



Habitat Herald

A Publication of the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy

Volume XV, Issue 2

Summer 2010

Limiting Lyme Disease – Naturally?

by Jenny Mattes

Adapted from an article in Volume 36, Issue 3 of *Conservation Currents*, a publication of the Northern Virginia Soil & Water Conservation District

Over the past ten years, reported cases of Lyme disease in Loudoun County have increased from 29 to over 500 per year. According to the Loudoun County Health Department, the incidence of Lyme disease is about 20 times greater in Loudoun County than the Virginia average. A survey

conducted by Dr. David Goodfriend, Director of the Loudoun County Health Department, showed that about 70 percent of people who contracted Lyme disease became infected on their own property.

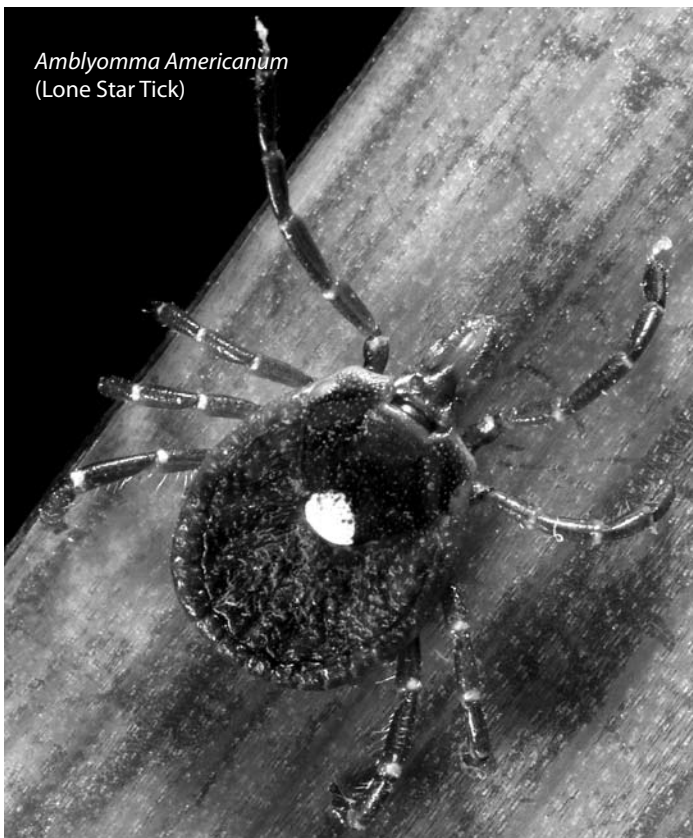
The high risk in Loudoun County is due to a number of different factors. The natural areas and woodlands as well as suburban areas create an ideal environment for ticks, which can carry Lyme disease, and the county's increasing population allows more people to come in contact with infected ticks. The health department also attributes the higher numbers to an increase in the reporting of cases due to the trained medical community and well-educated residents.

Lyme Disease Facts

Lyme disease is a bacterial disease transmitted through the bite of the black-legged tick, *Ixodes scapularis*, more commonly known as the deer tick. Lyme disease is not contagious, and if detected promptly, often by the tell-tale bull's eye rash, is typically curable with antibiotics. However, in a fraction of patients, particularly in adult patients whose disease remains undiagnosed for an extended time – Lyme disease can cause serious lingering symptoms, including joint pain and arthritis, fatigue, memory loss, other neurologic symptoms, or inflammation of the heart.

Black-legged ticks are ubiquitous and pernicious pests. They inhabit humid woody areas such as wooded parklands but also flourish in the edge areas between forest and lawn that are common in suburban and residential settings. They wait in leaf litter and on the tips of leaves and grasses for a mammal host to brush against them. At 3/8-inch long or less, they are easy to overlook; and although they are less prevalent in the winter, ticks can be active in periods of warm weather year-round.

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Amblyomma Americanum
(Lone Star Tick)

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A Word from the President Lessons from the Gulf

by Joe Coleman

While not local and on a scale most of us cannot even comprehend happening anywhere and especially here, the horrendous environmental disaster which is unfolding in the Gulf of Mexico is painful

to watch. The photos of oil-drenched birds, dead dolphins, and sea turtles are heart-wrenching as we watch some of our nation's most bountiful natural areas being lost, all because **the bottom line** was more important than doing what was right and legal. Exceptions were made because people believed technology can accomplish anything and because nothing similar had happened in over 30 years. While it will probably be years before we know the details of whom and what is really responsible for this massive disaster, we do know that it occurred because of poor judgement, the taking of risks that should have never been tolerated, and a desire to maximize short-term profits.

What is especially hard to believe is that some public officials want to continue the same failed policies in spite of what has

occurred, saying that such a calamity will never occur again. However, we can be sure that it will happen again unless we are truly vigilant and ban such activities when the risks are too high and ensure that laws are fully followed when such activities are permitted.

Small risks often lead to major problems. We are seeing some of the same kind of thinking that led to the Gulf disaster occurring here in Loudoun County. There is significant scientific research that shows that Great Blue Herons abandon their nests when human activity occurs too close to those nests, and as a result several states have set minimum buffers for human activity around those nests. In spite of science that shows otherwise, Loudoun County decided that a buffer of 600 feet was no longer necessary to protect nesting Great Blue Herons and is betting that a 500-foot buffer is okay, just so a company can support its bottom line. I only hope they are right. If not, we will lose a precious "critical natural resource" and the sense of wonder that can be experienced when viewing a Great Blue Heron rookery.

There is also considerable scientific proof that shows what happens to water quality when streams and rivers are not

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Coordinator: Joe Coleman
Editors: Karen Coleman, Mary Ann Good
Design: Lorrie Bennett

Printed by: Mr. Print, Purcellville, VA

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The Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy is a non-profit 501(c)(3) group of volunteers who share a common goal of protecting and perpetuating natural habitats for the benefit of both people and wildlife. Contributions are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by the law.

The Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy Board meets the first Tuesday of each month. Board meetings are open to all current members. For more information, or to suggest topics for discussion at upcoming meetings, contact Joe Coleman.

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■ *A Word from the President, continued from pg. 2*

protected by sufficiently large vegetated riparian buffers. To ignore this scientific proof is not only asking for polluted water and damaging storm runoff but also extensive downstream flooding. With ever increasing rapidity, the Midwest is experiencing large floods where once these were less frequent and less damaging. The basic reason why is the loss of vegetated riparian buffers to development. What is amazing is that, in our litigious society, someone has not sued those people upstream from them who removed vegetated buffers along their streams and thereby increased the risk of flooding and pollution downstream.

