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Celebrating and sharing our experiences along "the roads" we take through nature.

Award Winning Newsletter of the El Camino Real Chapter
Milam County Texas Master Naturalist Winter 2017

Remembering Katherine

September 21, 1951— November 12, 2016

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As a loving tribute to our dear friend and fellow Texas Master Naturalist, this special feature includes personal recollections from several chapter members, and a selected set of photos that show her love of nature and children, and great sense of humor:

From Dorothy Mayer:

Katherine Moore Bedrich, my friend and mentor.

One of the best things about getting involved with the El Camino Real Master Naturalist Chapter of the Texas Master Naturalists in Milam County Texas was meeting new people and making new friends. My life has been so much richer since getting involved with this group. I joined this group in 2009, the second group to get locally trained and involved in the Texas Master Naturalists. The first year was 2008 and most of our founders and integral chapter members were in that first group. One of those integral members was Katherine Bedrich. When I joined in 2009, Katherine was holding office as Vice President of the chapter. Our organization has 2 year terms. So, after her term was up as Vice President at the end of 2009, she was elected to serve 2 more terms and 4 years as our chapter president. Then, over the next 2 years, Katherine re-



mained on the board of directors as past president. So, she served a total of 8 years on the board. To say she was an important part of our chapter would be an understatement.

Since getting acquainted with Katherine in 2009, I had the good fortune to get to know her very well. And, as many others in our chapter, we had many discussions and became very good friends, too. During these many talks, I learned that

Katherine had always regretted not completing her Bachelor's Degree in Education. Something she always felt led to do was to teach. Anyway, once she got involved with our chapter, she evolved into the teacher that she had always wanted to be. She became active in most all activities that the chapter pursued, working to teach lessons or to support and encourage others to teach. So, we all had a teacher or a cheerleader backing us who was constantly working to convince us that we needed to speak up for nature conservation. I truly do not see how she could have influenced more people if she had completed her formal teaching certification.

Did You Know?

What mammal does a handstand as part of its defense?

See last page for the answer.

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Katherine had a way of getting to know every new member in our chapter and all knew that she was there to help them. As a chapter, we are working very hard to step up and fill in the enormous hole that has been made by the loss of this amazing naturalist and leader. I know that I feel closer to many in our chapter because of this shared feeling of loss. While I still struggle with coming to terms with this, I would not take anything in place of having known and having been able to call Katherine my friend. And, in spite of our loss, the birds keep singing and the world is still an amazing place to be. I will never walk by a 'pile of scat' without checking it out while a thought of Katherine comes to my mind. I know that does not necessarily sound very nice. But, I know that Katherine would approve. Of course scat is not the only thing that will make me think of her. There are also lichens, animal tracks, snake skins, mussels, skulls, and most anything in our natural world.

We must not dwell on what is wrong or on our losses. We should rather concentrate on what there is to love and enjoy. That is what Katherine would have wanted.

At Katherine's funeral service, Deacon Colley described her as being a 'spitfire.' I loved that description because it fit her so well. And, in addition to being a spitfire, helping with nature conservation and being a fabulous person, I will forever remember her kindness. If I had to choose just one word to epitomize Katherine, I would say that above all, she was KIND.

And, I will love her forever.



From Linda Jo Conn:

The Unforgettable Katherine Bedrich.

Many called her Kathy. However, she was introduced as Katherine Bedrich so I always used her given name Katherine, except perhaps on email correspondence when I may have referred to her as "KB".

Countless times every day since her death, I think about Katherine. I remember Katherine whenever I:

- Meander around my place or walk along a public pathway, stop in my tracks, and kneel down to examine an interesting plant.
- Pause to scrutinize lichen on a tree branch or mushrooms amongst leaf litter.
- Hear a song bird serenading from a treetop and am compelled to stop, look, and listen.
- Notice an insect camouflaged on a leaf or tree trunk or a spider scurrying away to elude my curious eye.
- Take an unplanned exit ramp while traveling down a major highway in order to return to a particular area, pull over, park, and investigate an interesting patch of unfamiliar vegetation.
- Make a U-turn on a county or farm-to-market road to check out a wildflower display in a bar ditch, a bird perched on a fence post, or a DOR (Dead on Road) animal I just drove past.

At these and so many other occasions, I think: "Wow! This is awesome! I can't wait to share this with Katherine!"

