

Wild Bird Habitat Store

September Newsletter - 2019



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www.wildbirdhabitatstore.com

**Have bees invaded your hummingbird feeder?
Tips to make your feeder
bee free on page 7**

Remembering Dr. Mary Bomberger Brown

Dr. Larkin Powell
UNL School of Natural Resources
*Friend and confidant of
Mary Bomberger Brown*

Some of you know our friend Mary who is slowly slipping away after a long, courageous fight. She is a world-famous ornithologist and the center of so many people's lives. After visiting her a couple nights ago for the last time, I sat down and some words found their way onto paper. Peace to you, our friend.



August 24 - 10:30 AM -

Dr. Mary Bomberger Brown, age 62, an ornithologist and friend to all feathered and unfeathered things, passed away this morning. She leaves behind a legacy beyond measure. Read about the accomplishments of Mary Bomberger Brown in this month's newsletter

The Wild Bird Habitat Store is honored to have collaborated with Mary Bomberger Brown on several projects involving bird conservation and bird education. She is forever in our heart!

To Mary by Larkin Powell
August 23rd, 2019 - 8:10 PM

Last flight

Do you ever wonder if a bird knows
When it lifts off for its last flight,
Transcending gravity one more time
If only for the moment?

And how does the final landing feel,
The sudden jarring of reality
When sod and grass rise up
To meet outstretched feet?

And the clouds?

Once so near and whispering
On the tips of outstretched wings
But now as far away as the moon?

Does one look up to the sky
At this time
To curse your broken wings and
Fret over what will never again be?

Or does the ground comfort you
As it does the mouse
Who never knew the freedom

**Audubon Spring Creek Prairie September Activities on Page 7
Join in the fun and celebrate birds!**

Cedar Waxwing



One of the most attractive birds you may see in your backyard is the nomadic Cedar Waxwing. In fall Cedar Waxwings gather in small to large feeding flocks to feed on berries, filling the air with their high, thin, whistles. These flocks generally appear abruptly feeding on berries and small fruits hanging around until the supply of food is gone, and then so are the Waxwings. These birds are not at all predictable when and where they will appear. Some years I will have flocks of Cedar Waxwings feeding on the berries of the Hackberry trees in my yard, other years none will show up. During the summer you may see them hawking for insects, devouring ripened berries, or eating various types of web worms.

Cedar waxwings are a medium sized bird approximately 6 to 7 long and weighing around 2 ounces. They are smaller and browner than their close relative, the Bohemian Waxwing (which breeds farther to the north and west). It is a "silky, shiny collection of brown, gray, and lemon-yellow, accented with a subdued crest, black mask. These birds' most prominent feature is a small cluster of red wax-like droplets on tips of secondary flight feathers on the wings, a feature they share with the Bohemian Waxwing. The wings are "broad and pointed, like a starling's. The tail is somewhat short, and square-tipped with a terminal band on the end that is typically yellow or orange depending on diet. Birds that have fed on the berries of an introduced Eurasian honeysuckle while growing tail feathers will have darker orange-tipped tail-feathers. Adult Waxwings have a pale yellow belly and a crest that often "lies flat and droops over the back of the head. The Waxwing's black mask has a thin white border above a short wide bill. Immature Cedar Waxwings are streaked on the throat and flanks, and often do not have the black mask of the adults. Adult males and females look alike. One of the most striking characteristics of a Waxwing, other than the unique coloration, is the smooth appearance of its feathers that seem to resemble well groomed fur.



Cedar Waxwings bathing in our avian pond

Cedar Waxwings are typically a woodland bird, particularly along streams, but you may also find them in fields and grasslands with scattered trees. With the increased use of ornamental berry trees in landscaping, Cedar Waxwings are increasingly common in towns and suburbs. In winter, Cedar Waxwings are most abundant around fruiting plants in open woodlands, parks, gardens, forest edges, and second-growth forests. In fact the name Cedar Waxwing derives from their appetite for cedar berries in winter and the wax like tip on the feathers.

Cedar Waxwings are sociable and are seen in flocks year round. They are non-territorial birds and will often groom each other. They move from place to place depending on where they can find good sources of berries. They will often nest in loose clusters of up to a dozen nests and more.