Loudoun County is currently considering an ordinance that would improve and protect clean water through vegetated riparian buffers. This ordinance is titled the *Chesapeake Bay Ordinance*, so some people have said it doesn't pertain to this

county. However, since all of us live upstream from someone else and our actions have an impact on those downstream from us, there is no doubt that this ordinance will go a long way in cleaning up our streams and protecting us right here in Loudoun County, as well as the Chesapeake watershed.

What is hard to understand is the deceptive and misleading campaign that has been mounted to stop this ordinance. The other side argues that it will inconvenience them, as they will not be allowed to do what they have always done even when it damages their stream. This county has allowed the degradation of its surface waters for far too long, and it is time to do something now. Let's learn from the Gulf of Mexico disaster and begin to seriously take action to protect what we have right here in Loudoun County.

■ *Lymes Disease, continued from pg. 1*

Black-legged ticks have a rather complex two-year life cycle involving several life stages: larvae, nymphs and adults. Ticks can feed on humans in any life stage, but the majority of Lyme disease cases, up to 98 percent, are caused by bites from nymphs. Black-legged tick nymphs, which may be 2 mm in size or less, are active from spring through mid-summer, transforming into adults in late summer or fall.

Ticks, as larvae or nymphs, ingest the Lyme disease-causing bacteria, *Borrelia burgdorferi*, during blood meals from small, infected mammals or birds. The white-footed mouse is the predominant carrier, although chipmunks and common suburban birds such as robins, grackles and house wrens may also carry the disease-causing bacteria. Black-legged ticks are also called deer ticks because the deer is another important host, particularly for adult ticks. Deer do not transmit the bacterium that causes Lyme disease, but up to 90 percent of adult ticks feed exclusively on deer! Black-legged tick populations and distribution have been conclusively linked to those of deer.

Basic Lyme Disease Prevention

Particularly for families with young children, Lyme disease prevention is of utmost concern. Unfortunately, most cases of Lyme disease in children can be traced to normal outdoor play. Also, adult cases are often related to routine outdoor activities.

The best way to prevent Lyme disease is to **make checking for ticks a habit**. Check yourself and your children thoroughly, including armpits, scalp and groin. If you do find a tick, remove it immediately with fine-tipped tweezers to reduce the chances of contracting the disease. Ticks are slow eaters; they typically must be attached for 24-36 hours to spread the Lyme disease-causing bacteria to their host.

If you know you will be in tick territory, take additional precautions. Since most ticks hang out close to the ground, wear light-colored long pants for trips to woodlands and natural areas. Tucking your pants into your socks may look ridiculous



but can help to further limit access points to your skin. For older children and adults, spray shoe tops, pant legs and socks with insect repellent containing 20-30 percent DEET. (Increasing the concentration of DEET is not noticeably more effective at preventing tick bites.) Stay on paved or mulched trails and avoid contact with adjacent vegetation to further limit your exposure. Outdoor clothing and gear can also be dosed with a product containing the pesticide permethrin, which will kill ticks on contact.

"Tick Safe" Landscapes?



Integrated pest management (IPM) for ticks involves a combination of landscaping changes, control of host populations, and pesticide use if necessary. The approach incorporates official public health recommendations for creating "tick safe zones" in landscapes but allows each property owner or manager to balance ecological concerns with tick eradication efforts.

■ *Continued on page 4*

Is It Native? A Botanical Perspective

by Stanwyn Shetler

Stanwyn G. Shetler is Curator of Botany Emeritus and a former Deputy Director of the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Natural History. He has been a member of several plant societies, including the Virginia Native Plant Society, and has served several terms on the Board of Directors of the Audubon Naturalist Society and was its president from 1974 to 1977. In 1995, he received the Society's highest honor, the Paul Bartsch Medal, for outstanding contributions to conservation and environmental education.

"Is it native?" is perhaps the most commonly asked question on a wildflower field trip nowadays. We have learned to give the evil eye to exotics or aliens, plants from elsewhere that don't belong here. The more we study the local flora the keener is our sense of place, of what belongs and what doesn't belong, and this leads us to use terms like "native" and "alien." To the uninitiated plants are plants, each to be enjoyed for itself without prejudice of history or place, and

■ *Continued on page 5*



Queen Anne's Lace or Wild carrot was introduced from Europe as a medicinal plant and was naturalized in North America.

■ *Lymes Disease, continued from pg. 3*

In controlled studies, reduction of deer populations has been demonstrated to be at least if not more effective than pesticide use and more effective than landscape changes in reducing cases of Lyme disease. Fencing out deer from your yard, planting deer resistant plants, and encouraging public programs that reduce deer populations can reduce the number of ticks around your home. Research has also linked removal of invasive understory and thick, non-native groundcovers like pachysandra with decreases in tick populations. These types of landscape cover provide habitat for the white-footed mouse, a primary tick host. Using a variety of deer-resistant native vegetation around your home can limit tick hosts and also support natural resource management strategies to encourage biodiversity and conserve habitat.

Public concerns about Lyme disease related to 'messy' landscapes should be recognized and addressed. However, no-mow zones and habitat areas can be part of a "tick-safe" home or public landscape. Sunny, upland meadows and butterfly gardens, for example, are typically too hot and dry for ticks to proliferate. Establishing dry, sunny gardens or mulch areas around outdoor play, eating, and storage areas and vegetable gardens will reduce contact with ticks. Outside recreation areas can also be separated from habitat areas, stonewalls, and woodpiles with three-foot wide mulched perennial borders or mulch or gravel pathways. Creating or widening paths through meadows, woodlands and other natural areas and pruning vegetation encroaching on walkways will allow for intimate connections with natural areas and also make both children and adults less likely tick hosts.

A single landscape-wide application of a pyrethroid pesticide in late May or early June targets tick nymphs and is often recommended by public health entities to reduce Lyme disease cases. However, pyrethroids are highly toxic to bees as well as to fish and other aquatic organisms. In fact, the U.S Environmental Protection Agency limits use of these chemicals on or within 100 feet of wetlands, streams and other water bodies. An alternative to landscape-wide pesticide use is targeted use of pyrethroids at the margins of outdoor recreation zones. Techniques also exist to treat hosts, particularly white-footed mice, with pesticides. These techniques include using bait-boxes containing the pesticide Fipronil (often used for flea and tick control on pets) or tubes filled with permethrin-coated cotton balls that mice harvest as nesting material.

Lyme disease can be a serious illness, and keeping families safe is a primary concern. Environmental projects can take public health risks related to Lyme disease into account while still resulting in increased habitat, more diverse ecosystems, and cleaner air and water. At the same time, home and public property owners and managers can undertake a balanced, ecologically sound approach to reducing Lyme disease risks. An extremely thorough guide to tick management has been published by the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station and is on-line at www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/lyme/resources/handbook.pdf. For local information, visit the Loudoun County Lyme and Tick-borne disease web page www.loudoun.gov/lyme





■ *Is It Native?, continued from pg. 4*

the distinction between native and alien is judgmental and baffling.