Then, my heart sinks. I am devastated, reminded again that Katherine is no longer physically among us. I pause for a moment as I silently thank her again for the influence she had and continues to have on my life.

For example:

- If it were not for Katherine, I would not have completed my initial Texas Master Naturalist training. She was a cheerleader and a mentor for many El Camino Real Chapter members. I intend to remain an active member.

- The carefree jaunts the two of us took around Milam County when we parked on the sides of narrow backroads to investigate anything and everything that caught our interest. By the end of an excursion, my head would be literally spinning with all the things we had observed. And, I eagerly anticipated the next investigational trip.

- The interesting people we met when "interrupted" by infrequent but friendly curious passersby who stopped to inquire what we were doing along the side of the road. Katherine always used such occasions as an opportunity to promote Texas Master Naturalists and wildlife.

- That classic day we often laughed about later when Katherine brought a literal bouquet of plants she had gathered to my house. We sat down with our massive taxonomy key books with the ambition to identify each and every one of them to species. After several hours contemplating one specimen, we finally tentatively identified it as an *Oenothera* species. It was certainly a learning experience for both of us.

- Katherine's example of actively meeting other TMN members at conferences and events is a trait I admired and have tried to emulate. She would often eat her meals at a table with TMN

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folks from counties other than Milam while getting acquainted and networking. I failed in practicing her example last October at the State Conference, but intend to continue in future events.

- The “humor” of the legendary field trip when Katherine, Ann Collins and I observed yellow passionflower (*Passiflora lutea*) in bloom on a county road but unfortunately also encountered an unforgettable species of “chiggers on steroids”.

- The ability to cope with conditions that were not always perfect, such as that miserable cold blustery day Katherine, John Pruet, and I met on the El Camino Trail to inventory its flora and soon opted to reconvene at a warm Cameron cafe, drink coffee, and do organization and planning instead.

- Because I knew Katherine would always appreciate and share my joy and excitement of any wildlife observation, I enjoyed being with and around her. She was generous with her knowledge, insight and resource materials and had a bit of good-natured mischief that she shared with others.

Katherine Bedrich was the epitome of a Texas Master Naturalist and a driving force and champion of our El Camino Real Chapter. Katherine taught us so much and sparked a love and appreciation of all things wild in anyone she met. It is still difficult for me to accept the loss of a special friend, but I am obligated to break out of my personal feelings of loss and depression and will continue to honor her by sharing the enthusiasm about nature with others that she instilled in me.

Katherine will not be forgotten by anyone who knew her.



From Sheri Sweet:

Here's a story I have about Katherine:

One evening, Wes and I were watching TV when something started bumping against the wall outside our front door (which is the back door). He got up to see what was going on - I was right behind him. We looked around and then I noticed a reddish turtle stuck in the corner near the door! I ran for my camera and took a couple of pictures of it. Then Wes carried it down to the tank. I looked through my very limited references on turtles and searched the internet.

Then I emailed Katherine and attached a picture of it, asking if she knew what it was. She said she thought it was a Box Turtle, but was sending it on to someone at TAMU to find out for sure.

A few days later, she emailed me and said it was a Three-toed Box Turtle! And then she told me to report it on the Turtle Watch forum, which I did.

At the next Master Naturalist meeting, she came over and asked me if I had reported it!

Pictures are worth a thousand words:

And here's a small selection of photos from our group's Remembering Katherine online album (now approaching 200 photos and growing) of her in various “naturalist” environments. See all the photos at tinyurl.com/RememberingKatherine. With a Gmail/Google ID you can add your own.





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Earth Day Story Time



Getting to Know You

This is another of our interviews based on a questionnaire we use to guide the process. Dorothy Mayer suggested Karin Patzke be our interviewee for this issue given she is Katherine's niece. Karin has been involved with a number of chapter activities and was a guest presenter on "Life and Contributions of Roy Bedichek, Master Naturalist in Texas", and "Wildlife Around Riparian Areas". Here's Karin...

1. Where was your birthplace and childhood home?

I was born in Madisonville, Texas and my family lived around Calvert. I went to high school in Garland, Texas, just east of Dallas.

2. What do you remember as your first encounter or a special encounter with nature growing up, and what was special about it? (Several is fine)

My mother and father raised cattle when I was younger, and while my mom was always an avid hunter, after my father died, she turned to raising pointers and setters for hunting and trial runs. She would take my brother and I out with her to skeet competitions and I remember enjoying being around all the animals – horses, dogs, quail, doves, etc. It was always bustling and full of excitement.