Cedar Waxwings generally nest in early to mid-summer when a good food supply for their young becomes available. Although both adults will search out a nesting site together it is the female that makes the final selection. The female does most the nest construction although if there is a second nesting the male will assist with that one. She builds a bulky nest with a variety of materials composed of twigs, grasses, plant down, hair, and similar materials. When finished it will be 5 inches across and 3 inches high and lined with fine rootlets and grass. She may even decorate the exterior with flowering catkins from nearby trees. The female Waxwing may make as many as 2500 trips to the nest site over a 5 to 6 day period during construction. Once completed she will lay a clutch of 2 to 6 pale blue or blue gray eggs sometimes spotted with black or gray. She will incubate them for 11 to 13 days and the young chicks will remain in the nest for another 14 to 18 days.



Continued on page 7



Arnie's Pet Food Store
A division of the
Wild Bird Habitat Store

**Corporate Sponsor for
Husker DogFest**

Come join us at the Husker DogFest from 10am-2pm on **Saturday, September 21st** on the University of Nebraska-Lincoln campus!

This event is **FREE** to attend. Bring your family, friends, and well behaved and leashed dogs to UNL's city campus and:

- Tour the new Canine Cognition and Human Interaction Lab (501 Building)
- Participate in dog activities
- Watch demonstrations of dog obedience, police dogs, and dog frisbee tricks
- View dog-related products and services
- Grab lunch at a food truck

**Learn more about this canine event at
dogfest.unl.edu**

Brown leaves behind an inspirational legacy of conservation

Mary Bomberger Brown, 62, associate professor of practice at the School of Natural Resources and coordinator of the Tern and Plover Conservation Partnership, died due to complications from cancer on Aug. 24, in her home in Lincoln. Her contributions to conservation, especially with endangered bird populations, and to the science of avian biology will have a lasting impact on the state and region.

Bomberger Brown, a Nebraska native, started at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln as an undergraduate student in Biological Sciences - at a time when few women pursued scientific degrees - and graduated in 1979 with a bachelor's degree with distinction. She went on to earn her masters in biological sciences from Nebraska in 1982, before taking research associate positions at Princeton University, Yale University and then University of Tulsa.

As a researcher, she was integral to the success of the Cliff Swallow Project conducted at Cedar Point Biological Station in western Nebraska for more than 35 years, helping coordinate the student workers, capturing birds, recording their details and banding their legs. Data collected from the long-term study, still ongoing today, is considered to be the largest in the world.



Mary Bomberger Brown (right) discusses Piping Plover habitat with students

In 1996, Bomberger Brown co-wrote "Coloniality in the cliff swallow: The effect of group size on social behavior," which has been cited in innumerable research papers since its publication. Her work in cliff swallows also earned her a shared Elliot Coues lifetime achievement award from the American Ornithologists' Union in 2009 for extraordinary contributions to ornithological research.

In 2011, Bomberger Brown earned her doctorate in applied ecology from SNR, and promptly became a research assistant professor. She was promoted to associate professor of practice in 2017.

As the tern and plover program coordinator, her work was dedicated to bridging the gap between sand and gravel miners and state and federal regulatory agencies to create dedicated habitat and support conservation efforts for the endangered least terns and plovers.

"She continued to band plovers and terns, and was delighted when she received reports and photos of plovers from Nebraska on their wintering beaches to the south," said Larkin Powell, her colleague at SNR and a close friend. "Mary also contributed to work on secretive marsh birds and investigations of wind energy effects on greater prairie-chickens."

Over the course of her career, Bomberger Brown earned no fewer than six notable national awards, but she rarely - if ever - spoke of them. She also authored more than 160 scientific papers; had her research featured in more than 200 articles, news releases, television stories or nature documentaries; mentored more than 100 student field researchers; and personally advised 24 undergraduate and graduates students in their pursuit of higher-education degrees.

"When I think of Mary, I think of how much she selflessly cares," said Amy Oden, who Bomberger Brown advised from 2011 to 2013. "When I was a graduate student, she strived to make my work, and by extension my skills as a researcher and writer, better. Her teaching method was always positive; I never once saw any disappointment from her. Instead, my research gained more aspects and my scientific writing became proficient enough to be publishable with her help. "Long after I graduated and was no longer her student, she still kept in contact with me over coffee or tea," she added. "Years beyond being my graduate advisor, she continues to advise me on life, work, and people."

