Splendid Spiders

Have you ever noticed in the fall when you are walking through the woods in the morning you are also walking through a lot of spider webs. I don't know why spiders seem to be more prolific in the late summer and fall, but I suspect Dr. Dave Grant from Davidson College could tell us. And I sure he will at our next meeting. After three tries we are finally going to get an opportunity to face our fears and misconceptions of spiders. It should be a fascinating presentation.

Put your apprehensions aside and join us on Thursday, October 7th at 7:30 PM in the Sharon Seventh Day Adventist Church fellowship hall.

From the President's Perch

Last spring I was at the Charlotte Nature Center near Freedom Park to help celebrate International Migratory Bird Day by doing some programs for them. About the time things were winding down, a gentleman came up to me with something in his hand. He said he had found it sitting in the middle of the parking lot. It was an adult male downy woodpecker. It appeared he had broken his wing, probably from flying into a window. Of course, since I was the 'bird lady' I would know what to do. And I did!

We found a small box put the bird in it and then I set out on a very interesting adventure. I was going to take the bird to Wild Birds Unlimited on Independence. One of the women who works there had recently started working with a rehabber in the area and I knew she would be able to take the bird, stabilize it and then get to the rehabber. Unfortunately, when I arrived Nancy informed me that she was heading out of town as soon as she got off work. There was nothing for me to do but take the bird to the rehabber myself.

So I headed off to Vicky’s place at the other end of the county. I have worked with the Raptor Center for many years and know what it is like to do rehab work. But I was not prepared for what I found at Vicky’s house. There were cages of every shape and size everywhere. All filled with injured creatures. Since it was spring birds were plentiful but there were other furry critters as well. None of them were happy to be in the situation they were in and most of them were hungry. Vicky and a volunteer were doing their best to make all the animals as comfortable as possible as they healed or grew up enough to be released back into the wild.

Vicky confirmed my diagnosis; the bird had a broken wing. She would see what she could do but he was one of number of downies that she had received recently with the same injury. The break was very close to the shoulder and would be difficult deal with. I left the bird in her capable hands and knew that she would do what was best for the bird.

I have to admit though I felt a little guilty leaving the house. There was such a great need there and I couldn’t do anything. Or at least I didn’t think I could do anything.

I ran into Vicky this past weekend at Wild Birds Unlimited’s open house and we got talking about what she’s
FIELD TRIPS

Please remember to contact the trip leaders several days before the trip. If you don't, you may not receive information about last minute changes or cancellations. Also, if we don't know you are coming we might leave without you!

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 2: LATTA PLANTATION PRAIRIE

Half Day. Larry Barden will lead us on a hike through this unique habitat. He'll talk about the research being done by students at UNC Charlotte and the flora and fauna that have been making a come back in the prairie environment. Of course we will be looking at birds, butterflies and a wide variety of other creatures as we go along.

We will meet at the Latta Plantation Nature Center just inside the gate at 8 AM. [Directions can be found at http://meckbirds.org/birdingspots/lattaplantation.htm] If you are planning on joining us contact Larry Barden at 704-595-6325.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 11TH: HUNTINGTON BEACH, SC

All Day. This is our fall sojourn to a South Carolina birding mecca. Fall migrants - hawks and warblers - will still be moving through, wintering shorebirds will have settled in and a few ducks may also have begun arriving. This is one of the best times of the year to see peregrine falcons and merlins. And I am sure we will be delighted with spectacle views of hundreds if not thousands of tree swallows. Best of all the people have moved out! It is a wonderful time of year to be on the beach.

We will meet in the parking lot on the eastside of the causeway at 7:30 AM. It can pretty hot so remember a hat, sunscreen and plenty of water. We will eat lunch in the park so bring a lunch & water.

Since most participants stay for the weekend, we will plan to go out to dinner Saturday night. At dinner we'll plan where to go on Sunday. A favorite, inexpensive Mom & Pop motel in Murrel’s Inlet is the Brookwood Inn [843-651-2550]. If you are planning to go contact Judy Walker at 704-537-8181 or birdwalker@mac.com.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 16TH: McMULEN CREEK GREENWAY

McMullen Creek Greenway in South Charlotte is a great place to see a variety of birds at a nice leisurely pace. It's an oasis in the sprawl of new development treasured by both birds and people. Some late migrants will probably still be hanging around and some of our winter visitors may have begun to arrive. We’ll meet at 8:00 AM at the entrance to the greenway on Highway 51 [directions].