And I remember fishing with my family as well. My grandmother had a small tank (huge to me as a child!) that we would always fish when we visited Aunt Kathy and other relatives in Milam County. And, on special occasions, we would all go down to "Uncle Buck's," a small reservoir that had been constructed on my great uncle's property. My brother and I would fish and swim with my cousins all day long. We still have many pictures from those times and I continue to enjoy looking at them when I come home.

3. Tell us a little about your family today, and your adult life – formal education, career, places lived, countries visited.

I currently live in Troy, New York where I attend Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. This is my final year and I will receive a PhD in a program called Science and Technology Studies. Very generally, I study the intersection of science and law. I'm interested in how scientific knowledge is translated into legal understandings of the world. In my dissertation, I look at

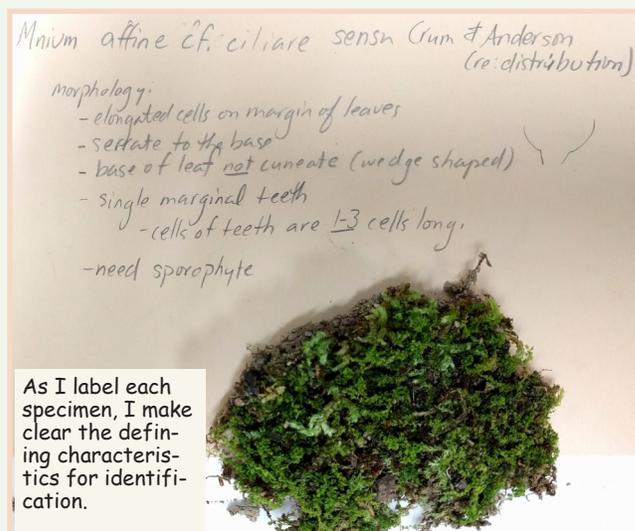


environmental conservation on private lands in Texas and specifically, I've investigated the history of conservation in Texas, as well as the property tax incentives created for landowners to preserve open space in the state.

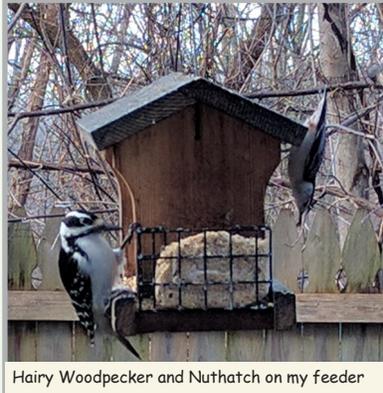
Before beginning my studies in New York, I lived in Chicago where I worked at the Art Institute of Chicago in conservation and collections management. In Chicago, I received both a Bachelor's & Master's degrees in fine art and art history. In addition to working at the museum, I co-directed a gallery, called Lasso, and worked as an artist making prints and posters, among other artistic ventures. I never thought I would leave Chicago until I applied to graduate school, but after ten years in that amazing city, it seemed the right decision. Now, when I visit Chicago, I'm amazed at all the changes. The city has worked hard to create new green spaces, including reclaiming a defunct rail line that is now an elevated city park. And, there are even wildlife preserves close to downtown with deer and coyotes roaming the neighborhoods. It is spectacular to see a city try to responsibly address wildlife habitat.

4. What areas of nature most interest you today, and why?

Probably because of my dissertation work, I am most interested in how people develop practices, like stewardship and habitat conservation, in an effort to live with wildlife. I think there is a notion that nature is something "out there" away from people, but I'm always excited to hear people talk about nature being "right here", part of their lives and everyday existence. And, of course, I like lichen. Meeting Dale Kruse at the Texas Master Naturalist annual meeting really sparked my interest in the "lost flora" like mosses, fungi, liverworts and lichens. I've been so thankful to have the opportunities the past two years to work with Dale and his colleagues to expand my knowledge and practical skills concerning these (often) tiny forms of life.



Additionally, Ann Collins has taught me so much about birds and birding that I've taken it up as a real hobby and have tried to cultivate it among my fellow graduate students in New York. Sometimes it's hard to justify leaving the office for an afternoon. But, spending time with friends and attempting to identify birds is always better than sitting in front of a computer.



