



The Tuneful Warbler

A Dunwoody Village Wildlife Refuge Committee Publication, Spring 2022

BIRD WATCH

Keep Your Feeders Full

The birds are back but they need to refuel for breeding season and feeding the hungry chicks.

Don't forget to put out a shallow bowl of water. Birds get thirsty, too, and some, like the robin, may want to bathe. Add a few pebbles where bees and butterflies can perch without falling in.

The Four Best Birding Books

Resident bird watcher Scott Tuttle recommends four basic guide books for both novice and experienced birders.

- *Birds of North America*, 2nd edition by Roger Tory Peterson, hardcover, \$23.99, Harper Collins.
- *National Geographic Birds of Eastern North America*, \$15.95.
- *Birds of North America*, Kenn Kaufmann, \$14.97, Kaufmann Focus Guides.
- *The Sibley Field Guide to Birds*, 2nd edition, David Allen Sibley, \$19.95, Knopf.

An excellent on-line reference on bird identification is the Cornell University Bird Lab, www.birds.cornell.edu.

Hummingbird Nectar

It takes only a few minutes to make hummingbird nectar. This recipe comes from the Audubon Society.

- 1/4 cup refined white sugar
- 1 cup boiling water

Stir until sugar is dissolved.

Do not substitute honey, which can promote dangerous fungal growth, or use red food coloring, which is not necessary and could also prove harmful to birds.

Memorial Garden Tree Walk

The most restful of the community areas at Dunwoody is without a doubt the Memorial Garden. Many residents, new and not so new, are curious about the plantings in the garden and the many trees that shade us in summer months. In April, Wildlife Committee chair Jorie Nailor took us on a tour and introduced us to the many species of plants, some are rare, all beautiful.

“The residents who built the garden back in 1976 envisioned a place for respite and restoration of residents and staff alike, where they can sit in the sun and fresh air, surrounded by trees, flowers and shrubs,” says Pat Turner, chair of the Memorial Garden Committee. Over the years the Memorial Garden has grown in both size and functions. Today we go there to read, meet friends, contemplate and muse, plan and ponder, and enjoy a meal under the pergola.

But, back in 1976, this area was slated to become a parking lot.

A group of residents, who were also accomplished gardeners, suggested a garden instead. Permission was granted, and the residents agreed to finance the project. Over the years residents have added a fish pond, a pergola and a gazebo as well as



specimen trees and expansive flower beds. There's rarely a day without a bloom.

Where once the residents did garden maintenance, a horticulturist is now in charge. Still, each spring, eager gardeners get out their trowels and help plant 20 or more flats of annuals.

Pat reports that the Memorial Garden is ready for visitors. The tables are out on the patio, the awning is up, and the koi are zooming around the pond. Stop for a moment and enjoy this marvelous space.



Keep Ticks Away

Tick bites are more than annoying, Deer ticks spread Lyme Disease. Bobbi Mynott suggests this easy-to-make spray for protection when walking in the woods or the garden.

Combine in a spray bottle:

- 2 c. apple cider vinegar
- 1 c. water
- 20 drops of peppermint or eucalyptus oil

Spray ankles and arms as needed.

Chesco Expands Its Open Space

Chester County announced a major milestone in April. More than 30% of the county —147,000 acres — has been preserved as open space. Chester County is the fastest growing county in the state and remains committed to preserving open space.

Does Your Cat Know Your Name?

We already know that pet cats can recognize their own names. Now scientists in Japan have shown that pet cats recognize the names that people have given to other cats who live in the same home—and it seems that some may even know the names of their owners. Read the post on *Psychology Today*: [Pet cats know their fellow cats' names.](#)

Why Robin Eggs Are Blue?

