stopping at a few of these "thickets", we got the opportunity to see Northern Parulas and Yellow-throated Warblers up close. The Parula is a bluish gray warbler with yellow highlights, white eye crescents, chestnut breast band, and yellow-green patch on the back. The Yellow-throated Warbler is aptly named, having a bright yellow throat which is set-off by a gray back, black streaks down the sides, white belly and white under-tail, a black triangle below its eye and a white eyebrow. Both are outstandingly pretty birds! We heard what was thought to be Ovenbirds but finally concluded that we were hearing the Yellow-throated Warblers. This is a good reminder that you need to listen "carefully"; they have similar sounds. A couple of White-eyed Vireos were singing but were not visible from where we were standing in the middle of the road.

Moving on, we stopped at a point where the Weetock Trail crosses Haywood Landing Road. This allowed us to stand on somewhat of a bluff, overlooking a wet drain, to look and listen for birds in this habitat. Al heard a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, almost immediately. Then, there it was again -- sounds like an Ovenbird and Kevin said, "That's an Ovenbird, I'm almost certain". Ok, Wade play the Ovenbird Call..... Just like it was planned, the Ovenbird responded by flying right over us and perched in a nearby tree -- nice!

Ovenbirds are olive-green above and white with chevron streaks below, with bold black-and-orange crown stripes. Like several other terrestrial, or near-terrestrial, warblers, Ovenbirds have pink legs. There seems to be an abundance of Ovenbirds in the area right now. Croatan National Forest is a great place to find them.

A short drive to the Haywood Landing Boat Ramp took us to the end of our Bird Walk. Taking a few quick steps from the parking area, over to the creek, provided another opportunity to look at Northern Parulas, at eyelevel. Nice way to end our outing. Beautiful bird!

Hope everyone can make it to next month's LNBC Bird Walk. Happy Birding!

-Ronnie Hewlette



White-eyed Vireo
©Ronnie Hewlette



Yellow-throated Warbler
©Ronnie Hewlette

LNBC Checklist – Patsy Pond / Cedar Point April 2

Compiled by Ronnie Hewlette

No.	Species	No.	Species	No.	Species
01.	Canada Goose	17.	Red-tailed Hawk	33.	Carolina Wren
02.	Red-breasted Merganser	18.	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	34.	Gray Catbird
03.	Pied-billed Grebe	19.	Red-bellied Woodpecker	35.	Northern Mockingbird
04.	Mourning Dove	20.	Downy Woodpecker	36.	Eastern Bluebird
05.	Clapper Rail	21.	Red-cockaded Woodpecker	37.	Bachman’s Sparrow
06.	Sora	22.	Pileated Woodpecker	38.	White-throated Sparrow
07.	Laughing Gull	23.	White-eyed Vireo	39.	Eastern Towhee
08.	Double-crested Cormorant	24.	American Crow	40.	Red-winged Blackbird
09.	Great Egret	25.	Fish Crow	41.	Brown-headed Cowbird
10.	Little Blue Heron	26.	Purple Martin	42.	Ovenbird
11.	White Ibis	27.	Carolina Chickadee	43.	Common Yellowthroat
12.	Black Vulture	28.	Tufted Titmouse	44.	Northern Parula
13.	Turkey Vulture	29.	Northern Rough-winged Swallow	45.	Pine Warbler
14.	Osprey	30.	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	46.	Yellow-rumped Warbler
15.	Bald Eagle	31.	Brown-headed Nuthatch	47.	Yellow-throated Warbler
16.	Red-shouldered Hawk	32.	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	48.	Northern Cardinal



Ovenbird
©Ronnie Hewlette



Bachman’s Sparrow
©Ronnie Hewlette

Lower Neuse Bird Club

LNBC Bonus Trip – Trails at the Property of Member Les Coble

by Les Coble

1.22 miles and 41 species was the summary of a walk by 7 members of the Lower Neuse Bird Club on April 24th. Last year this walk was held 2 weeks later and several nests were located. Many breeding birds were certainly present but the expected influx of passage migrants was not seen, except for a lone Magnolia Warbler which did not linger for that BVD (better view desired) by the members.