Hairy Woodpecker and Nuthatch on my feeder

Perhaps what's salient to these three things is the ability to just stop and look at the nature right in front of you (or in the ditch on the side of the road!). There seems to be a wonderful practice in the El Camino Real Chapter that both Katherine Bedrich and Linda Jo Conn have instilled in their work: stopping and looking! I've done something similar and I'm so glad to have found a place where it's appreciated!

5. If you could come back after this mortal human life is over as some other kind of life form, what would that be and why?

Hmmm. No answer for that.

6. How about any funny, embarrassing or stupid things you've done – and are willing to share. I think many of you know that stopping on the side of the road in Texas is not without peril. While the county roads in Milam present ample opportunities to view a variety of wildlife and native flora, you are almost always standing in front of someone's home, or at the very least, someone's pasture. And not everyone is enthusiastic to have strangers so close to their property.

One day Katherine and I had stopped at a place she was familiar with and had been monitoring over the past few months. There were a variety of native grasses and forbs and we were both hoping to identify and take some good photos.

But, as we pulled over and got out of her blue Jeep with our cameras and clipboards (Katherine making sure that the El Camino Real Chapter sign was prominently displayed on the side of the Jeep), a young man in a large pickup truck came barreling down at us. Katherine

immediately went back to the Jeep and I'm left clutching my clipboard and camera as the man got out of his truck and began yelling to us to get off of his property. We were both startled and as Katherine was searching for legitimating documents (brochures, IDs, etc.), I grasped my clipboard in front of my chest (hoping his bark was worse than his bite) and made my way toward him. I'm sure I attempted to smile as I yelled back, "We are with the El Camino Real Master Naturalist Chapter! We are sponsored by TPWD and TX AgriLife, the County Extension! You have some wonderful native grasses here that we wanted to identify for educational purposes!"

Well, I'm not sure if it was the clipboard, the mention of state agencies, or my smile, but he quickly calmed down and we learned that his father had seeded the pasture with native grasses. His father was a farmer who was interested in planting and preserving native species and the grasses and forbs we had found on the roadside were part of his heritage. Katherine explained to him more about the Master Naturalist Program and gave him many brochures about the work of the chapter, which he seemed excited to learn about.

As he drove away, we resumed our work, identifying and photographing the plants. But I did not doubt that we were still under surveillance and I attempted to perform what I thought of as "naturalist" to our unseen audience. I dramatically pointed to grasses and enquired in a loud voice, "Should I photo just the seed head or the stalk base, as well?" I continued this pantomime for a while, furrowing my brow and putting my finger to my chin as Katherine asked if I thought a group of plants near the fence was a Maximillian sunflower or a variety of rosinweed.

I really didn't know what I was talking about, but I think the performance of "naturalist" was convincing!

7. Any favorite books, songs, poems, movies, people, places, pets, etc.?

While I'm an enthusiastic reader, I primarily read non-fiction, which can be pretty boring (Remember what I said earlier about studying law and science? Those texts are very, very dry!). However, as an artist, I've always loved painters and printmakers who can bring animals to life. One of my favorite artists is Laurie Hogan, who paints beautiful and brightly colored wildlife. And the drawings of Walton Ford are also gorgeous. Both of these artists use animals and pictures of nature to portray political events as allegories. This is a tradition in Western painting that is not so often practiced in contemporary art, but both Hogan and Ford have cre-



Pixie Cup Lichens at Buttermilk Falls



Hill of Cladonia Lichen in Central NY that I pass by regularly.

ated a strong body of work that compellingly portrays the problems and concerns of our times.

And, I have always had a least one cat in my life. As a child we often had indoor and outdoor cats that would take care of the mice and rats in the barns or be lazy and relaxing animals in the house. Right now, I have a black cat (her name is Tank) who is very much my partner right now, not just following me around on my travels, but making sure I take some time to relax! While she doesn't like to travel much, I did bring her down to Texas last year for several months. Now she's in New York and has taken up hunting snakes, voles, moles and chipmunks.

And of course every morning we watch the birds together!

8. What are some typical daily activities that you love to do?

I watch birds for about an hour every day and I have 5 species of woodpeckers that visit my feeders regularly.