Dave Lovett will be leading the trip so if you are interested in going contact him at 704-622-2770 or email him at birdsalot@WEBTV.NET.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 30TH: OWL PROWL [TENTATIVE]

Owls are as much a part of Halloween as witches, ghosts, tricks and treats. And as Rob Bierregaard has discovered Charlotte is chock full of owls for a spooky Halloween evening. Take a break from tricks and treats and join us for some really spooky encounters. The exact location hasn’t been determined yet but if you are interested in finding a few of these nocturnal denizens contact Judy Walker at 704-537-8181 or birdwalker@mac.com.

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 7TH: PEE DEE NWR [FULL DAY]

When birders think of National Wildlife Refuges places like Pea Island, Chincoteague or Merritt Island spring to mind. Places on the coast. But there are literally hundreds of smaller refuges across the country that protect unique habitat for both flora and fauna.

Pee Dee NWR is one of the smaller refuges tucked away in a not so glamorous place - the NC Pied-
doing. She told me last year she received over 800 critters and a great number of them were birds. The Raptor Center receives about 600 birds a year and they have fulltime staff, a host of volunteers and lots of space. Vicky does this voluntarily in her home with a handful of volunteers.

As we were talking I realized that I could do something to help her. Not only could I do something but all of us could. I realize most of us have full time jobs and don’t have much time to physically volunteer. But we can help in another very important way. We can help Vicky by making sure she has the supplies, equipment and medicines she needs much like we help food banks in the area. Many of the supplies she needs are everyday supplies we use around the house. You may have needed equipment sitting in your closet gathering dust. Why not pick up an extra item or two at the store and/or rummage through your closets for items Vicky needs and bring them to the October meeting? We’ll have a box to collect the items and get them to Vicky.

Of course financial donations would also be accepted since we can’t pick up the medicines the critters need to get better.

Carolina Wild Care is the nonprofit, tax-exempt organization that Vicky founded to support the care of injured and/or orphaned wildlife. She receives no funding from state, city or county agencies, she depends on the kindness of people who care about wildlife.

Of course, if you have the time she can always use an extra hand to feed the animals and work on several other projects. If you have some time to offer you can contact Vicky directly at 704-399-9668.

Take a look at the list, pick up a few items, check you closets to see if you have any of the bigger items and bring them to the next meeting. I know the birds and other critters will greatly appreciate it. [If you are considering a financial donation please make the check out to Carolina Wild Care.]

---

Carolina Wild Care Wish List

Add some of these items to your shopping list:
- Baby food (ONLY chicken & chicken gravy or chicken & chicken broth)
- Bird seed (without red millet)
- Cheerios
- Clorox (unscented)
- Cotton Balls
- Disinfectant (Nolvasan or Chlorohexadrine)
- Hill’s Science Diet Kitten Original
- Kaytee hand-feed formula for baby birds
- Liquid sanitizer
- Paper tape
- Pedialyte (plain and grape)
- Q-tips
- Spoon-sized shredded wheat (plain)
- Suet cakes
- Tissues/toilet paper (soft 2 ply, high quality for TLC)
- Triple-antibiotic ointment
- Unsalted nuts in shell (pecans, walnuts, almonds, acorns)
- White paper towels

Things that might be laying around your house not being used:
- Aquarium tops
- Aquariums (all sizes)
- Crab boxes (all sizes)
- Dog & cat kennels (all sizes)
- Hanging water bottles
- Heating pads
- Play pens
- Play sand
- Polar fleece fabric/throws
- Small ceramic bowls

If you have a few hours you can help with
- Carpentry and plumbing projects
- Feeding animals and cleaning cages
- Transporting animals

Bring any (or all) of the above items to the monthly meeting and we will make sure they get to Vicky as quickly as possible. It’s one way you can help the birds.