There is, of course, good reason for calling attention to the alien species in a flora. Some of them (about 10%) become invasive, spreading rapidly and “over-powering” the native species. These invasive aliens destroy habitats and native plant communities and, if not unstoppable, may require herculean measures to control or eradicate. But we can get so consumed by this fight that we fail to see the drama of plant dispersal, migration, and present distribution.

Step back and take the long view of plant distribution. Every species originated somewhere on earth. A plant geographer (phytogeographer), like a good detective sifting the clues, often can trace back through time to the region or place of origin. From that place it has dispersed and migrated over time, perhaps eons, to its present area of distribution. Some species have gone far, perhaps worldwide, while others, especially “young” species, have stayed put (narrow endemics). How far depends on, among other things, the elapsed time, means of dispersal, and ecological versatility of the species.

The shifting continents have moved whole floras around, giving rise, for example, to similarities between the eastern North American and European and the West African and northeastern South American floras. Birds are important long-distance dispersers. They carry seeds and other plant propagules, sometimes thousands of miles. This is particularly true of waterfowl and shore birds and accounts perhaps in large part for the widespread ranges of many aquatic plants. Wind and water also disperse seeds varying distances. The spores of spore-bearing plants (ex.: ferns, mosses, lichens)

may be carried around the world in the upper currents. On a local level animals disperse seeds in their hair and scat, and ants take seeds to their nests and are agents of much micro-dispersal.

Humans are master dispersal agents who throughout history have been taking their favorite garden, orchard, and ornamental plants with them wherever they go. Humans are also master gardeners and have scoured the earth for novelties to bring home. Human activity, intentional and unintentional,

“Humans are master dispersal agents who throughout history have been taking their favorite garden, orchard, and ornamental plants with them wherever they go.”

has greatly disturbed the natural order on the face of the earth, especially in this age of boundless international travel and commerce. Quite apart from our deliberate help and unbeknownst to us, seeds hitch rides on all our means of conveyance to all our destinations.

What are we to make of this constant **falsification** through time of the history of nature? Each plant has its own story

of origin and migration by natural process to tell, so to speak, unless we falsify it by what we do. How then is the phytogeographer to know what is “native” and what is “introduced” (alien, exotic) and often “naturalized” (reproducing in the wild)? To find a native species in an unusual place is always a thrill, adding a new point to the map of natural migration, but what if it was planted? Just what does it mean to be “native”?

One perspective is that planting is gardening, no matter whether the species is native in some sense or alien. No matter whether the genes

come from near or far, the plant is planted and adds to the planted landscape! In this view natives are aliens unless the natives have planted themselves. The **species** may, indeed, be native to the region, state, or local area, but the **individual or population** being planted is introduced and is not native in that place.

Are we to stop gardening? Of course not, but we will be more careful in how we speak of “natives” if we pay attention to the dynamics of plant distribution.



Iris Virginia



Chirps from the LWC Nature Book Club

by Donna Quinn

April 2010: **Gathering Moss** by Robin Wall Kimmerer

"The patterns of reciprocity by which mosses bind together a forest community offer us a vision of what could be. They take only the little that they need and give back in abundance. Their presence supports the lives of rivers and clouds, trees, birds, algae, and salamanders, while ours puts them at risk. Human-designed systems are a far cry from this ongoing creation of ecosystem health, taking without

giving back... I hold tight to the vision that someday soon we will find the courage of self-restraint, the humility to live like mosses. On that day, when we rise to give thanks to the forest, we may hear the echo in return, the forest giving thanks to the people."

– Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Gathering Moss*

Gathering Moss is a provocative collection of essays centered on mosses. This collection offers not only fascinating scientific facts about mosses but also rich spiritual guidance

on how to live in harmony with nature and respect the interconnectedness of all living things. LWC Nature Book Club readers were captivated by the astonishing capacity of mosses to flourish in places where little else can grow, to survive drought, to capitalize on opportunities created by the unpredictability of nature's forces, and to change their reproductive method depending on environmental conditions to increase success. We were drawn into a world filled with science as well as spiritual reverence for these amazing tiny plants from which we can learn so much.

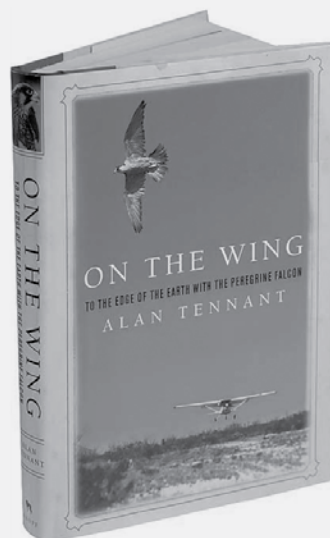
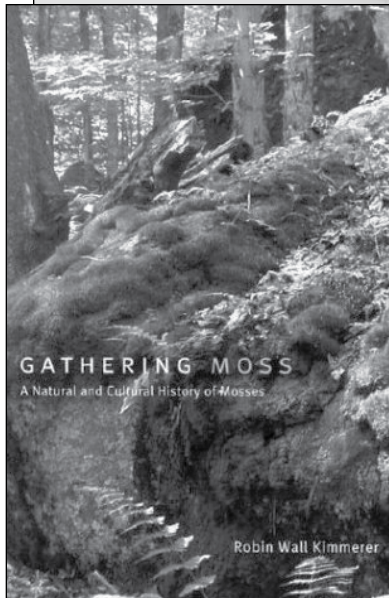
In *Gathering Moss*, Kimmerer takes us on an intimate journey with mosses – we feel the intensity of rocks and logs the mosses cling to and can sense water flowing through crevices and connecting all. She welcomes us to an "entire realm which lies at our feet." What is a moss? We learn it is a bryophyte, a primitive land plant which lacks flowers, fruits, seeds, and roots. Because of what it doesn't have, mosses are limited in size and live in the boundary layer – the quiet and still place where

surface and atmosphere meet. In this microenvironment, there is little air friction, which is important for a plant with no roots. Also, carbon dioxide from the decaying forest floor (required by photosynthesis) can be up to 10 times higher than in the atmosphere above. Each one of the 22,000 moss species existing in virtually every ecosystem, even city sidewalks, is simply and elegantly designed for success in its tiny niche.