9. Any neat photos you can share to help tell your story? (Included)

10. How did you first hear about Texas Master Naturalist?

My Aunt Katherine introduced me to the program and I am so grateful she did. I've enjoyed learning about wildlife, geology and the volunteers who work in Milam County and the surrounding areas. Initially Katherine is the one who encouraged me to change my dissertation work and investigate wildlife management. It's been a really wonderful experience and I'm looking forward to continuing working with the chapter.

11. What has the program meant to you?

I'm really grateful to learn more about the community where I grew up and see firsthand how people are attempting to conserve spaces for wildlife. It's helped me to reconnect to this part of the country in such a wonderful way that I'm always scheming to find ways to return here!

Happy (rabbit) trails to you all!



The Influx of the Lady Asian Beetle

By Dorothy Mayer

This year we would be hard pressed not to notice a little orange beetle hanging around everywhere. These beetles look very much like the beneficial red lady bugs we all know and love. While the Asian beetles are common now throughout the United States and Canada, they have not always been here. These Asian lady beetles (*Harmonia axyridis*) were introduced into the United States in 1988 for the purpose of reducing the aphid population in pecan orchards.

The non-native Asian Lady Beetles range in a wide spectrum of colors from yellow to orange to red and have a varying number of spots. There are a couple of things to look for to differentiate the Asian Lady Beetle from our native beneficial 'Ladybugs' that are already familiar to us all. The Asian Lady Beetle has a very distinctive white "W" or "M" (depending on which angle you look) shape on its pronotum, the area immediately behind the head, and their domes are usually orange,



tan or yellowish with black spots. The American Ladybug has a shiny black pronotum with two tiny white circles and their domes are a rich scarlet red with black spots.

Although the introduced Asian Lady Beetles had a somewhat slow start, like many other introduced species, they have become problematic. One of the biggest problems these Asian Lady Beetles have caused is the displacement of our indigent, beneficial Ladybug species as well as eating a lot of other small native insects such as spider mites, the jumping plant louse, mealy bugs, leaf beetle weevils and moths causing unpredictable effects in terms of pest control. They are good to eat the aphids, but will also eat other beneficial insects, including our native Ladybug larvae, when other aphids become scarce. This can happen mostly when they first hatch from the egg stage to the larval stage before going into the pupal stage.



(Continued on page 8)

The Asian Lady Beetle goes through 4 stages of metamorphosis: egg stage, larval stage, pupal stage & the adult stage. The adults tend to find warm sunlit places to overwinter. So, you may find them in your windows, especially on the West and South sides, coming out of your vents, and snuggled in the insulation in your attics, to name a few. They have good eyesight and may return to favored places if removed.

Basically, the Asian Lady Beetle is mostly harmless to humans although they do tend to taste anything they land on. So when they land on a person, they often bite but, those bites are not extremely painful or poisonous. They do not inject any harmful venom. So, their bite has been described more like a pinch. However, in rare cases an allergic reaction can lead to rhino conjunctivitis, or pinkeye. These beetles also have a bit of a musky smell and might cause some discoloration on curtains and painted surfaces.

So, although these beetles have some beneficial traits, we want to do what we can to keep them from taking over habitat needed by our native insects. One of the best suggestions is to use a vacuum cleaner to suck up large concentrations of them. Please be careful in using pesticides or you may end up doing

more damage to our native insects than to the invaders. Personally, I plan to attack with the vacuum being certain to burn the vacuum cleaner bag afterwards. Then, I plan to order some of our native lady bugs and release them per the instructions. Hopefully, they will be able to come out on top in the long run.