---

Some idiot, put fabric softener in the birdbath!!
**Myth:** Spiders are insects.

**Fact:** No, spiders belong to the Class Arachnida, insects to the Class Insecta. Arachnids are as distant from insects, as birds are from fish.

**Myth:** “Arachnid” is just a fancy name for spider.

**Fact:** No, not really. There are eleven orders of arachnids. These include the scorpions; mites and ticks; harvestmen; pseudoscorpions; whipscorpions; solpugids; and spiders.

**Myth:** Spiders are easy to ID.

**Fact:** No such luck! Laypersons often assume that there are only a few spider species around, and all they’d need to identify them would be a few pictures. In reality, the world holds over 50,000 species of spiders classified into over 100 families. In our area, there are likely at least 30 families and a few hundred species.

**Myth:** All spiders make webs.

**Fact:** Technically, a web is not just anything a spider makes out of silk; it is a silk structure made to catch prey. Only about half of the known spider species catch prey by means of webs. Others actively hunt for prey (including members of the wolf spider, jumping spider, ground spider, sac spider, lynx spider, and other spider families), or sit and wait for prey to come to them (trap door spiders, crab spiders, and others).

**Myth:** The orb web is the “normal” spider web.

**Fact:** Although orb webs are the most conspicuous webs (because they tend to be large and are often suspended in mid-air) they are not the most common type. In temperate regions, sheet webs are the most common, and cobwebs are also more abundant than orb webs. In some locations, funnel webs are also more common. Only in the tropics can orb webs equal other web types in abundance, but they still are rarely in the majority. So when you notice a spider web that is not a round orb, rest assured that it’s perfectly normal.

**Myth:** A “daddy-longlegs” is a kind of spider.

**Fact:** This is a tricky one. Unfortunately, different people call completely different creatures by the “daddy” term. Most Americans who spend time outdoors use the term for long-legged harvestmen, which are ground-dwelling, outdoor creatures. Harvestmen are arachnids, but they are not spiders — in the same way that butterflies are insects, but they are not beetles. Harvestmen have one body section (spiders have two), two eyes on a little bump (most spiders have eight), a segmented abdomen (unsegmented in spiders), no silk, no venom, a totally different respiratory system, and many other differences; not all have long legs.

**Myth:** Most spiders cannot bite humans because their fangs are too small.

**Fact:** This may actually be true of a few of the smallest spiders, and of groups like crab spiders that have small fangs. However, there are well-documented human bite cases from spiders as small as 3 millimeters long. It’s not that spiders can’t bite, it’s that they don’t bite except very rarely. And on those rare occasions, the bite almost always has only trivial effects on the human, who after all weighs from one to several million times as much as the spider!

**Myth:** Spiders are most numerous in late summer.

**Fact:** Actually, August and September are the worst time of year for northern hemisphere spider collectors. A few large conspicuous spider species (including the larger orb weavers and the giant house spiders) are mature at that time, but not many other spiders are.

**Myth:** You can identify “brown recluse” spiders by a violin shape.

**Fact:** Because of this myth, brown recluses are also called “violin” or “fiddleback” spiders. The real Loxosceles reclusa does have a vaguely violin-like spot right behind the eyes. So do a number of other spiders, many of them in different spider families. That alone would limit this spot’s usefulness for identification! Most people who have heard this myth forget about the “right behind the eyes” part, and identify as “brown recluses” any spider in which any part of the body or pattern can be envisioned as violin-shaped. The spider family (Sicariidae) to which the recluse group belongs is recognized partly by the arrangement of the eyes, which would rule out 99% of the specimens that get misidentified — if anyone ever bothered to look for anything but that mythical “violin”! At species level, as in other spiders, a powerful microscope is needed to...
House spiders are usually not the same species as the yard or garden spiders outside your house. They belong to a small number of species specially adapted for indoor conditions (constant climate, poor food supply, very poor water supply). Some house spider species have been living indoors at least since the days of the Roman Empire, and are seldom to be found outside, even in their native countries (usually Europe). Many of these species now live in houses worldwide, and most have been carried by commerce to more than one continent.

