

Wings Over Georgia

A Newsletter about Birds and Butterflies for the Members of
The Garden Club of Georgia, Inc.

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Welcome to another issue of our newsletter. My yard is a hive of bird activity. The concert in the morning is breath-taking. It's an exciting time to be a bird watcher! With the warmer days, butterflies are beginning to make an appearance, too. Enjoy your yard and the beautiful days of spring. Enjoy our "flying friends". I hope you'll enjoy reading this issue as much as I enjoyed compiling it for you.

Suzanne

Suzanne Wheeler

*GCG Birds and Butterflies Chairman
2007-2009*

311 Smith Street - Hartwell 30643

706-376-5120

wheeler@hartcom.net



Did you participate in the Great Backyard Bird Count? Hopefully many of you did. Start encouraging your clubs to participate next year. According to the official website, 85,000 people participated. Six hundred thirty-four species were identified. The Northern Cardinal was once again the most frequently spotted species. Mark your calendar now for February 13-16, 2009.

The following item on bald eagles came from Shirley Lewis in Savannah. She very graciously gave me permission to include it in this newsletter.

"Bald Eagles Over Coastal Georgia"

We have Bald Eagles flying over waterways and marshes along Georgia's coast! Below are some facts on this magnificent bird. Removed from the Federal Endangered Species List in June, 2007, the Bald Eagle remains protected under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act and Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

- 1- Scientific name: *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*
- 2- Range: every U.S. state except Hawaii; also northern Mexico and much of Canada
- 3- Habitat: large, open bodies of water with plentiful fish and tall nesting trees
- 4- Size: wing span between 6 to 8 feet; weight up to 15 pounds; body length up to 3.5 feet
- 5- Food: fish; small mammals and reptiles; sometimes scavenge dead animals
- 6- Breeding: nests can weigh several tons; Eagles mate for life; females lay 1-3 eggs per year, both parents share eaglet-rearing until eaglets learn to fly at 12 weeks old

Enjoy the Bald Eagle's grace in flight and awesome beauty!

Shirley Lewis, Liaison
Savannah GCs/Oleander District/ GCG/DSR/NGC

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The following came out of the *Texas Parks and Wildlife, May 2008*, by Mary O. Parker, (page 18). With this the season of baby birds, you may find it both interesting and helpful.

Is That Baby Bird Really An Orphan?

What should be done if you happen across a baby bird that appears to be orphaned? The first thing to consider is that the baby may not actually need your help.

Often, out-of-nest babies are mistaken for orphans or injured when the truth is they are simply doing what maturing birds do – preparing themselves to fly the coop. ... Many people still believe that once humans touch a baby bird, its parents will reject it. While that is incorrect, the truth is that by “helping” the baby

bird, there is a good chance you have interrupted the parents educational efforts or rescue attempts or even the baby's first attempts at spreading its own wings. ... A bird that is already feathering will usually require only a short period of time before it becomes independent.

If you find a nestling that has fallen from the nest, you should first see if you can locate the nest the baby fell from. If you can't, create a makeshift nest in a shoebox and line it with an old T-shirt. Never line it with a towel because babies often get their claws caught up in the frayed strings. Then secure the nest in dense shrubbery or a tree close to where you found the bird on the ground.

As tempted as you may be, it's best not to feed the baby. Quite often, birds are killed by their well-meaning caretakers either because they are given the wrong type of food (such as giving a seed-eater an insect or vice-versa) or giving liquids improperly (leading to fluid in the lungs).

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A young male ruby-throated hummingbird sips some flower nectar while perched on a wire tomato cage.

Ants can really put a damper on hummingbird feeding. Luckily, there is something that to help with that. Ant moats are a simple cup that you hang above the feeder and fill with water. Ants

will not cross the water barrier. Some feeders have built in moats, but it never hurts to add another deeper moat.

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How many of you wonder what Dollie Harper, immediate Past President of GCG, is seeing in the Dominican Republic? She sent me this picture sometime back and I wanted to share it with you. Not sure about the name of the bird. It was strolling around near the pool in the condo complex where Dollie and Gene live when they are there.



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I saw this picture in the Bird Watcher's Digest, Vol 30 No 5 May/June, 2008. Please forgive my grandmother story, but this picture made me think of it and I want to share it with all of you. My 4 year-old grandson and I had been watching a Carolina Wren build its nest in a fern hanging basket just outside of his front door. To entertain him, his father would hold him up to look at the bird sitting on the nest. At first, she would fly whenever David and Jordan opened the door. Then she decided that she could stay on the nest and just move away from them. Finally, she decided that Jordan meant her no harm and she would actually let him rub her head with his finger as she sat on the nest. The eggs have hatched now, and mama bird is busy feeding them. Daddy bird has shown up now, too - don't know where he was while mama was sitting on the eggs. Neither adult bird is afraid of Jordan although he is not trying to touch the babies. He's just looking at them.

Now is the time to be watching for caterpillars to start eating things in your garden. Know your caterpillars and don't harm the caterpillars of butterflies.



Eastern Tiger Swallowtail caterpillar



Monarch caterpillar



Black swallowtail caterpillar



Pearl crescent caterpillars



Buckeye caterpillar



Viceroy caterpillar



Mourning cloak caterpillar

Karen Stokes, Azalea District Birds and Butterflies Chairman, submitted the following article (source unknown) to the Azalea Trumpet. I thought that it was important, and she graciously said I could use it.

10 Commandments for a Healthy Yard

1. Go organic: limit exposure to toxic chemicals, and nourish your yard with compost.
2. Make your turf tough: sharpen mower blades and set them to mow no lower than 3" high; water deeply (1") only when needed. Reduce the lawn area by 50%?!
3. Go native: with more native plants the habitat will be healthier for wildlife and you.
4. Know your enemies: get a field guide to identify insects and learn their life cycles so you don't use poison unnecessarily.
5. Treat only when you have to: use non-toxic methods first such as picking/washing off insects or cutting of an affected branch. Tolerate a few chewed leaves.
6. Pick your pesticides: target specific pests and leave the beneficial insects alone.
7. Use biological controls or biopesticides.
8. Follow directions and protect yourself regarding chemicals.
9. Respect your neighbors' right to know: notify them before you apply pesticides that could drift.
10. Tolerate controlled untidiness for bird and other wildlife habitats; welcome a variety of wildlife into your yard.