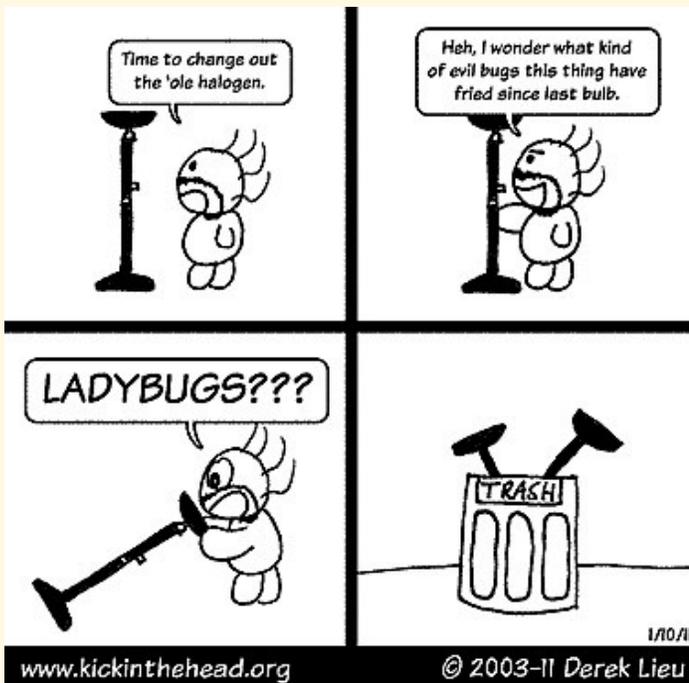
I cannot help but think of our Red Harvester Ants versus the influx of the non-native fire ants when trying to control these pests. We sometimes do more harm than good when we use pesticides indiscriminately. Even using organic pest control methods can harm our native species. So, we need to be extremely cautious. Often, things will balance out some on their own without our intervention.

Sources used:

<http://buglogical.com/ladybugs.html>

<http://keyetv.com/news/local/asian-lady-beetle-bug-invades-central-texas>

<https://www.creaturecontrol.net/insect-pest-control/asian-lady-bug/>



Bentley and his Friends

by Donna Lewis

Bentley is our small twelve pound, adopted, Papillion mix who thinks he's as big as the larger dogs in our family.

One day, earlier this January, my "children" Hershey, Rusty Bucket, and Bentley and I were taking our usual nature walk around our property when Bentley suddenly popped his head up from the tall grass and runs toward me. As he approaches, I see he's not alone. He has insect hitchhikers entangled in his long, white, fur and long tail. I pick him up for a closer look, and to my surprise, I find dozens of baby "Mantids."

What are all these "Mantids" doing out at this time of year?

I suspect the warm weather has awakened the Praying Mantis and other insects from their winter's sleep, and now they are restless.

Praying Mantis is in the order: "Mantodes." These insects measure from two to four inches in size. The females lay approximately two-hundred eggs at a time. They have a slender body, with a larger triangular-shaped head. Their head movement seems "robotic" as it slowly rotates left or right while looking over its shoulders for its prey. The females are larger and more numerous than the males. The reason may be that the female Praying Mantis eats the males during mating, or when she can't find other food.

Watch Out Guys!



Praying Mantis can benefit humans by feeding on unwanted pests in our gardens and farm grown field crops. However, I find these munching ladies annoying when they add my garden's beautiful butterflies, dragon-flies, and any other beneficial insects to their diet.

Bentley's new found friends, the Praying Mantis, may be small, but handle them with care - they can bite!



Sweet Shenanigans

by Sheri Sweet

We looked out the kitchen window towards our tank way out back a couple of weeks ago – one of those two bitterly cold days. He said, “oh, some trash has blown in onto the dam there.” I looked and said, “it looks like either a white, plastic box or a gallon milk jug.” And we proceeded to discuss our thoughts about people who let their trash blow around! He ambled away and I looked out at the tank again. Whoa! The white box moved a little. So I grabbed my trusty binoculars that I keep on the counter next to the sink and took a good look. Aha! The “plastic box” was a Great Egret, *Ardea alba*! (However, a couple of my sources identify it as *Casmerodius Albus*). One or two come around periodically throughout the year here. It was cold and it was hunting for something to eat! I guess it must have been finding something as it kept spearing into the water.

The Great Egret is a large, graceful heron, standing about 38” to 39” tall with a wing span of about 51”. It weighs about 5.3 pounds. It is second only in size to the Great Blue Heron. In flight, it has a slow wingbeat and its long snaky neck is folded into an “S” shape with it projecting below its body level. It is distinguished by its bright yellow-orange bill and its black legs. If you see a bird like this but its legs and bill are not these colors, it is NOT a Great Egret! It also has long white plumes that extend beyond its tail during breeding season. The one we saw didn’t have the long plumes, that I could see. One of my sources say, also, that their facial skin turns a pale green during mating season. A Great Egret will live 1 – 3 years in the wild, but up to 22 years in captivity! Predators include vultures, raccoons, and crows and habitat destruction by humans.



