

BirdWalk Newsletter 8.14.2016

*Magnolia Plantation and Gardens
Newsletter Written by Jayne J Matney*

*Bird Walks:
Every Sunday morning 8:30-11:30
Conducted by Perry Nugent*



“There is nothing in which the birds differ more from man than the way in which they can build and yet leave a landscape as it was before.” Robert Lynd

Nest building. We have seen nests of all types and sizes haven't we? Birds are the superheroes of being resourceful when it comes to preparing nests for their mates and babies. Sticks, moss, mud, grasses, leaves, or combinations of those naturally found items are the usual elements of a well-made nest. However, some nests can be seen in rooflines, rafters, logs, statues, shoes on a shelf, etc. I'm sure the list could possibly go on forever! Although, there are some birds that don't use a nest at all! The ground seems to suffice enough! Or if you are talking about penguins....the ice seems to be enough! Or perhaps a cliff edge as some eagles may choose. Some birds use the nest as a decorative enticement for their potential mates like that of the bowerbirds. If you have not read about the bowerbirds, this may be a great afternoon topic to research for yourself!

Some Fun Facts About Bird Nests:

Eagles reuse their nests by adding on to them year after year. The largest Eagle nest found was 20 feet deep and weighed an estimated 2 tons!

A contrast to the Eagle nest is the Hummingbird nest. A Ruby-throated Hummingbird builds a nest that is only the size of a sewing thimble.

Many other animals, such as alligators, wasps, and mice make nests. But the bird nest is a far more superior design with complex building procedures and skills used. These skills are instinctual. Studies have shown that a bird can build their own species specific type nest without ever needing to see examples prior to their first!

Of course ducks use their own down feathers to line their nests, but did you know that some birds will collect feathers dropped by other birds or have even been seen colliding with or striking other birds in flight to retrieve knocked off feathers?

Down feathers are not the only hot commodity! Some birds will use snake skins to help warn off predators and others may pick out certain plant's leaves to line nest that deter mites and other pests.

Usually female birds are much better at building nests. Some species of birds will have the male making "dummy" nests within the territory in order to throw off predators that may be watching!



Blue-gray Gnatcatchers make their nests out of spider webs and lichen while Barn Swallows may make more than 1200 trips to and from the nest with mouthfuls of mud to build their nest.

(info from: celebrateurbanbirds.org, www.fws.gov, and katiepickardfawcett.wordpress.com)



Blue-gray Gnatcatcher at nest

Photo by Jim Brownlee

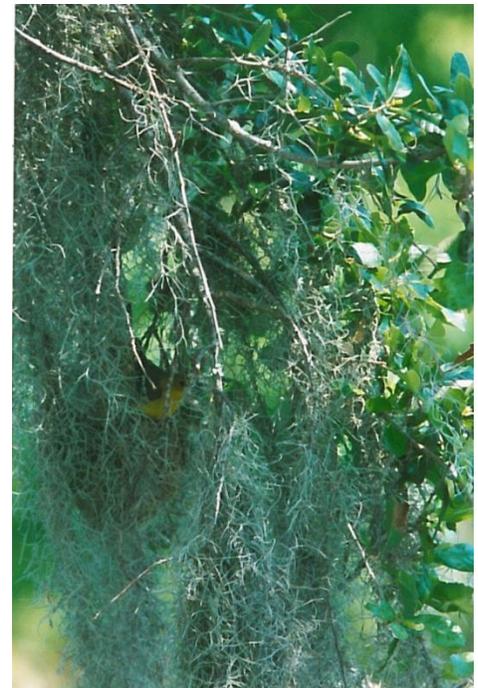
This past week, the morning was hot and muggy. Only one participant joined Perry this time. Success was made, however, with 44 species of birds in the count. The Wood Ducks are the top seated species today with approximately 120 individuals including some young being reared late in the season. Also in the running for high numbers were the Common Moorhen with 40, and Laughing Gulls with 50. The Little Blue Heron and the Green Heron barely made the double digits, while the 4 Glossy Ibis, 3 White Ibis, 4 Snowy Egret, 8 Great Egret, 2 Great Blue Heron, and 3 Anhinga came out short. The lone American Coot was seen once again this week at the large, old rice field. Black Vulture and Turkey Vulture are our regulars. A highlight for Perry was a flyover of 2 Mottled Duck rarely seen here. In the woodpecker category, 6 Red-bellied and 2 Downy Woodpeckers made the list.



*Squirrel caught trying to rob
a Pileated Woodpecker's Nest
Photo by Perry Nugent*

Pileated Woodpeckers were seen and heard between the Carriage House and the Office. During the walk, 2 Cuckoo were heard and 1 was seen near the white gate on the entrance road. 2 Royal Tern were spotted near the river dike. One Osprey was sighted over the café field, one Mississippi Kite appeared at the rice field's corner dike, 3 Red-shouldered Hawk (one sitting on a branch near the observation tower) appeared

along the woods, and 2 Cooper's Hawks (a young 2 year old and 1 adult) were observed near the exit road and cabins. The Blue-gray Gnatcatcher were everywhere and usually in family groups when seen. 5 Northern Mockingbird were interacting together and were suspected as being a family unit. 2 Great-crested Flycatcher, 2 White-eyed Vireo, 1 Red-eyed Vireo, 1 Yellow-throated Warbler, and 1 Pine Warbler are included on the list as well. Of course the Northern Cardinal, Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle, Boat-tail Grackle, Carolina Wren, Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Chickadee, and Mourning Dove rounded out the feathered crew.



*Above right: Hidden Orchard
Oriole nest within moss
Photo by P Nugent*