That brilliant shade of blue: Have you ever wondered why American Robin eggs are colored with such a hue? The blue pigment—also found in the wings of butterflies—is thought to protect the eggs by keeping them at just the right temperature. And while it may seem counterintuitive, it keeps them camouflaged, too. Source: *Audubon*

For the Birds: The Birdsong Project

This new Audubon audio-video production hopes to inspire bird conservation through art, music and poetry. It is now streaming everywhere you listen to music or you can watch it on YouTube. Produced by Grammy Award-winning music supervisor Randall Poster, the video features original music by celebrated songwriters and entertainers like Beck, Mark Ronson, Yo-Yo Ma, and Karen O, along with bird-inspired poetry by Rita Dove and Joy Harjo and recited by artists like Tilda Swinton and Matthew McConaughey. All proceeds benefit Audubon's mission to protect birds and the places they need to nest.



The Greening of Newtown Square

Newtown Township is proud to be “green.” From the flower baskets hanging from lampposts to township ordinances and its new Trails & Greenways Committee, the township's commitment to open space and environmental quality is everywhere.

Within township limits are five parks, the yet to be developed Meadow Preserve and a network of walking trails. Plans call for the trails to extend, uninterrupted, from Willistown to the west to Radnor on the right.

Again this year, as in five of the last six years, Newtown Square has been named a Tree City USA by the Arbor Day Foundation.

Being green also depends on com-

munity support. In 2017, volunteers formed Newtown Square in Bloom. They plant flowers and trees, develop trails, clean up parks and streams and maintain the Drexel Lodge Park Butterfly Garden. Two Dunwoody residents are current members.

For more information on parks and environmental programs, and on Newtown Square in Bloom, visit the township website: www.newtowntownship.org.



Invite an Acrobatic Dragonfly to Your Garden

Dragonflies are agile if nothing else. They fly forward and backward, hover and glide, top out at 20 miles per hour and catch their prey in the air.

And they eat Mosquitoes! In fact, they can eat 300 of them a day. They are fond of other garden pests, including flies, midges, ants and moths. Welcome the dragon as a useful predator in a garden.

A water source, such as a small pond, is a dragonfly's preferred home. Even so, they are frequently seen around Dunwoody. Black-eyed Susans and yarrow attract them.

Garden plants themselves can repel unwanted bugs:

- Lavender is anathema to fleas, flies, mosquitos and moths, but bees are drawn to it.
- Mint is great for keeping ants away..
- Lemongrass contains citronella which will repel mosquitoes all summer.
- Chrysanthemums contain a natural insecticide called pyrethrin, which drives away bedbugs, fleas and ants.
- The scent of fresh basil will scare off mosquitoes and moths. Plant them near your tomatoes.

Try one of these natural pesticides as an eco-friendly alternative to chemical-based products.

Sparrows: Naughty or Nice?

Naughty



English or House sparrow

All sparrows are not the same.

Some sparrows are well-behaved. Others are little terrors with killer instincts. It all depends on their countries of origin.

The non-native house sparrows (also called English sparrows) are the ones that give sparrows a bad rap. The English variety was imported to the US from England in 1852 to control the linden moth population in New York City. Today they are found throughout North America.

Unlike native sparrows, they are very aggressive and pose a serious threat to bluebirds, purple martins and other songbirds that nest in cavities. The house sparrow will kill both adult and young songbirds and take over their nests.

All sparrows are so accustomed to people that you probably can find them around your home even without feeding them. They are frequent visitors to backyard feeders, where they eat most kinds of birdseed, especially millet, corn, wheat and sunflower seed. When buying bird seed, check the label and try to avoid products with these ingredients. On the other hand, house sparrows aren't fond of black oil sunflower seeds, a favorite of most song birds.

House sparrows are attracted to human habitation and are most prevalent in densely populated areas. They make their nests in

areas with plentiful seeds, from weeds or garden plants. Farmers call them an agricultural pest.

The house sparrow prefers to nest in manmade structures such as eaves or walls of buildings, street lights, and nest boxes instead of in natural nest sites such as holes in trees. You'll find them "squatting" in the bluebird boxes here at Dunwoody. If you have a bluebird box, check it frequently and remove the nests. Bluebirds make nests of fine grasses, woven together in a tidy cup. House sparrow nests are more loosely formed, messy and include scraps of debris.