Great Egrets are common birds and are found along or beside ponds, streams, rice fields, salt-water and fresh water marshes, and mudflats. They nest and roost in varying colonies in trees. Normally solitary birds, they will gather with others if plenty of food is around. They forage in shallow water or grassy marshes. They will stand stock-still in one place for long periods of time, awaiting a passing fish or something else edible! They will also eat mice, frogs, and other small creatures.

Their range is most all of the US, and down into South America, Central Europe, Asia, Africa, New Zealand and Australia. I have not heard the Great Egret, but sources say that their call is a low, rattly, coarse croak, a “cuk, cuk, cuk”, or a short, low “kraak”. I love to watch them move their neck – it undulates like a snake! And the “S” shape is wonderful to watch!



My sources for this article include Switchzoo.com; A Field Guide to the Birds East of the Rockies by Roger Tory Peterson; A Guide to Field Identification Birds of North America by Chandler S. Robbins et al; The Sibley Field Guide to Birds of Eastern North America by David Allen Sibley; and The Stokes Field Guide to the Birds of North America by Donald and Lillian Stokes.

Birds Disappearing Quiz

by Pat Holley

Here's some information and questions to test your knowledge: (Answers below)

1. Birds may seem scarce in the spring time. What happens during the spring time to cause this scarcity?
2. Birds lay low after breeding by keeping out of the open. Why do they do that?
3. Bird seed is not a bird’s 1st choice or favorite food. It's only a percentage of their main diet. Will birds starve if we don't put out food?
4. What are other reasons why birds seem to disappear?

Answers:

1. Mating, searching for a mate, searching for nesting material and foraging.
2. To stay away from predators.
3. No. They only take advantage of the extra food.
4. Noise from local construction, land clearing, pesticide use, human encroachment, dynamic habitat changes, chemical use, invasive species, and climate changes.

Here is a web article reprinted with permission from the Audubon Society of Rhode Island to help understand these an-

swers and more. It seems bird behavior in the north is not that much different than around here.

“Nature is an amazing thing. Instincts long hardened into the brain become active when day length changes, when temperatures dip, or when moisture dries up. Survival skills and inbred behaviors ensure that wildlife endures the changes of the seasons. That is why, when summer is waning and days begin to grow shorter, the birds seem to disappear.

They have not actually disappeared, thankfully. They are simply not “hanging out” where humans may have become used to seeing them. Audubon Society of Rhode Island naturalist Kim Calcagno notes that she receives numerous calls and emails his time of year (fall) from concerned people who have noticed a remarkable dearth of birds in their yards and local parks. “Just as we can set the seasonal clock by the springtime robin and woodpecker phone calls, the start of autumn is distinctly marked by the profusion of calls asking what has happened to the birds” she says.

Well, what does happen to the birds? Calcagno explains that it is part behavioral and part nutritional. “During the spring and summer birds are focused on breeding. They come out to find a mate. They search to find nesting material. They forage endlessly for all those mouths to feed” she explains. “The birds you see are constantly taking risks by coming out in the open and exposing themselves to predators to get these things done. Once breeding is over for the season, they have some time before the winter comes to lay over a bit, staying out of the view of predators and keeping out of the open areas. This behavior is normal and comes with the season.”



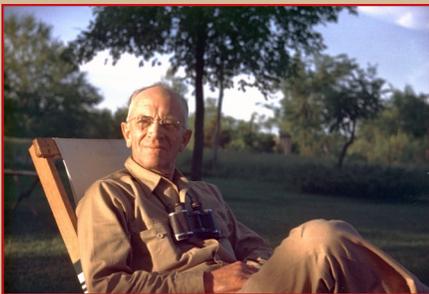
There is another reason why the birds seem to clear out, however. That has wholly to do with food. Many people are disappointed to hear the birdseed they lovingly put out for their feathered friends is not the bird’s first choice. The seed you put out, even in the cold of winter, is only a percentage of the birds’ complete diet. The birds take advantage of it, but do not require

it (and will not starve if you go away on vacation, so don’t worry.) “In late summer and early fall, the forests and fields are simply burgeoning with trees and shrubs that are full of ripe fruit, berries, seed pods and other fresh highly nutritious and easily obtainable food” adds Calcagno. “The birds are foraging in these trees, thickets and meadows in search of these treat. Whether a bird will migrate or will

stay in the area and face the cold of winter, this fall harvest helps them build up the necessary fat and muscle for the work ahead. The take advantage of the food sources while they can. It will be winter soon enough and they will once again have to work harder to find food.”