Bomberger Brown felt shared knowledge was important. She avidly worked to engage the public on conservation issues, working with the Platte River Time Lapse project, providing resources to teachers across the state, giving educational tours during the annual Sandhill Crane migration, and even supporting the after-school program at Irving Middle School in Lincoln. Until March of this year, she attended every meeting of the Chimney Swift Club, a collection of Irving students who advocated for - and won - saving the school's chimney from remodeling efforts in 2015 so it could remain a roosting spot for the swifts that live there. The club continues to thrive, fostering partnerships with those who care about birds and nature.

She is the reason that the Chimney Swift Club was such a great success," said Deanna Hughes, a recently retired Irving Middle School science teacher and friend. "Mary inspired and touched so many young lives — and some not so young, including mine."

Some of those lives include those of scientists across the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. In 2015, Bomberger Brown advised the launch the Association of Women in Science chapter at SNR. This led the university to become an institutional member of the national Association of Women in Science in 2017, furthering its commitment to advancing women's equity and inclusion on campus.

"Throughout her career, she quietly demonstrated the value of female scientists," Powell said, "and Mary is among those cited by professional societies as influential women in ornithology and ecology." In 2013, she was named a fellow in the American Ornithologists' Union, a prestigious award given only to those who have given exceptional and sustained contributions to ornithology or to the organization. John Carroll, director of SNR, said Bomberger Brown will remain among the elite in her contributions to science in her field.

"Mary loved her work in conservation and avian biology, but that was just part of her," he said. "She loved SNR, UNL, Lincoln, and Nebraska." She is the model, he said, of how to live a life worth living. Powell adds that his research career and his life would not have been the same without the influence of Bomberger Brown's mentorship and friendship.

"What an impact she provided for conservation, for biology, for ecology, and for her community of friends and colleagues," he said. "We will all miss her terribly, but I imagine the birds will miss her most of all."

In her life, Dr. Mary Bomberger Brown chose to give of her time, talent and treasure, inspiring others to contribute to conservation efforts — both big and small, especially when it came to birds. In her death, she'll continue to give back to students pursuing conservation degrees in fisheries and wildlife at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Currently, the Mary Bomberger Brown Scholarship Fund is being set up through the University of Nebraska Foundation. The scholarship will be specifically for students majoring in fisheries and wildlife at the School of Natural Resources, with a sophomore standing or above, and who have a GPA of 3.55 or higher.



"She expressed her desire to help and reward students who had a desire to learn and excel in this field of study, especially if they had financial constraints that may otherwise burden their abilities to study," her brother David Bomberger shared. "During the process of creating the fund, Mary did not want any credit, notice or recognition. She was content and satisfied knowing her life could make a difference in the lives of future students."

A memorial service for Bomberger Brown is being planned for 9:30 a.m. Oct. 8 at Butherus, Maser & Love Funeral Home, 4040 A St., Lincoln, Nebraska. In lieu of flowers, the family asks that memorial donations be made to this scholarship fund. Checks may be written out to "Mary Bomberger Brown Scholarship Fund" and sent to the University of Nebraska Foundation at 1010 Lincoln Mall, Lincoln, NE 68508 - (800) 432-3216

Dave's September Bird Chatter

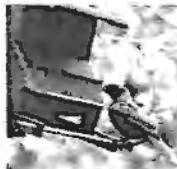
It seems as if we were just celebrating the arrival of our summer Neo-Tropical migratory birds; Baltimore Orioles, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, kingbirds, flycatchers, and a host of others, but already it's time to tell them good-bye till next spring. The avian calendar is swift and on a tight schedule. These Tropical birds migrate into North America where there are fewer nest predators than in the jungles of South and Central America. This guarantees a better chance of successfully raising a family. But on completing their nesting cycle they become restless as fall migration nears. As the daylight hours slowly grow shorter it triggers their instinct to return to the Tropics where food is plentiful as winter inevitably overtakes North America.