As in every love story, once the reader's heart has been stolen by mosses, it is broken in later essays highlighting human acts of greed and lack of respect for nature. We read about the utter devastation left behind a clear-cut forest, the callous disregard of a rich estate owner who destroys an ancient moss stand in an attempt to create an artificial moss garden for personal pleasure, the irony of how mosses' simplicity makes them impervious to highly toxic defoliants that kill all other forms of vegetation, and the author's horror at discovering 100-year-old mosses in florist displays – mosses that grew together with their sapling host for 100 years and cannot ever regenerate on mature trees. Kimmerer admits to her own attachment to the material world: her beloved books whose pages were once moss-covered trees, the oak of her desk, the wood paneling in her study, the smell of a wood fire on a cold night. While there is no resolution between these worlds, she shows us the way of the mosses – a lush, balanced, and interconnected universe in which only what is needed is taken, and infinitely more is given back.

What's next:

On the Wing by Alan Tennant: Naturalist Tennant (The Guadalupe Mountains of Texas) describes his efforts to trail peregrine falcons on their epic migratory flights from the Caribbean to the Arctic in a detailed, impassioned account that's part nature study and part gonzo travelogue. Meeting date and location TBD.



LWC in Action: *Planting Trees and Weeding Invasives*

by Joe Coleman

During April and May several Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy volunteers either helped with or managed three different habitat restoration projects.

At the Audubon Naturalist Society's Rust Nature Sanctuary, we helped Bruce McGranahan and Ann Garvey remove invasive alien plants around the pond and the pollinator garden and plant a number of native trees, shrubs, and perennials. On Earth Day, April 22, LWC joined forces with volunteers from the Waterford Foundation on the Phillips Farm to plant an additional 200 trees and shrubs as well as place protective shelters around them. To date over 1,200 trees and shrubs have been planted on the Phillips Farm, and the resulting healthier riparian buffer is not only providing more protection to the Catoctin but improving wildlife habitat at the same time.

Twenty volunteers on April 24 and May 3 added 170 trees, shrubs, and perennials to the more than 200 trees and shrubs and 144 perennials planted last June along Leesburg's Town Branch, immediately downstream from where it flows under Catoctin Circle. In spite of considerably more damage from deer than at the more rural Phillips Farm, more than 95 percent of the trees and shrubs planted last year have survived. As this vegetated buffer grows and fills out it will help capture and filter the many pollutants that flow off of Leesburg's streets and roads in this area as well as slow down storm water so it does not do as much damage downstream as it has in the past.

The Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy would like to thank the following volunteers who worked on these three projects, and especially Jeff Wolinski, Consulting Ecologist, for all his planning and assistance:

Bryant Bays	Linda Drake	Martha Polkey
Aiden Beach	Elaine Dubin	Donna Quinn
Marlena Beach	Betty Ebert	James Ragsdale
Siena Beach	Rockie Fera	Matthew Ragsdale
Christine Breighner	Ellie Florance	Tyler Ragsdale
John Breighner	Ginny Friend	Erin Ramsey
Virginia Breighner	Ann Garvey	Jennifer Roberts
Alicia Butterfield	Bonnie Getty	Boy Ryan
Christopher Butterfield	Carlos Gonzalez-Reyes	Bob Shuey
Kent Butterfield	Margaret Good	Emily Smith
Rosaria Butterfield	Kathleen Hughes	Sally Snidow
Lisa Cammarota	Thaissa Klimavicz	Erin Snook
Mia Cammarota	Franklin Leonel	Andrea Soccio
David Chamberlin	Mary Lopresti	Bronwen Souders
Ron Circe	Bruce McGranahan	John Souders
Joe Coleman	Frank McLaughlin	Karen Strick
Candi Crichton	Paul Miller	Mimi Westervelt
Casey Crichton	Bill Morris	Jeff Wolinski
Phil Daley	Brandon Morris	Alexis Zimmer-Chu
Nancy Doane	Carolyn Ott	Lisa Zimmer-Chu



Celebrating International Migratory Bird Day

by Joe Coleman

Every spring millions of birds move through North America on their way to their nesting territories. While it is widely recognized how important wintering and nesting areas are to birds, few people realize how critical it is that they also find healthy habitat along their migratory routes. Without being able to stop and replenish their energy stores before continuing, many of these birds would not survive, let alone reproduce.

The Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy, to celebrate this natural phenomenon, sponsors a series of walks every year on International Migratory Bird Day. This year 37 birders participated on May 8 in 10 walks in locations as varied as Algonkian Regional Park and the privately owned Horsepen Preserve in the east, to Loudoun County's Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve and the privately owned Dulles Greenway Wetlands Mitigation Project in the center of the county, to the privately owned Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship in the far northwestern corner of the county. 105 bird species were found on the ten walks, with the highlights including a Great Egret at Bles Park, good views of several Yellow-billed Cuckoos and a Wilson's Warbler at Algonkian, a Cerulean Warbler at the Blue Ridge Center, Prothonotary Warblers at both the Dulles Wetlands and Horsepen Preserve, and five Blue Grosbeaks at Banshee Reeks.

We would like to thank the leaders of the ten walks:

Dale Ball	Bruce Hill
Bill Brown	Larry Meade
Roger Clapp	Paul Miller
Joe Coleman	Andy Rabin
Phil Daley	Dori Rhodes
Cathey Daugherty	Del Sargent
Robert Daugherty	Cheri Schneck
Nicole Hamilton	Linda Sieh
Gerry Hawkins	Mimi Westervelt

LWC also sponsored a Birdathon to support its bird conservation efforts and specifically the five-year Bird Atlas project. Besides having a great deal of fun, the eight teams participating this year were able to raise approximately \$7,000 and find 135 species, all within Loudoun County. The friendly competition that surrounds the Birdathon results in teams searching high and low to find every species they can during a 24-hour period. This year the Raven Loonatics, comprised of Donna Quinn, Gerco Hoogeweg, Bruce Hill, and Larry Meade, found the most species – 108, including both of their namesakes, (Common) Loon and Raven. Right behind them was Shrike Force – Joe Coleman, Mary Ann Good, Liam McGranaghan, and Laura Weidner, with 107 species including their namesake, Loggerhead Shrike. Because the rules of the competition

Northern Parula
by Nicole Hamilton ▶



◀
White-eyed Vireo
by Liam McGranaghan

require that a majority of the team observe 95% of the total species, the Raven Loonatics could not count a Lincoln's Sparrow seen only by Gerco, and Shrike Force couldn't count the Wild Turkey, Grasshopper Sparrows, or Yellow-throated Vireo observed by 1 or 2 team members.

Some of the highlights of the different Birdathon efforts were Common Loon; Virginia Rail and Sora; a Dowitcher; Woodcock; Least Flycatcher; Bank Swallow; and 23 warblers including Cape May, Cerulean, Kentucky, and Wilson's by two of the teams.