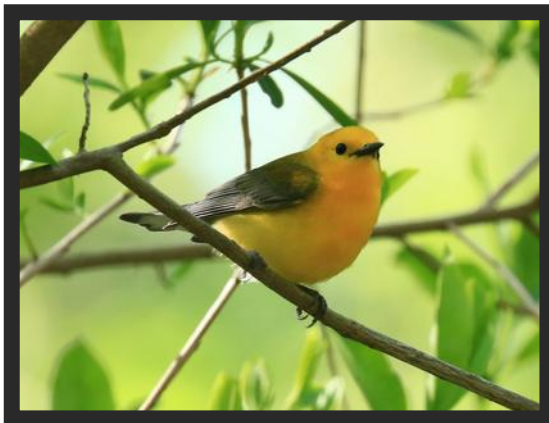
Migration recently has been noted all across the State and Country and yet the number of arrivals are still down. The big push of migrants to northern North America still in our future. Summer Tanager and Yellow-billed Cuckoos were finally heard at this property between Ernul and Aurora, and the wintering Yellow-rumped Warblers were not recorded for the first time this season.

Those stunning Hooded Warblers were on territory. Singing males were heard or seen at 3 locations. Everyone got to spend time with one male after a long 5 minute search in the leafed-out limbs. That is the story of many passerines. When the leaves are not present the insects on which these passerines feed cannot be found on non-existent leaves. Yet, when the leaf buds open, the passerines become far more difficult to find and follow as they forage. Such is the plight of the spring birder. The bejeweled, sought-after warblers make for challenging every birder's binocular skills.

~~4-5 Ovenbirds were fervently shifting at one site such that we had considerable difficulty going for that BVD. Eventually one pair slid out of the foray and the others moved beyond our area of view. Oh well, why not pass the time with the Blue Grey Gnatcatchers.~~

Recent Yellow-throated Vireos pairs were silent all morning and only one of the several Louisiana Waterthrushes made it's presence known. It refused to make an appearance.

We retired to the deck for coffee and fresh muffins and enjoyed the refreshing light breeze. A pair of Goldfinches further lightened the festive feel. Yes, migration is here. Enjoy each morning.



This Prothonotary photo is courtesy Bill Jarvis. Wow. Deep, almost russet, gold progresses to brilliant lustered gold, to vibrant yellow to soothing canary hues. What an amazing array of eye-popping chromes.



*Hooded Warbler
27th April, 2022
E.B. Jeffress Park
©Michael Cheves*

Which Birds Are Smartest?

by David M. Bird, Courtesy of Birdwatcher's Digest Vol. 44 No. 3
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The battle over which birds in the world are the most intelligent goes on! Corvids or parrots? The parrot fans are convinced that their birds are the smartest, largely due to the great work of Irene Pepperberg, now at Harvard University, and her captive African gray parrots, beginning with the amazing Alex (RIP). Her best-selling book, *Alex & Me*, is now out in audio format and worth the read. While I am not prepared to argue all the merits of the two groups of birds at this time, I do want to stoke the fires of debate by passing on two recent findings.

Let's deal with the parrot first. Why am I not at all surprised to learn that they have learned to lift the lids off trash cans to get at the food items inside? Sometime during the past decade in a Sydney, Australia, suburb, a sulphur-crested cockatoo perched on the edge of a garbage can lid and, bending head over heels, managed to pry open a gap with its amazingly powerful beak. With the lid held in its bill, the bird clung to the edge of the can and pushed the lid high enough to tip it off entirely, rendering the contents fair game. It obviously found some tasty ripe food and filled its stomach. But that was not the end of the story: It then taught another parrot to do the same. And, parrots being among the most incredible mimics in the bird world, the behavior spread like wildfire. By the end of 2019, over 44 suburbs were being subjected to these feathered trash-robbers. I am confident that it will not stop there.