Now, of course, there are sometimes sources not related to nature that cause the disappearance of birds. Noise from local construction, clearing of land, and the use of pesticides can affect local bird populations. It has been long a concern in the scientific community that across North America there has been a steep decline of songbirds over the last fifty years. Some species are down by 50% or more. This is due to many different reasons including human encroachment, dynamic changes in habitats, chemical use, invasive species and climate change. Sometime decline is temporary and unfortunately sometimes it is not. Calcagno notes that most of her callers are observing the normal fall behavior of birds, and many of the species will return after a few weeks of scarcity.”

Aldo Leopold Says:



“One of the penalties of an ecological education is that one lives alone in a world of wounds. Much of the damage inflicted on land is quite invisible to laymen. An ecologist must either harden his shell and make believe that the consequences of science are none of his business, or he must be the doctor who sees the marks of death in a community that believes itself well and does not want” to be told otherwise.”

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Certifications, Etc.

By Debbi Harris

New since the Fall 2016 newsletter **are in this color.**

2016 Re-Certifications (Guadalupe Bass pin). Lucy Coward, Don Travis, Cindy Bolch, Donna Lewis, Cindy Travis, Katherine Bedrich, Ann Collins, Linda Jo Conn, Joyce Conner, Darlene Anglen, Barbara Cromwell, Wesley Sweet, Sheri Sweet, Sherry Colley, Mike Conner, Debbi Harris, Kim Summers, Nancy Webber, Dorothy Mayer, Pam Neeley, Kathy Lester, **Carol Williams, Scott Berger, Lynn Hagan, and Lisa Milewski.**



Highest Level of Lifetime-to-date Milestone Achievement Levels earned by current members as of January 31, 2017 include:

5000 Hours—Katherine Bedrich (deceased Nov 2016)

4000 Hour Presidential Award—Donna Lewis

2500 Hours—Don Travis, Ann Collins, Debbi Harris and Lucy Coward.

1000 Hours—Joyce Conner, Sue Taylor, Dorothy Mayer, Phyllis Shuffield, Sandra Dworaczyk, Linda Jo Conn.

500 Hours—Barbara Cromwell, John Pruett, Sheri Sweet and Wesley Sweet

250 Hours—Janice Johnson, Kim Summers, Cindy Travis, Sherry Colley, Kathy Lester, Pam Neeley and Darlene Anglen.

Our December 31, 2016 Year-to-Date Volunteer Service and Advanced Training hours were **4,688** and **1070** respectively (41 current active and eligible members) and Total Accumulated hours for Volunteer Service and Advanced Training hours are **55,912** and **7,476** respectively (95 total volunteers past and current since 2008).

Congratulations to All

Did You Know?



What mammal does a handstand as part of its defense?

Yup! That would be our friendly little skunk. Take it as a great warning as to what's coming next! Skunks are omnivorous, eating both plant and animal material depending on the seasons. They eat insects and larvae, earthworms, grubs, rodents, lizards, salamanders, frogs, snakes, birds, moles and eggs. They also commonly eat berries, roots, leaves, grasses, fungi and nuts. In settled areas, skunks also seek garbage left by humans. Less often, skunks may be found acting as scavengers, eating bird and rodent carcasses left by cats or other animals. Pet owners may experience a skunk finding its way into a garage or basement where pet food is kept. Skunks commonly dig holes in lawns in search of grubs and worms. They are one of the primary predators of the honeybee, relying on their thick fur to protect them from stings. The skunk scratches at the front of the beehive and eats the guard bees that come out to investigate. Mother skunks are known to teach this behavior to their young. Skunks are notorious for their anal scent glands, one on each side of the anus. These glands produce the skunk's sulfur-containing spray. They carry just enough of the chemical for five or six uses – about 15 cc – and require some ten days to produce another supply. Most predators such as wolves, foxes and badgers, seldom attack skunks, presumably out of fear of being sprayed. The exceptions are dogs, reckless predators whose attacks fail once they are sprayed, and the great horned owl. It is the skunk's only regular predator. One of the most commonly held beliefs is that tomato juice will neutralize the smell. This, however, can require extremely large amounts of tomato juice and is only marginally effective. The Humane Society of the United States recommends using a mixture of dilute hydrogen peroxide (3%), baking soda, and dishwashing liquid. Wikipedia was the source. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Skunk>