LWC thanks the following people for everything they did to make the Birdathon a roaring success:

Dale Ball	McKenzie Ligi
Sally Brenton	Spring Ligi
Stephanie Brenton	Liam McGranaghan
Joe Coleman	Larry Meade
Phil Daley	Lauren Megan
Cathey Daugherty	Carole Miller
Robert Daugherty	Paul Miller
Kym Detrick	Doug Norton
Juanita Easton	Christine Perdue
Mary Ann Good	Donna Quinn
Nicole Hamilton	Turner Smith
Bruce Hill	Emily Southgate
Gerco Hoogeweg	Laura Weidner
Addison Ligi	

And of course we want to thank the many generous sponsors who donated so much so we can keep on conserving Loudoun's birds!

LWC's New Treasurer

Linda Sieh, LWC's newest Board member and Treasurer, lived in Loudoun County as a child, and then returned in 1984 to buy a home with her husband, Steve. She has a BS in accounting but has also studied botany and horticulture. Her 25 years of nonprofit accounting experience include financial reporting and serving as staff liaison to external auditors and various volunteer boards and committees. She serves on a Countryside community committee established to evaluate the ecological health of Horsepen Run preserve, where she also volunteers for the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy monitoring a bluebird box trail and assisting the bird atlas block coordinator. Linda and Steve have two sons, one who has fledged from the nest but still resides in Loudoun, and the other a high school freshman. The Siehs enjoy a wide variety of outdoor activities such as hiking, searching for reptiles and amphibians, identifying wildflowers, and simply sitting and enjoying their backyard birds.



Linda Sieh

Meet LWC's 2010 Summer Interns

The Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy is pleased to have two interns helping us with our mission this summer:

Erin Snook graduated from the University of Pittsburgh with a degree in Environmental Studies and Political Science. Erin has worked for Frick Environmental Center in Pittsburgh, has written articles on environmental issues for a Spanish newspaper, and will be teaching a course in Bay Ecology for Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth this summer. She spent the last year



Erin Snook

abroad and now happily, though temporarily, lives in Leesburg with her husband. Eventually she plans to pursue a graduate degree in ecology and is excited to be working with LWC for the summer and putting all her energy into what she loves.

Emily Smith, a longtime Leesburg resident, graduated from Hollins University in 2009 with a degree in Environmental Sciences. During her junior year at Hollins she interned with the Western Virginia Land Trust in Roanoke. Emily has always had a passion for the environment as a result of growing up in Great Falls surrounded by all the wildlife along the Potomac River. She is interested in landing a career in the environment and would also like to be a nature photographer.



Emily Smith

Loudoun County Students Honored by LWC

by Paul Miller

On March 18, 2010, a team of judges from LWC participated in the 29th Annual Loudoun County Regional Science and Engineering Fair held at Briar Woods High School. The judges reviewed over two hundred entries presented by Loudoun County students. As in the past, LWC appropriated funds to provide cash prizes in the Special Awards category when students' work aligned with the goals of our organization. It is always encouraging to see the areas in which the students, who will be the next stewards of our environment, choose to conduct their experiments.

This year we were pleased to recognize Alexa Rizzo as our 1st Place Award recipient for her project, "Analysis of Otolith Composition to Determine Fish Migratory Routes." Alexa presented her project to LWC members at our annual meeting in May and was awarded a check for \$350 for her work. Our 3rd Place Award winner, Lyons Sanchez also presented his project titled "Which Root Grasps Soil Best?" and received an award of \$150. Our 2nd Place Award winner was Aubrey Higginson whose work titled "Quantifying the Economic and Ecologic Benefits of Tree Cover" earned her a check for \$250. Unfortunately, Aubrey was unable to attend the annual meeting to publicly receive her award.

Many thanks to the judging team from LWC for giving their time and expertise to the Annual Science Fair. Members of that team were Marcia Widener, Otto Gutenson, Phil Daley, Mike Friedman, Bob Kaplan and Paul Miller.

Programs and Field Trips

Space is limited for many of these programs and field trips. Please call the designated program contact for further information and to reserve your spot.



SUNDAY IN THE PRESERVE

Join a naturalist from the Friends of Banshee Reeks and LWC for a free informal, family walk around the preserve. Search for the many natural wonders that make this such a special place. For information call the Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve at 703-669-0316.

Sunday, July 18
Sunday, Sept. 19
Sunday, Oct. 17 } at 1:00 p.m.

Board Meetings – LWC's Board normally meets the first Tuesday of every month at 7:00 p.m. All LWC members are welcome. Contact Joe Coleman at 540-554-2542 or jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org for additional information.

Butterfly Walk at the Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship – Saturday, July 17, 10:00 a.m. Join Joe Coleman on a free, family butterfly walk at this beautiful 900-acre preserve in northwestern Loudoun County. We will observe many butterflies nectaring at the butterfly-friendly organic farm and the surrounding wild areas. The Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship is located on Harpers Ferry Road, Rte 671, a few miles south of Harpers Ferry and the confluence of the Potomac and Shenandoah rivers. Detailed directions can be found on the website, www.brce.org. Meet at the Visitor Center at 10:00 a.m. *Questions: contact Joe Coleman at jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org or 540-554-2542.*

Gray Tree Frogs, Enjoy The Chorus – Saturday, July 24, 7:30 – 9:00 p.m. Registration Required. Join us at the Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship for an evening learning about Gray Tree Frogs, their habits, habitats needs, and life-cycle. The program will also include time in the field to listen to the frogs' calls and to spot a few. Please bring a flashlight or headlamp as well as a chair to sit on. Meet at the Visitor Center off of Rte 671, a little north of the Neersville Volunteer Fire Sta-

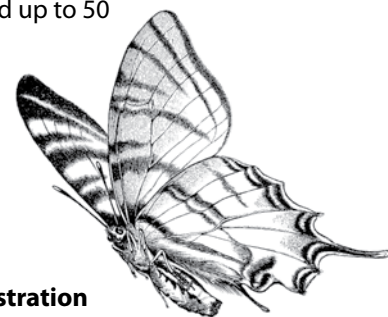
tion and on the west side of the road. **Registration is required** as the size of the program is limited. Detailed directions can be found on the website, www.brce.org. *Sign up online (www.loudounwildlife.org/SignUp.htm) or contact Nicole Hamilton at nhamilton@loudounwildlife.org.*

Butterflies and Dragonflies at Claude Moore Park – Sunday, July 25, 10:30 a.m. Join Nicole Hamilton and Andy Rabin for a free, family butterfly and dragonfly walk. We will investigate some of the many diverse natural areas that comprise this beautiful park and identify all of the butterflies and dragonflies we can find. Claude Moore Park is located at 21544 Vestal's Gap Rd. in Sterling Va. If you own binoculars, please bring them. *Questions: contact Andy Rabin at stylurus@gmail.com.*