House spiders colonize new houses by egg sacs carried on furniture, building materials and so forth. They usually spend their entire life cycle in, on or under their native building. If a large number appear at a specific season, it is usually late summer (August and September) — not a notably cold time of year! — rather than fall, and their appearance coincides with the mating season of the given species. What you are seeing is sexually mature males wandering in search of mates.

The females and young remain hidden for the most part, in crawlspaces, storage areas and other neglected rooms; wall and floor voids; behind furniture and appliances, etc. Generally fewer than 5% of the spiders you see indoors have ever been outdoors.

Although some house spider species can survive outdoors, most don't do well there, and will perish rather quickly when removed from the protective indoor habitat. You're not doing them a favor when you put them outside.

In most cases, house spiders are harmless and beneficial. They prey on insects and other small creatures. They are not bloodsuckers, and have no reason to bite a human or any other animal too large for them to eat. In any interaction between spiders and humans, the spiders are almost always the ones to suffer.

[Adapted from Spider Myths Burke Museum University of Washington -http://www.washington.edu/burkemuseum/spidermyth/index.html]

Brush piles make excellent places for many wildlife species to hide, find food and even raise their young.

Building a wildlife brush shelter involves little to no cost and can be lots of fun. The concept is simple: build a sturdy structure out of logs and branches that provides cover and safety while still allowing enough spaces for animals to move around.

The dimensions of an average brush shelter are approximately ten feet across and five feet high. However, if you're dealing with limited space, a shelter half that size made with smaller brush will still attract a variety of critters. Someone with a larger property may want several shelters twice that size.

How to get started:

*Start by building a strong base with about a half dozen large logs, six to ten feet long and four to six inches in diameter. Stack and criss-cross them in a manner that's sturdy and provides a variety of runways and spaces. (Imagine an animal the size of a rabbit being able to navigate through your structure).

*Add large branches by criss-crossing them in a slightly tighter mesh than the logs. Continue adding more branches of a gradually smaller diameter to obtain a denser, more compact weave on top of the pile.

*Your end product should be a dome-like structure.

*Some communities do not allow brush shelters, so check your local codes. If brush piles are a fire hazard in your region, consider creating a rock pile or stone wall.

Identify recluse, and in females, it is even necessary to cut open the abdomen and examine internal parts!

**Myth:** "I know the dreaded Brown Recluse spider is in this area because people have been bitten by them!"

**Fact:** Unless you live in the south-central USA (see map), where Loxosceles reclusa actually lives, human bite cases are reported from your area because of the incompetence of those reporting them, not because of actual spiders biting people. In the USA generally, there are hundreds of these cases reported each year, and at least 60% of them are false reports from areas where the spider supposedly responsible does not exist.

**Backyard Habitat Tip**

Real distribution in 2002; real
Feathers

Many people when asked what makes a bird a bird will reply – wings, because they allow them to fly. But think about it. Some birds don’t fly – ostriches and kiwis. And there are a lot of things that do have wings and fly like insects, bats, seeds. Some aren’t even alive like airplanes! It is actually their feathers that distinguish birds. There are numerous other unseen physical characteristics also unique to birds but feathers are what most nonscientific people notice.

Obviously the feathers allow the bird to fly and they also keep the bird warm in the cold and cool in the heat. But did you know:

• Primary feathers are aerodynamically shaped to provide the best lift and control. Where do you think engineers learned everything they know about aerodynamics.

• Man didn’t invent Velcro either. Take a closer look at a feather under a magnifying glass or microscope. There are minuscule ‘hooks and loops’ that hook together to keep the feather smooth and in one piece.

• Birds do not grow feathers all over their body (except for the ostrich). Instead they grow in what are called feather tracks. The feathers extend from the tracks and cover most if not all of the body. This makes it easier for muscles to control the feathers and for the bird to move its wings more easily. Imagine what it would be like to have to move your arm if you had feathers growing out of your arm pits!

• Each feather has its own muscle. This how the bird can puff itself up to keep warm or make itself real skinny to cool off.