One of the first bird migrants to begin the slow trek south is the hummingbirds, usually by the end of July in Nebraska. We normally began receiving reports of hummingbirds at feeders in early August. The number of reports of folks having hummingbirds should increase through most all of August and well into September. September 6th is the median arrival date when the majority of hummingbirds are moving through. So there is plenty of time to get a hummingbird feeder out and enjoy them as they normally are at the feeders till the first week in October.

As I begin to write this newsletter for September I realize I've yet to see a hummingbird at my feeder. Hummingbirds will return year after year to a location where they know flower gardens and nectar feeders have been available from previous years. My hummingbirds generally arrive about August 25th. But it doesn't hurt to be prepared the first part of August. In fact it offers the opportunity to attract some of the first migrants passing through.

Last year I had two males competing for a single hummingbird feeder. So I added a second nectar feeder which seemed to end the conflict. Each male laid claim to a feeder. However a third male arrived and was driven off every time he approached one of the nectar feeders that had already been claimed by one of the two males. Poor guy kept going back and forth trying to feed until he finally gave up and went on his way. Often having multiple hummingbird feeders will help to attract more hummingbirds, especially if they are out of sight of each other. A dominant male cannot patrol both feeders if the second feeder is blocked from his view.

Another sign that birds are preparing for the fall migration is when black birds begin to flock together. This typically begins by late August into September. It's a time of year when we hear a lot of complaints about these flocks of black birds at the bird feeders. However this is just one of many signs of a coming change in the season. We have several weeks of summer left, but the birds are already sensing the change of seasons and preparations are slowly getting underway to relocate before winter arrives. Your best bet to reduce the number of black birds at the feeders is to use one of our safflower wild bird feeds.



Birds may seem to visit the backyard bird feeders less often this time of year. This is mostly due to the abundance of natural foods that have become available after the summer growing season. And with the early rains the harvest this year should be bountiful. Birds will begin to take advantage of these natural food sources and visit the bird feeders less often.

None-the-less it's a good idea to keep the feeders stocked with wild bird feeds. This is a period where our resident birds will be establishing winter food sources, both natural and supplemental, and winter birds will be looking for feeding grounds as they arrive. They will gladly add your backyard feeders to their list of food plots if you continue to maintain a well stock feeder now. This will result in more bird activity when the days get colder and more energy is needed to weather winter's cold days and frigid nights.

Wingtip: There is still plenty of time to put out a nectar feeder and attract hummingbirds. The median arrival date for these little jewels is September 6. They will continue to move through until the end of the month and possibly early October weather permitting.

Birds will also become quieter in September as they molt from their tattered summer feathers into new winter basic plumage. During this time flight can be somewhat inhibited so they move around less. They know they may be more susceptible to predators during the molting period. If your feeders are located in areas where trees and shrubs provide good cover you may not notice as much of a slow down during the molt as they can conceal themselves in-between visits to the bird feeder.

September is the official start of the annual fall migration. This is the time of year during which, by months end, our summer birds, both long range and short range migrants, will have moved to their wintering territories. One of those bird species that will be heading to the Gulf States this month is the Common Grackle. These boisterous black birds will hardly be missed. But rest assured that as our summer birds depart, they will be replaced with our winter resident birds. This includes the Juncos, Red-breasted Nuthatches, Pine Siskin, crossbills and Redpolls and others.

Another early migratory species of birds that is on the move are shorebirds. Already we have had numerous reports of shorebirds in the area and those numbers along with species will increase. These migrants nest from the Great Plains to the sub-Arctic. It is exciting to see them but they can be a bit challenging to identify. It is recommended when viewing shorebirds to have a good pair of binoculars or a spotting scope and a field guide or bird ID app on your smart phone. The same goes for viewing ducks, geese, or other aquatic birds. Watching shorebirds is an area of birding that can be exciting and fun.



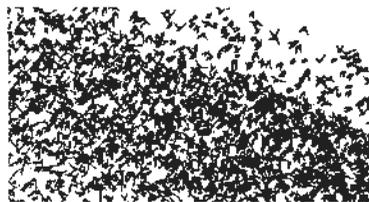
Baird's Sandpiper

The Warbler migration will ramp up in September and you should test yourselves at identifying them. Remember, some fall birds do not look like they did in the spring when they were in their brightly colored breeding plumage and it may be a challenge to identify them. The saying "confusing fall warblers", presents a problem at times for even the most experienced birders. This is one of several reasons to have a good field guide, or bird ID app, and familiarize yourself with it. More than 26 species of warblers migrate through Nebraska, primarily in the eastern third of the state. And quite often there are a few others that strayed off course and show up in our area. The fact that one never knows what bird or bird rarity might show up in any given area can create a lot of excitement.