Butterfly Safari – Wednesday, July 28, at the Broadlands Community Center, 7:00 – 9:00 p.m. Families with children ages 5 and up flutter on over and join the fun as local naturalist, storyteller, and the co-founder of the Washington Area Butterfly Club, Alonso Abugattas, shares some wonderful facts about these winged wonders. Discover the many clever ways these delicate creatures have of surviving. The Broadlands Community Center is located at 43008 Waxpool Rd, Broadlands. Free family program. *Questions: contact Laura Weidner at lweidner@loudounwildlife.org*

Annual Loudoun County Butterfly Count – Saturday, August 7, 9:00 a.m. Join LWC on its 14th Annual Butterfly Count, centered in the Waterford area. No experience is necessary; novices will be teamed with experienced leaders in each segment of the count. Counters will visit various locations that include butterfly gardens, sanctuaries, roadside wildflower and grassy areas, and parks. Over 2,000 butterflies can usually be counted in this single day, and up to 50 different species can be found. Our count circle stretches from White's Ferry in the east to the Appalachian Trail and the Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship in the west to Point of Rocks and south to Lincoln. Please bring a lunch and water. Binoculars are also helpful. **Registration Required.** *For more information or to register*



and receive directions, please sign up online (www.loudoun-wildlife.org/Butterfly_Count.htm) or contact Nicole Hamilton at nhamilton@loudounwildlife.org

Dragonflies at Banshee Reeks – Sunday, August 22, 10:30 a.m. - 12:00 noon. Join LWC for one of our free, family dragonfly walks. We will investigate some of the many diverse natural areas at Banshee Reeks and identify all of the dragonflies we can find. If you own binoculars, please bring them. Questions: contact Andy Rabin at stylurus@gmail.com.

Annual Waterford Labor Day Picnic – Sunday, September 5, 5:00 - 8:00 p.m. For the past three years, LWC has partnered with the Waterford Foundation to build a vegetative riparian buffer on the Phillips Farm. Join us at this annual celebration of the project. Bring a picnic and enjoy it at the Mill, join us on a guided tour of the history and natural wonders at the Phillips Farm, and watch a Monarch Butterfly release.

Wings Over Sky Meadow – Monday, September 6, 8:00 a.m. - Noon. Pre-registration required. Only 30 minutes from Loudoun and situated on the slopes of the Blue Ridge Mountains, Sky Meadows State Park offers a mix of habitats, including meadow, forest, field, and stream. Explore this natural area with Joe Coleman and Laura Weidner in search of birds, both resident and fall migrants, and late-season butterflies. We will walk up to 3 miles, some uphill and downhill in sunny terrain, but at a leisurely pace. Co-sponsored with the Audubon Naturalist Society (ANS). **Pre-registration required:** Members (ANS & LWC): \$23; Nonmembers: \$32. To register contact ANS at 301-652-9188 x16.

Chimney Swift Night Out – (September date and location TBD). Registration Required. Chimney Swifts congregate in communal roosts prior to their migration in the fall. Some roosts may consist of an extended family group of six birds, but the larger sites can host hundreds or even thousands of swifts! One such roost has been found in the Lincoln area. Meet at the Goose Creek Friends parking lot where Lincoln RD intersects with Sands and Foundry Roads. Bring a blanket to sit on and binoculars. We'll sit on a lawn area across from the chimneys where the birds roost and watch their wonderful aerial flights. **Registration Required.** Please Sign Up online. Keep an eye on our website for details of this field trip.

Birding the Appalachian Trail and Hawk Watch – Saturday, September 18, 8:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. Join us as we hike along the Appalachian Trail in search of migrants in the morning. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at Snickers Gap to car pool to a close-by location for a hike that leads to a beautiful waterfall. Around

11:00 a.m., we'll meet back at the Snickers Gap Hawk Watch for a few hours of hawk watching and possibly see a major push of Broad-winged Hawks. Bring a lunch and a chair. Meet us at 8:00 a.m. at Snickers Gap or join us at 11:00 at the Snickers Gap Hawk Watch. Questions: contact Mary Ann Good at magood1@verizon.net.

Mid-Week Nature Walk at Dulles Wetlands – Tuesday, September 21, 8:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. Registration Required. Join Joe Coleman and Phil Daley on a free, mid-week nature walk to explore the Dulles Greenway Wetlands Mitigation Project to see birds, butterflies, and wildflowers. Waterproof footwear, long pants and insect repellent advised. This field trip is being co-sponsored by the Northern Virginia Bird Club. To register or for questions contact Joe Coleman at jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org or 540-554-2542.

Birding the Blue Ridge Center



On the fourth Saturday of each month (except December), LWC leads a free bird walk at the Blue Ridge Center for Environmental Stewardship (BRCES), a beautiful 900-acre preserve in northwestern Loudoun County. The property includes meadows in the valley and heavily forested slopes on the Blue Ridge. The Center is located just north of Neersville, at 11611 Harpers Ferry Road (Rte 671). Meet at the visitor center. Detailed directions can be found on the website, www.brces.org.

Questions: contact Joe Coleman at jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org or 540-554-2542.

Saturday, July 24

Saturday, August 28

Saturday, Sept. 25

Saturday, October 23



Walks begin at
8:00 a.m.

Continued on page 12



■ *Programs and Field Trips, continued from pg. 11*

Birding Banshee



Join LWC and the Friends of Banshee Reeks at the Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve for the monthly bird walk. Because of its rich and varied habitat, it is a birding hot spot. Please bring binoculars. Questions: contact Joe Coleman at 540-554-2542 or jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org.

Saturday, July 10
Saturday, August 14
Saturday, September 11
Saturday, October 9

*Walks begin
at 8:00 a.m.*

An Introduction to Our Local Snakes – Wednesday, September 22, 7:00 – 9:00 p.m., location TBD. Liam McGranaghan will present a slide show on the snakes one is likely to see in our area. Learn more about these fascinating creatures and why they are a valuable part of the world around us. Come at 7:00 for light refreshments and meet the speaker; the free program will start at 7:30.

Exploring Wetlands – Saturday, October 16, 9:00 a.m. – noon. (Location TBD). Registration Required. Join Jeff Wolinski, a Consulting Ecologist and wetlands expert, on a visit to one of our local wetlands. As we explore the wetlands, Jeff will describe the plants, soils, and other characteristics that blend together to create one of nature's most fascinating and important natural habitats. **Register online** at www.loudounwildlife.org or contact Joe Coleman at jcoleman@loudounwildlife.org or 540-554-2542.

Questions about the programs?

Contact Laura Weidner at lweidner@loudounwildlife.org.