• Feather color is usually caused by pigments. However, the iridescence of Indigo Buntings and hummingbirds are created by the structure of the feather. That’s why the Indigo Bunting is brilliant in the sun but hard to find in the shade and the hummingbird’s throat changes color depending on which way it is facing.

Feathers are fascinating. So the next time you pick up a feather take a closer look at what makes a bird a bird.

Just for Fun

A contestant on “Who Wants to be a Millionaire?” had reached the final plateau. If she answered the next question correctly, she would win $1,000,000.

And as she suspected the million-dollar question was no pushover. It was, “Which of the following species of birds does not build its own nest, but instead lays its eggs in the nests of other birds? Is it: A) the condor; B) the buzzard; C) the cuckoo; or D) the vulture?”

The woman was on the spot. She did not know the answer. She was on the spot because she had used up her 50/50 Lifeline and her Audience Poll Lifeline. All that remained was her Phone-a-Friend Lifeline. The woman had hoped she would not have to use it because the only friend she knew would be home happened to be a blonde.

But the contestant had no alternative. She called her friend and gave her the question and the four choices.

The blonde responded unhesitatingly: “That’s easy. The answer is C: The cuckoo.”

The contestant had to make a decision fast. She considered employing a reverse strategy and giving Regis any answer except the one her friend had given her. And considering her friend was a blonde, that would seem to be the logical thing to do. On the other hand she responded with such confidence the contestant could not help but be persuaded.

“I need an answer,” said Regis.

Crossing her fingers, the contestant said, “C: The cuckoo.”

“Is that your final answer?” asked Regis.

“Yes, that is my final answer.”

Regis said, “I regret to inform you that that answer is . . . absolutely correct. You are now a millionaire!”

Later, the contestant hosted a party for her family and friends— including the blonde who had helped her win the million dollars.

“Jenny, I just do not know how to thank you,” said the contestant. “Because of your knowing the answer to that final question, I am now a millionaire. And do you want to know something? It was the assuredness with which you answered the question that convinced me to go with your choice. By the way, how did you happen to know the right answer?”

“Oh, come on,” said the blonde. “Everybody knows that
The Traveling Birder

Wings Over Water November 2-7, 2004

Have you ever been on an owl prowl? Or stood around on a pitch-black night and “howled” up some red wolves?

These are two of the many field trips offered at Wings Over Water, Nov. 2-7 on the North Carolina Outer Banks.

Pontoon boat tours of the Scuppernong River, a kayak trip through The Maze, a tour bus ride through Outer Banks history, and ghost town birding on Portsmouth Island are but a few of the new events at this year’s festival.

Among the birding field trip locations are Mackay Island NWR, Pea Island NWR, Currituck Lighthouse, Roanoke Island, Oregon Inlet, Bodie Island, Cape Hatteras, Ocracoke Island, Portsmouth Island, Alligator River NWR, Palmetto-Partrree Reserve, and Mattamuskeet NWR. All trips have been rated for expertise and degree of physical ability needed.

Paddlers can chose from trips at Kitty Hawk Woods, Pine Island Audubon Sanctuary, Currituck waterways, Alligator River, Ocracoke Island, Pea Island NWR, North River, Lake Phelps, and places with interesting-sounding names like Laurel Bay Lake, Whipping Creek and Hidden Lake.

Nags Head, Roanoke Island, Cape Hatteras National Seashore, Buxton Woods, and Pea Island NWR will host natural history events. A butterfly trip to the Oregon Inlet area is offered, as well.

For more information, contact the Outer Banks Chamber of Commerce at (252) 441-8144 or visit www.wingsoverwater.org.

Colonial Coast Birding & Wildlife Festival October 8-10, 2004

Jekyll Island is the headquarters for the second annual Colonial Coast Birding & Nature Festival, Oct. 8-10.

Mottled ducks and least bittern will be targeted on field trips to Altamaha Waterfowl Management Area, while Blackbeard Island NWR should yield the marbled godwit and the endangered piping plover. A trip to Fort Stewart will seek out red cockaded wood-peckers and Bachman’s sparrow. The Savannah Harbor spoils area has a track record of eared grebe, Hudsonian godwit, Wilson’s phalarope and clay-colored sparrow in Fall.