The behavior was documented between 2018 and 2019 by a citizen science initiative using video cameras called the Clever Cockie Project. However, the birds were so fast at opening the cans that the cameras often missed the moment. So, to get some decent video of the behavior, the researchers had to open a lid, place some bits of bread inside, and then close the lid right in front of some cockatoos.

This clever type of adaptive behavior by birds in the suburbs is not exactly new. It had been seen decades before in the UK when it was discovered that blue tits had learned to peek open the cardboard lids on glass milk bottles placed on people's doorsteps so that they could eat the cream on the top.

Such innovative behaviors are routine for corvids, i.e., crows, ravens, jays, and magpies. After all, it has been documented more than once that crows have not only learned to drop hard nuts in the path of approaching vehicles but also wait until the pedestrian light shows that it is safe to venture on to the pavement. And then there are those New Caledonia crows at Princeton University in New Jersey that not only fashion tools they use to find food in the wild but also solve highly complex step-by-step tasks that involve thinking ahead. Search for it on YouTube to see for yourself!

However, the crows may just have outdone themselves in a recent study.



Fish Crow
Union Point Park
New Bern, NC Oct. 3, 2021
©Michael Cheves

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Which Birds Are Smartest?

*by David M. Bird, continued from Page #9. Courtesy of Birdwatcher's Digest Vol. 44 No. 3
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Ask any mathematician and they will tell you that the discovery of zero as a numerical value in a number system was one of the most amazing discoveries in the field. It transformed the science of mathematics. This highly abstract concept of “none” or “nothingness” was fully accepted by humans as far back as the fifth century AD, or maybe even earlier. More recently, though, bees and monkeys have joined our human ranks as being able to understand the zero concept, but even more exciting to ornithologists like me, it has been proven that at least one species of crow actually knows what zero means. You see, the special thing about this unique value is that it does not fit into any kind of routine for counting real objects. In other words, if one looks at three or four objects clustered together on a table, one can count them as one, two, three, or four. But when there is nothing there to count, one can conclude that the number of objects sitting on the table is zero. Zero isn't used in counting.

Andreas Nieder, a professor of animal physiology in the Institute of Neurobiology at the University of Tübingen in Germany, and colleagues set up a computer game for some captive carrion crows. Each crow was presented with two displays, each containing dots ranging from zero to four. The crows were trained to identify when both displays matched one another. The birds' neural activity was monitored at the same time. When the two screens displayed zero dots, the neurons in the cognitive part of their brains lit up, indicating that the birds actually understood the concept of zero.

It would be interesting to learn whether those highly touted intelligent African gray parrots can match the carrion crows in this regard. It might help decide once and for all which birds are the smartest: the corvids or the parrots! Or is it all much ado about nothing?

Readers' Observations

Sharon Umbach of West Vancouver and her husband were visiting Green Lake in Whistler, British Columbia, in the early spring, and were distressed to see a female common merganser prone in the water with a male merganser swimming nearby. It was so still that they assumed that the female had recently died. Suddenly the duck came to life and the pair swam away as if nothing had happened. They suggested that perhaps this particular duck has an unusual sleeping manner.

Comment: To be honest, I had never heard of this behavior before, but I did know exactly whom to ask about it: my best friend and long-time mentor, Rodger Titman, living in Montreal. It just so happens that he wrote the Birds of the World account on the red-breasted merganser, making him a genuine authority on mergansers in general. Upon receiving my question as to whether he had encountered the behavior in the photograph supplied by the Umbachs of the bird looking dead or asleep, he replied immediately and succinctly, “Yes, frequently. She is soliciting copulation from her mate.”

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Which Birds Are Smartest?

by David M. Bird, continued from Page #10, Courtesy of Birdwatcher's Digest Vol. 44 No. 3
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Bill Thomas of Cedar Mountain, North Carolina, asked me why red-eyed vireos sing so obsessively and compulsively all the time during the day. He felt that this behavior seemed counterproductive to the usual evolutionary strategy of trying to use as little energy as possible to perform the necessary actions of its life, especially when nesting season was over and singing no longer has territorial implications.