For up-to-date information on our programs check our web site at www.loudounwildlife.org

Celebrating 15 Years

by Nicole Hamilton

More than 80 people came out to celebrate LWC's 15th anniversary at the annual meeting on May 16. It was a great day to get together, enjoy delicious food, listen to Karen Strick's wonderful flute music, and catch up on everything that has been happening.

Before the main activities began, people had a chance to meet and talk with the science fair winners and to bid on a variety of outstanding items in the silent auction. Thank you to all the donors who gave original art, books, pottery, t-shirts, and other items to the auction, which raised over \$500 for LWC.

Spring Ligi, the main speaker for the day, gave a slide presentation on the Loudoun County Bird Atlas project, sharing some of the findings to date and discussing the importance of this project for bird conservation locally. It was fascinating to learn of the progress and to hear how participants all over the county are helping to collect data.

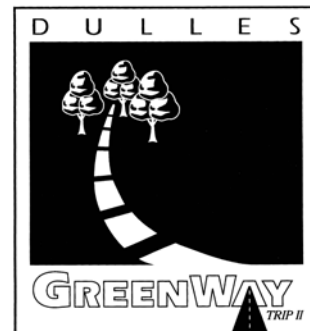
The business part of the meeting covered the treasurer's report and the nominating committee's slate of officers, which was voted on by the membership. LWC officers for the new, two-year term are: President: Joe Coleman, Vice President: Nicole Hamilton, Treasurer: Linda Sieh, and Secretary: Rockie Fera.

Congratulations to Paul Miller for being named LWC's Volunteer of the Year. Paul has made significant contributions to LWC with all his hard work in building our Environmental Education program for children, helping out at every habitat restoration project, being involved in our programs committee as we plan field trips and speaker programs, assisting with our summer nature camp, and always being on hand to help out whenever volunteers are needed for a project.

For photos check out our Facebook album. Many thanks to everyone who helped pull together our annual meeting – 15 years is a great milestone!

Dulles Greenway's 2010 Drive for Charity Again Benefits LWC

For the second year in a row, ridership was higher during the Dulles Greenway's Drive for Charity than any other day of the year, resulting in more than \$226,000 being raised on May 20 for five different charities, one of which was the Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy. On June 10, Trip II, the owners of the Dulles Greenway, presented LWC with a check for \$31,675. This money, the largest annual donation the Conservancy receives, will be used to fund our many educational programs, including sending several kids to this summer's Nature Camp. It will also be used to underwrite the *Habitat Herald*, LWC's various Habitat Restoration projects, our different monitoring programs, and all the great work our volunteers undertake.



Virginia Clematis, *Clematis virginiana*

By: Mary Lopresti

With approximately 297 different types of species, it is no wonder that the clematis has so many unique nicknames. A few names of our native *Clematis virginiana*, which include Virgin's Bower, Devil's Darning Needles, Devil's Hair and Old Man's Beard, are derived from the appearance of the plants long, feathery seeds and most likely from the plants toxicity.

Early travelers and pioneers of the American Old West used the clematis as a substitute for pepper, since black pepper at the time was so expensive and hard to obtain. Unfortunately, clematis is highly toxic and can cause irritation to the skin and mucous membranes, excess salivation, blistering, inflamed eyes, abdominal cramping, weakness, as well as other unpleasant side effects. Native Americans, however, were able to use very small amounts of clematis as an effective treatment for migraine headaches, nervous disorders, and skin infections. Regardless, it is a good idea to wear gloves when pruning clematis.

Clematis may grow up to 20 feet or higher if it has something nearby that can support its weight, such as a wall or other types of vegetation. The plant can be found growing in thickets and woods and also along roadsides and stream banks. The Virginia Clematis can be found up and down the eastern coast from Canada to Louisiana and as far west as Kansas.

The Virginia Clematis is a trailing perennial vine that has jagged leaves and numerous small, fragrant white flowers. It is easily confused with Sweet Autumn Clematis (*Clematis terniflora* or *Clematis paniculata*), an Asian vine that has escaped from gardens. The two vines can be distinguished by their leaves; on the *Clematis virginiana*, almost all leaves have jagged teeth. Sweet Autumn Clematis has rounded leaves, which are mostly untoothed.

While the Virginia Clematis has numerous small flowers, other species of clematis produce single or double flowers that can range in size from 1 to 10 inches across. They bloom in many beautiful colors from pastels to richly, vibrant burgundy, blue and purple hues, as well. This plant prefers most, rich soils, but will also thrive in dry shade. While the clematis may be a boon to gardeners who wish to attract hummingbirds, butterflies and bees, keep in mind that, if ingested, clematis can be deadly to humans, dogs, cats, birds and other wildlife.

Resources:

www.ct-botanical-society.org

www.drugs.com/npp/clematis.html

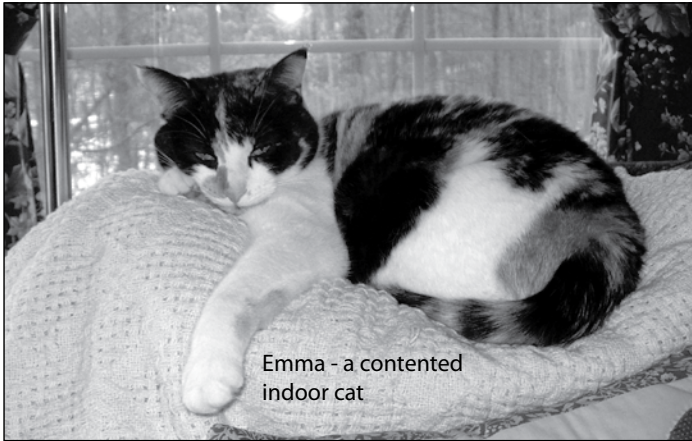
www.prairiemoon.com/seeds/trees-shrubs-vines/clematis-virginiana-virgins-bower/

www.wildflower.org/plants/result.php?id_plant=CLVI5



Indoor Cats: Keeping Cats and Wildlife Safe

by Emily Cook



Emma - a contented indoor cat

Anyone who has ever owned a cat can tell you that with ownership often comes some form of guilt as we watch our feline companions stare longingly out the living room window or bat at birds that stop for a respite on the window sill. Oftentimes this guilt gets the better of us and we begin to let our friends outside, little by little, so they can explore their "wild side" and feel the freedom we guilt-ridden owners think cats need to have in order to be happy.