Butterfly enthusiasts will visit Harris Neck NWR, while paddling events are planned for Melon Bluff Nature & Heritage Reserve and St. Simon’s Island. Possibly the most diversity of environment and bird and animal life will be found on the trips to the Okefenokee NWR.

Among the seminars scheduled are Fall warbler identification, pelagic birding, gull and tern identification, Barrier Island ecology, digiscoping, backyard wildlife habitats, and southern birds in Native American culture. For more information, call (912) 652-4030 (ext. 111) or visit www.coastalgeorgiabirding.org.

Local Membership

Join now and your membership will be effective until June 2005.

Because of changes in National Audubon membership structure, Mecklenburg Audubon now must offer a local Chapter Membership to cover the cost of the newsletter, web site and cost of meetings.

Name_________________________________________ Phone________________________

Address [Street, City, ST, and Zip]_________________________________________ E-mail________________________


___ Please, save trees and send me[us] the newsletter electronically.

___ I[we] would be willing to lead a field trip.

___ I[we] would be interested in participating in a work day at one of the local preserves.

___ I[we] would be willing to do a program.

Return to: Lucy Quintilliano, Treasurer, Mecklenburg Audubon Society, P.O. Box 221093, Charlotte, NC 28222
Who’s New!?

Jim Boyes
Martha Sherman & Robert Bustle
John Chapman
Ron Clark & Anne Giles
Rayo Daroowalla
Kip Wait & Jeanette Day
Sharon Freedman
Judy Gough
Sue Gursky
Pat & Dave Hooten
Mary M Kistler
Sylvia Lande
Bruce W Nelson
Sheila O’Shaughnessy
James Snyder
Mariaelena Souto
Lisbeth Stockman
David & Janet Wakelin
Mary Alice Warren
Wayne Washam
Kathy Watkins

Answers to September Crossword Puzzles

ACROSS
1. Man o’ war bird - Frigatebird
2. Introduced back to Maine - Atlantic Puffin
4. Silent hunter at night - Owl
5. Raptor - Harrier
6. Small ducks - Teal
8. Mimic at midnight - Mockingbird
9. Cardinal causing problems in Hawaii - Red Crested
10. Ratite - Ostrich
13. Swan with pink bill and legs - Coscoroba
14. Gull with black head, red legs - Bonapartes
15. Only true stork in US - Wood
16. Desert woodpecker - Gila
17. Beep, beep - Roadrunner
18. With a coal black cap - Chickadee
20. Has a hanging nest - Oriole
22. With a coal black cap - Chickadee
24. In the mangroves - Spoonbill
25. Eurasian swan - Whopper

DOWN
1. 2. Introduced back to Maine - Atlantic Puffin
3. Small ducks - Teal
6. Cardinal causing problems in Hawaii - Red Crested
7. Decorates its home in blue - Bowerbird
9. Northern Atlantic seabird - Gannet
11. Brood parasite - Cowbird
12. Sunshine at your feeder - Goldfinch
13. Swan with pink bill and legs - Coscoroba
16. Desert woodpecker - Gila
17. Beep, beep - Roadrunner
18. With a coal black cap - Chickadee
20. Has a hanging nest - Oriole

What’s Inside?

Monthly Meeting 1
President’s perch 1
Field Trips 2
Carolina Wild Care 3
Spiders 4
Backyard Habitat 5
Feathers 6
Just for Fun 6
Traveling Birder 7

Activities Calendar

Sat. 10/2 - Latta Prairie - 1/2 day Field Trip
Thu. 10/7 - Spiders - Monthly Meeting
Sat. 10/8 - Huntington Beach, SC - All Day Field Trip
Sat. 10/23 - McMullen Greenway - 1/2 Field Trip
Thu. 11/4 - Woodpeckers - Monthly Meeting
Sun. 11/7 - Pee Dee NWR - All day field Trip
Sat. 11/20 - McDowell Prairie - 1/2 day Field Trip
Thu. 12/2 - Snowbirds - Monthly Meeting

For additional activities and information go to http://meckbirds.org