

BirdWalk Newsletter

10.2.2016 Magnolia Plantation and Gardens

Conducted by Perry Nugent

Written by Jayne Matney

Hurricane season. We are still in hurricane season and I have had people come to me and ask, “What do birds do in storms?”



White Ibis

Photo by Jo Frkovich

Prior to a hurricane, many birds will take off when winds are still favorable. This enables them to travel away from the storm’s path. According to an article in 2014 by Carrie Arnold for National Geographic, scientific data shows that Golden-winged Warblers in Tennessee

sensed a severe thunderstorm coming several days in advance and were able to move out prior to its arrival. Scientists theorized that the birds have an ability to sense infrasound (a low frequency sound wave) produced by these storms. Barometric pressure shifts are also indicators for birds when weather changes are about to occur. On the east coast of North America, hurricanes circulate in a counterclockwise direction. **After** a hurricane system comes through, the birds may react by using the winds now traveling northwest if that is what they want to do for migration purposes. But what about



Crepe Myrtles by Jo Frkovich

during a hurricane? Smaller species of birds that happen to get caught in the storms while migrating usually don't survive the storms if the winds are very strong. Even the larger, stronger birds are exhausted. Those that are lucky enough to survive these winds, may end up pushed back to a place they were days ago, and will have to retrace miles of territory already covered. For those that wander into the storm and make it into the eye of a hurricane, they travel with the storm and put all of their efforts into staying there in the eye where it is safer. It is widely known amongst birders that sometimes tropical birds from the Caribbean will end up on the east coast of the United States after a hurricane because they were swept up into the high winds. Some example birds that have been spotted along the coast from the Caribbean Islands include the black-capped petrels, and several types of terns such as the bridled and sooty terns.

(www.audubon.org/news/how-do-hurricanes-affect-birds by Daisy Yuhas)

There is an interesting article by Emma Springfield in the July 23rd edition of the Nature Center Magazine which states many kinds of ways animal behavior "*may or may not change*" according to stories along the ages. Some examples were:

"Many types of birds become abnormally noisy just prior to a storm: other types of birds become abnormally quiet." I guess you best know which are which!

"Large numbers of perching birds on powerlines indicates a storm coming." I guess they haven't seen all of our mourning doves hanging out.

“If birds feed during rain, the storm is going to last a long time, but if they don’t come out to feed during the rain, then the storm will not last.” Can’t get between a bird and his food! Eating like a bird is definitely not true!

“If you see sparrows bathing in mud, it is going to rain.” Sounds like it already has if there is already mud available!

“If a rooster crows before sleeping it will rain.” I’ve been on farms where the rooster crows all the time! Do they give no regard for the specific roosters’ personality?

“Chicken will cluster together while scratching for food if it is going to rain.” How close is considered “clustering”?

“Black cockatoos screech loudly before rain.” Don’t they always screech loudly? I don’t get it.

I don’t know about you, but I think I need more evidence on these examples! Whatever the case may be, Birds do “hunker down” low in branches and thickets close to trunks to take cover for the storm or seek refuge up in roof eaves and abandoned spaces. With heads tucked and wings covering them, they wait out the storm.

This week at Magnolia Plantation we are watching Hurricane Matthew as it pushes its way towards us. Perry went on the walk alone this week as some of the regulars were involved in an Audubon Event. It was warm, breezy and nice as he made his



way around the property. It is apparent that Blue-winged Teal and the Pied-billed Grebe are beginning to come in. The Wood Ducks are in fair numbers while the regulars: Anhinga, Great Blue Heron, Great

Egret, Little Blue Heron, Green Heron, and White Ibis were present as well.

An Osprey was seen flying over the large old rice field and the Bald Eagle was sitting in a tree close by. A Cooper's Hawk flew low to the ground in the campground area. Perry shared that the Cooper's Hawk had been using the same nest for about 4 years. However, this year it was abandoned and the pair must be settling in at another nearby location.

8 Red-shouldered Hawk were seen and heard along the way. Perry



Red-shouldered Hawk enjoying the Spectacular view! Photo by Nugent

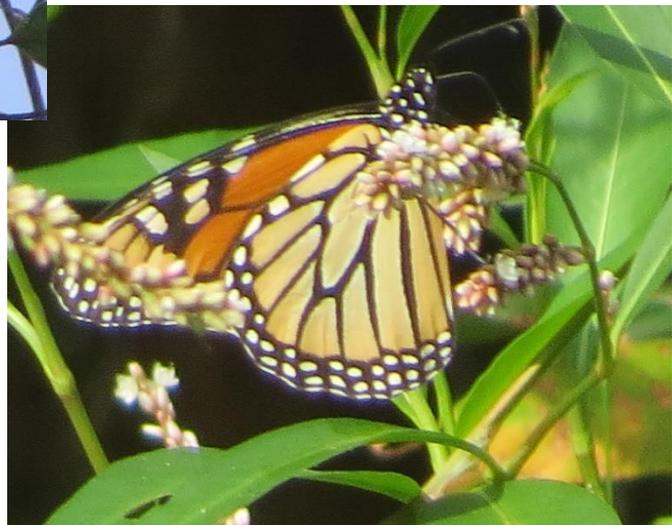
and his crew know at least 4 nest locations, but believe there are more. The nests are spaced out fairly evenly on one side of the property. According to the apparent territorial space they are allotting each other, there is plenty of room for more on the rest of the

plantation. We are about 60 high in Common Moorhen. No American Coot were spotted this week.

A highlight in the Passerine sightings was the Northern Parula. Perry



was able to get a photo of this young one. You can see the touch of orange under the neck and upper breast area. It is just starting to develop this marking. (See photo left by Perry Nugent) Another highlight for Perry was watching a female alligator call out to her young, and a monarch butterfly lighting gently on a branch. See below:



The Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, and Pileated Woodpecker are all accounted for. The passerines included: Mourning Dove,

White-eyed Vireo, Blue Jay, American Crow, Fish Crow, Carolina Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Wren, Eastern Bluebird, American Robin, Gray Catbird, Northern Mockingbird, Brown Thrasher, American Redstart, Northern Waterthrush, Common Yellowthroat, Red-winged Blackbird, and Common Grackle. Counting a few of the Turkey Vulture and Black Vulture circling above the river and field, the total number of species was 37.