We soon find little "gifts" at the foot of our bed or when Spot comes home he returns with a "prize" to let us know how much he loves us. While this is somewhat unappetizing, we attribute this endearing habit to their need to hunt, their instinctive desire to seek out prey in the wild. It's just nature, we say. But the truth of the matter is that letting our cats roam outdoors has a much greater impact, and is much less critical to the health and happiness of our feline buddies, than we think. In fact, there are many reasons why we are doing a great disservice to both our beloved pets as well as our local wildlife by letting them out of the confines of their safe, secure home. First, cats make a larger dent in the wildlife population than you may realize. While our one little kitty may only bring home one mouse or bird a week, it is estimated that nationwide cats kill hundreds of millions of birds and more than a billion small mammals per year. In addition, cats not only kill birds we consider common, they also prey upon many species that are on the endangered list. As a result, scientists have listed cats, along with invasive species, as the second most serious threat to worldwide bird populations. When you consider that one unaltered domestic male cat can breed with an unlimited number of feral females who are able to produce up to 3 litters per year, the result can be devastating to wildlife.

Aside from the obvious impact to the wildlife on which they prey, there are also many ways cats impact our ecosystem we may never consider. Domestic cats often hunt for sport, and when they do, they are directly competing with native predators for prey, often impacting the availability to those species

reliant on hunting for survival. It is also suspected that cats spread fatal feline diseases to native wild cat species including mountain lion, bobcat, and even the endangered Florida Panther.

Venturing out of doors is also detrimental to our furry companions. Thousands of cats are killed each year by motor vehicles as a result of being permitted to run loose. In addition, many fall victim to predators such as hawks, coyotes, and foxes. This is particularly true with cats that have been declawed and are still permitted to roam free. Often cats who are allowed to venture outdoors spend hours in below-freezing temperatures or lack shelter during inclement weather when their owners are not available to let them back inside. And let's not forget the unaltered male discussed above, who may produce thousands of unwanted wild kittens, many of which lead short, miserable lives.

It is our responsibility to our pets, as well as to the native wildlife in our neighborhood, to keep our cats safe and happy indoors. There are many ways to accomplish this and still keep everyone happy.

- Train your cat to walk on a leash (yes, it can be done!)
- Place perches on windowsills. Cats love to sunbathe and watch the outside world.
- Consider having more than one cat. There are many available for adoption and they love to have a playmate (see adoption sources below).
- Purchase toys that stimulate a cat's desire to hunt and pounce. Make sure to dedicate time each day to play with your cat.
- If at all possible, enable your cat to spend time on a screened porch or play enclosure. This way they get the best of both worlds.
- Place cat perches/trees in your home. They love to climb and exercise their claws.

While it may be a challenge to keep your kitty indoors at first, in the long run we will have much healthier, happier pets and wildlife will have an opportunity to flourish in their native environment.

Resources:

Cats Indoors Campaign Facts:

www.abcbirds.org/cats
www.abcbirds.org/abcprograms/policy/cats/index.html

Having a Happy Indoor Cat:

www.cat-world.com.au/keeping-indoor-cats-happy

Adoption Resources:

www.loudoun.gov/Default.aspx?tabid=787
www.lostdogandcatrescue.org/
www.hart90.org/





Adventures of Zoom & Compass

by Senia Hamoui

Baby Bird in Distress

"Detectives, this is Kendal and I need your help! I'm here with a baby bird in distress and I don't know what to do!" she cried.

"We have you on speakerphone, Kendal. Can you tell if the bird is injured? Is it making any movement or sounds?" asked Zoom.

"It doesn't look hurt, but it's incessantly peeping at me—as if asking for help," she replied, her voice shaking.

"Look around and see if there are any other birds in the area—it may be a fledgling," said Zoom.

"Fledgling?" asked Kendal.

"A fledgling is a young bird that has left the nest but doesn't know how to fly quite yet. It will continue to be cared for by one or both parents for the next couple of weeks," explained Compass.

"I think this baby bird is much younger—it's got these soft, dark feathers that aren't even full, and it walks real clumsily," said Kendal.

"Do you see any other birds around?" Zoom asked again.

"Um—I don't see any that can be its parent. Before I called you, I looked on from a little distance to see if another bird would return to care for it, but it didn't."

"Where did you find the nestling? Can you see into the nearby trees and brush for a nest that it may have fallen from?" suggested Zoom.

"I found it outside a neighbor's home so I'm going to ask their permission to look around—I don't want to appear to be snooping," she replied. "I'll be right back."

While holding for Kendal, Zoom and Compass further discussed the case and came up with a feasible explanation and solution but they would need to learn more from Kendal to be sure.



"I see a nest but the adult bird that flew over to it is definitely not the parent," said Kendal.

"What does the adult bird look like? Nestlings can look very different from its parents," interjected Zoom.

Kendal squinted as she looked up at the bird. "It has tannish feathers with black spots on the wings, and a pretty small head compared to its body. I noticed white tips on the tail feathers when it flew from the nest, making some whistling sound."

"That's a mourning dove!" exclaimed Compass. "And the nestling is most likely its chick."

"To be sure it's the right nest, you'll need to carefully climb up and peek in at the other nestlings," Zoom instructed. "Are you comfortable doing that?"

"You see," Compass began, "both parents take turns feeding the mourning dove crop milk for the first few days of its life. Crop milk is super nutritious—more so than cow or even human milk! It needs to get home for its feeding ASAP!"

"Will the parent bird attack me if I get too close?" Kendal asked.

"No, chances are you'll startle it from the nest which will allow you to take a good look. You'll hear the whistle again when it flies away—mourning doves make that sound with their wings," said Zoom.

Compass and Zoom waited eagerly on the phone. They could hear the clang of the ladder and climbing footsteps.

"Awww," Kendal whispered. "I see two others in the nest that look just like it."

"That's wonderful!" Zoom and Compass said at once. They were a bit surprised at first since a mourning dove's typical brood is two chicks, and this one will have three now, but it's not necessarily unusual either.

"I'm placing the baby back in its nest now, and it fits so snugly!" Kendal squealed.

"Mission accomplished!" said the detectives. "Job well done, Kendal!"



*People and Wildlife
living in Harmony*

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Let's Count Butterflies!

LWC's 14th Annual Butterfly Count takes place on Saturday, August 7th. Teams will cover Loudoun County, looking for butterflies as they flutter through fields, woodlands, and gardens. This is a great activity for all skill levels. Whether you know your butterflies or are just getting interested, this is a wonderful chance to see a wide variety of species all in one day. Teams are led by experienced people who share identification tips and other interesting butterfly facts. Join us for just part or all of the day — your choice. For more information and to sign up, visit our website: www.loudoun-wildlife.org/Butterfly_Count.htm or contact Nicole Hamilton at nhamilton@loudounwildlife.org.



Yes, I want to Join/Renew My Membership!

Membership Benefits include:

- Making a Difference
- Subscription to Habitat Herald
- Classes and Workshops
- Volunteer Opportunities
- Regular Monthly Meetings and Programs

Go online at www.loudounwildlife.org/Join.htm