There will be many bird species on the move beginning in September and into early November. Watch your yards for these new visitors; native sparrows, thrushes, warblers and others. While some birds may stop by and take advantage of the food in your bird feeders, others may spend time foraging for insects in the trees and shrubs in your yard, or for a quick bath if you have a water source available. But once you see the Snow Geese flying overhead you'll know we are reaching the end of the fall bird migration.



Harris's Sparrow



I can remember as a kid 60 years ago playing outside where most kids spent their time in those days. The skies would be cloudy with a north wind that had a touch of coolness to it reminding everyone the seasons were about to change. Then almost out of no where the sky would become filled with an endless flow of blackbirds from horizon to horizon. Today that endless stream of blackbirds overhead have been reduced to much smaller flocks from declines caused by human activity and habitat loss

If you enjoy hawk watching, this is the time of year to keep your eyes on the skies. Sometimes we are fortunate enough to see huge flocks of migrating hawks soaring high above us. These are called "Ketties" and there can be several varieties drifting on the thermals in lazy circles, slowly and effortlessly heading to warmer climates. Although hawk migration can be seen just about anywhere, one of the best places is at the Hitchcock Nature Center in Crescent, IA just minutes north of Omaha. Hawk Watch runs through October. This includes a variety of hawk species, eagles, falcons, Ospreys and others. The hawks will be following the songbirds that are on the move. After all, this is how they make a living. Google <Hitchcock Nature Center> for more information or ask us at Wild Bird Habitat.

Our late nesters, the Goldfinches, Waxwings, and Mourning Doves, will be winding down the nesting season. The first two birds always wait until late June and July to start nesting. The Doves on the other hand, just seem to keep on nesting almost into the fall months. They only lay two eggs at a time, but they seem to be keeping their numbers up in spite of the hunting seasons in several northern states. I've mentioned how birds are becoming restless as we move closer to a changing season. Well I can assure you in late August and the first few weeks of September many birders are becoming restless as well. It's getting to be time to get out birding and enjoy the birds that will be moving through on a pilgrimage that has been going on for millions of years. By the middle of the month to early November we encourage you to take a day once in a while during the fall bird migration and venture out to a nearby wetland, lake, or wildlife management area. Take a hike through the woods. And when you're not out looking for birds keep a good eye on who is visiting your backyard. You might just be surprised at what new bird you might see. Wild Bird Habitat wishes good birding to all in your backyard and out in the field.

HAVE BEES INVADED YOUR HUMMINGBIRD FEEDER?

Tips to distract bees and wasps from the nectar feeder

- Use hummingbird feeders with built-in bee guards or attach bee guards to your feeder.
- Avoid hummingbird feeders with yellow colors on them as bees are attracted to yellow.
- If yellow jacket wasps are at your feeder reduce their numbers by using wasp traps. Just moving hummingbird feeders by 3 or 4 feet periodically will help insects lose track of them but hummingbirds will still find them easily. Insects are less inclined to search out a relocated hummingbird feeder.
- Locate your hummingbird feeder in a shady location. Bees prefer feeding in sunny locations. This will also prevent the heat of the sun from separating the sugars and starting a fermentation process of the nectar.
- Always wipe off any spilled nectar from your hummingbird feeder after filling and hanging so bees won't be attracted to the sugary scent.
- Make certain hummingbird feeder is not leaking nectar.
- Never use insect-killing chemicals around hummingbird feeders! It's bad for the hummingbirds and may also kill beneficial honey bees!