House sparrows typically live four to five years, usually remaining with the same mates for life.



House sparrow nests are messy and often completely fill the nest box. Look for a "tunnel" entrance and a cave-like

Sparrow Symbolism

Are sparrows bad luck? According to the Audubon Society, a common superstition is sparrows carry the soul of the dead people and it's bad luck to kill them. Sailors get sparrow tattoos with the hope that a sparrow will their carry souls when they die at sea.

Some Native Indian Tribes believe sparrows are friends of the common people and peasants as well as helping spirits that travel between heaven and earth.

There are many stories in the Bible about Jesus and the sparrow. One claims that Jesus made twelve sparrows from the clay in Joseph's workshop. Thus, the sparrow was considered a symbol of lowly people and also that God was protecting it.

Nice



Song sparrow



White-throated sparrow



Chipping sparrow



White-crowned sparrow

Spring, Summer—Perfect Seasons for Planting a Pollinator Garden

With temperatures rising, and bird and insect populations diminishing, gardening with native plants is growing in popularity. No yard is too small or too large. Even a few containers, window boxes or hanging plants will feed the birds and insects.



Most trees, flowers, shrubs, and grasses provide shelter and food, but not all plants are equal. Native plants do a much better job of nourishing local species than non-native ones. Native species also need less watering and care. Knowing which plants are native, and which are not, isn't always easy. Here are some suggestions for plants that may be grown in a flower bed or in a container. There are many other native species available in local nurseries.



Milkweed (*Asclepias*)

Milkweed attracts monarch butterflies and provides food for their caterpillars. Orioles and finches use the fibers to line their nests and hummingbirds feed on the nectar.

Goldenrod (*Solidago*)

Goldenrod is a magnet for pollinators and supports 115 species of butterflies and moths. Woodpeckers and chickadees eat insect larva that live on the plants and other birds are drawn to butterflies. The American goldfinch and other birds eat their seeds.



Coneflowers (*Echinacea*)

Bees and other pollinators love coneflowers. Birds eat the insects and hummingbirds sip on the nectar. Goldfinches, blue jays and cardinals eat the seeds in fall and winter.



Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia*)

Black-eyed Susan is a popular, easy to grow garden flower that attracts 17 kinds of butterflies and moths. Dozens of species are available, so be sure to buy plants that are native to our area. Cardinals, goldfinches, chickadees, nuthatches and sparrows eat the seeds. In the fall, leave the seed heads for birds to feed on during cold months.



Blazing Star (*Liatris*)

Liatris grows flowers that bloom from the top down on a stalk. They range from two to five feet in height and grow well in full sun and poor, dry soil. Look for rough blazing star (*L. Aspera*) and gayfeather (*L. spicata*). Their seeds attract goldfinches, chickadees, indigo buntings and tufted titmice. Insects are also attracted to this plant.

Sunflowers (*Helianthus*)

Sunflowers range in size from one to three feet and may grow as tall as an average person. Some species are not native to our region. Be sure to check the species. Each flower is made up of many small blossoms in its center. Pollinators love them. Cardinals, goldfinches, grosbeaks, jays, finches and many other birds eat the seeds.



Native Americans first cultivated sunflowers in what is now New Mexico and Arizona. Spanish explorers took their seeds to Europe around 1500.. Today they are the national flower of Ukraine. In 2021 Ukraine produced 17.5 million metric tons of sunflower seeds. Much of the harvest was used to make sunflower oil, which became popular in the 1700s when the Russian Orthodox Church banned lard, butter and olive oil during Lent.

The Tuneful Warbler is published quarterly by and for Dunwoody Village residents.

Thanks to our writers, editors, photographers and proofreaders: Lucy Irwin, Judy Kaufman, Bobbi Mynott, Charlene Millheim, Jorie Nailor, Dee Owen, Marcia Pentz, Eloise and Peter Smyrl, and Scott Tuttle.

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