Comment: That is a great question and one that we likely do not have a definitive answer for, at least not yet. Here is my initial take on it. As you are doubtless aware, these birds are singing initially to attract females for mates, but after that has been achieved, they keep on singing to proclaim their territory. It is probably a lot less energetically expensive for a bird to sing than to fly all over the place from one corner of their territory to another. Even when the young have fledged, they still like to defend their feeding territory.

But to get the best explanation from someone who is, in my book, among the world's leading experts on birdsong, I copied my response to Don Kroodsma, a retired professor of ornithology who has written several books on birdsong, including *The Singing Life of Birds*. Here is Don's response in his own words: "I think that most male songbirds sing for two primary audiences. Well, maybe three, if you include males. One audience is his own female, another of the other females in the neighborhood. My best guess is that a male songbird will continue to sing through the season as long as there is a fertile female in the neighborhood. But why sing all day long? Other songbirds seem to expend all their energy during the dawn chorus, but maybe Red-eyed Vireos just have a different approach, as they're not heard much during the dawn chorus." Don does admit that he has not kept up on the literature since retiring in 2004, but his explanation makes a lot of sense to me.

John Parrish, emeritus professor at Georgia Southern University, sent me some very interesting commentary on my September/October column, wherein I discussed the orange spots that appear on the nictitating membrane of black-billed magpies. It brought back memories of his early research on ultraviolet vision in birds and one of his graduate students who examined UV reflectance in butterfly wings. Butterflies apparently use structural ridges on their wings to produce UV reflectance patterns. One butterfly studied was the orange tip. The orange of the tips actually reflect UV (about 300-340nm), which we humans cannot see due to compounds in our lenses that absorb UV, and because we lack UV cones that birds possess. The reason we see orange (590-625 nm) is because the butterfly's wings reflect orange at half the intensity that they reflect UV, which is bright enough for us to see. Thus, John speculates that the magpie's orange spot might actually be a UV spot. He added that there are no pigments in the orange tips' orange tips, but only the lamellar ridges that reflect UV. Since UV reflections have been shown to be important in sexual selection, the orange (UV) eyespot in magpies might be involved in that process.



Red-eyed Vireo
Purlear, NC
©Michael Cheves

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Lower Neuse Bird Club

Which Birds Are Smartest?

by David M. Bird, continued from Page #11. Courtesy of Birdwatcher's Digest Vol. 44 No. 3
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Sheryl McNair of Watauga and Pamlico counties, North Carolina, had read my column on towhees in the January/February 2021 issue, and she was intrigued by the reference to quail “dumping” their eggs in towhee nests. She wondered whether they do that to only towhees, or just occasionally. Sheryl rightfully pointed out that quail raise their young a lot differently than towhees.

Comment: Each female quail produces between 12 and 16 eggs. But a given female can expand the size of her brood by as many as 28 chicks by laying some eggs in other birds’ active nests. While this is most often their own species, I suppose that any nearby ground-nester, including towhees, will do. This is called egg-dumping. It is not a problem in the end for two reasons. First, quail young are precocial, meaning that they are ready to run about and forage as soon as they escape from their shells. And second, quail engage in day care, meaning that several females bunch together to raise their broods. I am sure that a lot of the chicks die from various causes, e.g., predation, and that is why they produce so many young in this manner – to hedge their bets.

Just a note of appreciation to all of my readers, but especially those who send me new and interesting observations, some of which have never before been reported or documented. And a special thanks to those of you who read my columns and have something further to add.

Send your bird behavior questions and observations to David M. Bird, c/o BWD, P.O. Box 110, Marietta, OH 45750 or email your questions to bwd@birdwatchersdigest.com. Visit his website <https://www.askprofessorbird.com>,

LNBC Photo Gallery

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Virginia Rail
Simmons Street Wetlands
April 6, 2022, New Bern, NC
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Bachman's Sparrow
Patsy Pond
April 2nd, 2022
©Mike Creedon