September Activities at Audubon Spring Creek Prairie

Contact Spring Creek at (402) 797-2301 for activity information and to register



Tastes in the Tallgrass - A Sunset Dinner Prairie Style / Sunday, September 15, 2019

4:00pm - 7:00pm Denton, Nebraska / Limited seating More info at 402-797-2301

Savor the sights, sounds, and flavors of a sunset dinner -- prairie style -- at our 12th annual Tastes in the Tallgrass fundraising event. Enjoy stunning prairie vistas, carefully crafted food and drink, and swinging acoustic music mixed with birdsong while supporting our nature education and habitat management programs. This year's event will feature fabulous live and silent auctions, spotlighting fine art and memorable experiences.

Fall Fest - A Prairie Plant Party! Friday, September 27, 2019 / 5:00pm - 8:00pm Denton, Nebraska

Join in for our annual fall prairie festival as the prairie grasses mature and the fall wildflowers come into full bloom. Enjoy kid and family-friendly activities around the trails, wagon rides, live music, a live bird show, and tons of great native plants to be given away and purchased. Bring your own picnic and celebrate the beauty and diversity of the tallgrass prairie. \$5 suggested donation, kids 12 and under free!

Birds & Brews Festival - Sunday, September 29, 2019 / 1:00pm - 4:00pm Denton, Nebraska

Learn about birds while sampling local quaffs. Come learn about birds and prairie while tasting some delicious local craft brews, enjoying local food (for purchase), and listening to some great local tunes. Tasting cups provided so participants can sample from all on-site breweries. Bring a lawn chair/blanket and refillable water bottle if desired. We will also have some activities/interactive education opportunities. Dress for weather conditions and wear shoes comfortable on soft or uneven terrain.

Continued from page 2

The conservation status of Cedar Waxwings has a fairly good outlook as they are currently listed as a "bird of least concern" meaning their population seems to be increasing. But that could change dramatically as more fields are plowed for crops and habitats altered for development.

With the proper habitat and a water source it is possible you will see these beautiful birds in your yard some time during the year. Trips to state parks and wildlife areas often produce some outstanding views of these birds if you look for them. No matter where you find them, they are truly a site to behold and a lot of fun to watch.

Wingtips: *Berry producing shrubs and trees can entice Cedar Waxwings into your yard along with a number of other interesting songbirds. A few plants readily available that attract these birds are: serviceberry, strawberry, mulberry, dogwoods, raspberries and various Viburnums. Crabapple, junipers, mountain ash, hackberry and Washington Hawthorns are berry producing trees these birds will flock to. Combined with a source of fresh water you'll be delighted by the variety of songbirds you attract along with the Cedar Waxwing.*

Interesting Cedar Waxwing Facts

- Cedar Waxwings get their name from the waxy red tips on the end of their secondary feathers. The number of these wax tips and the size increases as the bird gets older.
- Cedar Waxwing's are not migratory but more nomadic. They roam around in flocks looking for a food source.
- Once they strip all the fruits off a tree or shrub they move on. Waxwings even nest in groups.
- Over-ripened fruits tend to ferment creating alcohol and can cause waxwings to get drunk
- Cedar Waxwings are one of a few birds in North America that can survive for months only on fruits.
- It takes the female Cedar Waxwing 5 to 6 days to construct a nest making more than 2500 trips with materials to complete. She may often rob materials from other bird's nests to make it easier.
- Unlike other individual birds that just grab seeds Cedar waxwings are very polite. They will eat in shifts. One group will feed first then move away so the other group can feed.
- Brown-headed Cowbird chicks in a Cedar Waxwing's nest cannot develop most often won't survive on the high fruit diet as the waxwing's nestlings do.
- Cedar waxwings do not have a song but make a soft buzzing and trilling noise.
- A group of waxwings is called an "ear-full" or a "museum" of waxwings.
- A male Cedar Waxwing banded in Maryland in 2008 was recaptured in Maryland in 2014 making it the oldest recorded Cedar Waxwing at 7 years old.

Coming in October!

**The Wild Bird Habitat Stores will be celebrating the start of our 27th year.
Watch for special offers and customer appreciation days**



FREE The Online Guide to North American Birds

This online guide to North American Birds features over 800 species of birds in 22 Orders and 74 families. The guide covers all of North America's regular breeding birds - as well as non-breeding species that regularly or occasionally visit North America, north of Mexico.

<http://birds.audubon.org/birdid> (for desktop)

www.audubon.org/Free-App (for smart phone & tablets)