

Nature Notebook

Birdwatching Fun All Year

BY MILLIE BLAHA
Sherwood Forest

Backyard birdwatching is a hobby that can be enjoyed by anyone at all times of the year. Each season brings changes — changes in the kinds of birds that can be seen, changes in the bird's activities and changes in the natural food supply available to them. And what better place to begin observing the world of nature than in your own backyard!

The backyard birdwatcher may indulge in this pastime simply for the esthetic enjoyment derived from it, for the close-at-hand opportunity to broaden his or her knowledge of birds and their niche in the natural world, or simply to help develop a sense of awareness of the immediate world around him.

I make no apology for being a backyard birdwatcher. It not only has helped to break up the monotony of certain routine household tasks, but also has been a learning experience for me.

In the several places where we have lived, windows have been wonderful vantage points for getting a good look at a bird's size, color and feeding habits in order to try to identify it. Once its name is learned, an added joy has been to try to find out something about where the bird migrated from when it came to our yard, where it will go when it leaves, where it nests and how to recognize its song.

Two birds which are useful in identification are Roger Tory Peterson's "Field Guide to the Birds (east of the Rockies)" and "Birds of North America, a Guide to Field Identification", a Golden Press publication. I also keep a pair of binoculars handy in case a closer sighting of a field mark is necessary.

Wind direction, weather conditions and temperatures have much to do with whether or not there are any birds in our yard, so I record this information along with bird observations in my nature notebook.

A recent entry noted the color changes in the goldfinch. All winter long, the male, female and last year's young looked very much alike — a dull, olive drab marked by black wings with white wing bars. But now the Spring moult of the male is bringing out his golden yellow coloration. On some, as the yellow begins to appear on the head, Olive-colored circles are left around the eyes making it appear as though the bird is wearing goggles.

Stolen Car Recovered

A Chevrolet Nova auto belonging to Mrs. Mary Jane McCrary was recovered Thursday in Henderson County a short time after being stolen in Brevard, Police Chief Neugene Stiles reported.

All of Mrs. McCrary's valuables were also recovered the chief said.

A juvenile was charged in connection with the auto theft.

The courtship of the gold-

finch is a long one. Unlike many other birds, it delays its nesting until late summer when thistleseed with which it lines its nest is available. Compact, cup-shaped and made of fine grass, moss or plant fibers, the nest is usually built in the crotch of a tall shrub, a sapling tree, or sturdy weed. Because of its association with thistles, the goldfinch sometimes is called the Thistle-bird.

When my husband and I lived in Illinois, a backyard birch tree served as the winter dining table for goldfinches, purple finches pine siskins and ruby-crowned kinglets. Their bills were just right for picking seeds from the abundant sausage shaped catkins.

A sight I shall remember is a stand of true native prairie punctuated by a flock of goldfinches clinging to the swaying, slender stems of the late summer-blooming golden-rod, asters, thistles, prairie dock, ragweed and other plants whose seeds are an important source of their food.

As I approached this busy group arose on the wing, their wavy flight rising and falling, each undulation marked by a cluster of clear, sweet notes — per-CHIC-o-ree, per-CHIC-o-ree. These bursts of melody long ago prompted people to call them Wild Canaries.

When one hears their bubbly bursts of song, one wonders what sad sounds were heard by the person who applied the adjective "tristis" to its scientific name, for it means dull, sad, or dejected.

If actions and expressions are any indication of a bird's feelings, the goldfinch must be one of the most joyful of our feathered friends.

When it perches long enough it let you look at it from the back, it is so sleek and slender. Its folded black wings, marked with symmetrical white stripes, join to form a "v"-shaped pattern, creating an almost abstract design.

If you have never taken time to see what kinds of birds find food and shelter in your backyard, take a moment to look. Soon you will learn to recognize those birds which remain with you most of the year. When one you have never seen before suddenly appears and you can identify it, you will experience the same thrill that comes to someone who has made a great discovery!

Work Asked On Rd. 1309 And Bridges

The Cantrell bridge, which the bus must cross, is set at an angle to the road, forcing the bus driver to go onto the shoulder in order to maneuver the bus across. Yellow paint on both sides of the bridge provides evidence that the bus often makes contact with the railings at best.

In view of the circumstances just described, I implore you and the Department of Transportation to give serious thought to the need for reconsidering plans as first priority making road 1309 safer as a school bus route.

I trust that the Department of Transportation will take this matter under serious consideration and will inform me as to any decision reached.

Very sincerely yours,

Mrs. Mary C. Nesbitt
Room 1007
Legislative Building
Raleigh 27611

HAPPY HEARTBEATS



"DIG THAT BEAT!" Dr. J. M. Gordon kids Cecilia Sutton, as she listens to the heartbeat of her unborn baby on a fetal monitoring machine. She was a diabetic patient at the University of Louisville Medical Center's high-risk obstetrical clinic, set up with the help of the March of Dimes for the prevention of birth defects.

When you think of prescriptions, think of VARNER'S adv.

Jail, Road Hearings Scheduled This Week

—Continued From Page One
road hearing may prove controversial.

On February 25 Woodburn Williams of the Jail and Detention Branch of the N. C. Department of Human Resources told the county commissioners that he had visited the jail that afternoon and found inmates getting treatment as a result of inadequate facilities "that is not what we call humane."

"You must remember," said the official, "that most of the inmates are being held for trial, they haven't been convicted of anything. They have certain rights."

Mr. Williams said that no decision had then been made on whether to padlock the jail, but he made it clear that he would if there were no action forthcoming from county officials on the jail situation.

Early this month, the commissioners called for the hearing to be held Tuesday night, and they are inviting any citizen who wants to speak on the issue to do so.

Last week Sheriff Milford Hubbard made the suggestion that the jail be renovated only as a 72-hour holding facility until some permanent solution to the jail problem was forthcoming. The officer argued that most prisoners either make bond or are released within that period, and that closing the facility to longer-term inmates would not necessitate a large amount of "taxi-service" to neighboring counties with prisoners.

Over the weekend, Mrs. Molly Wilmot, chairman of the Democratic Executive Committee of the county, and speaking for the committee said:

"The Democratic Executive Committee wholeheartedly endorses the position of Sheriff Hubbard as being the only practical suggestion to solve this dilemma that has

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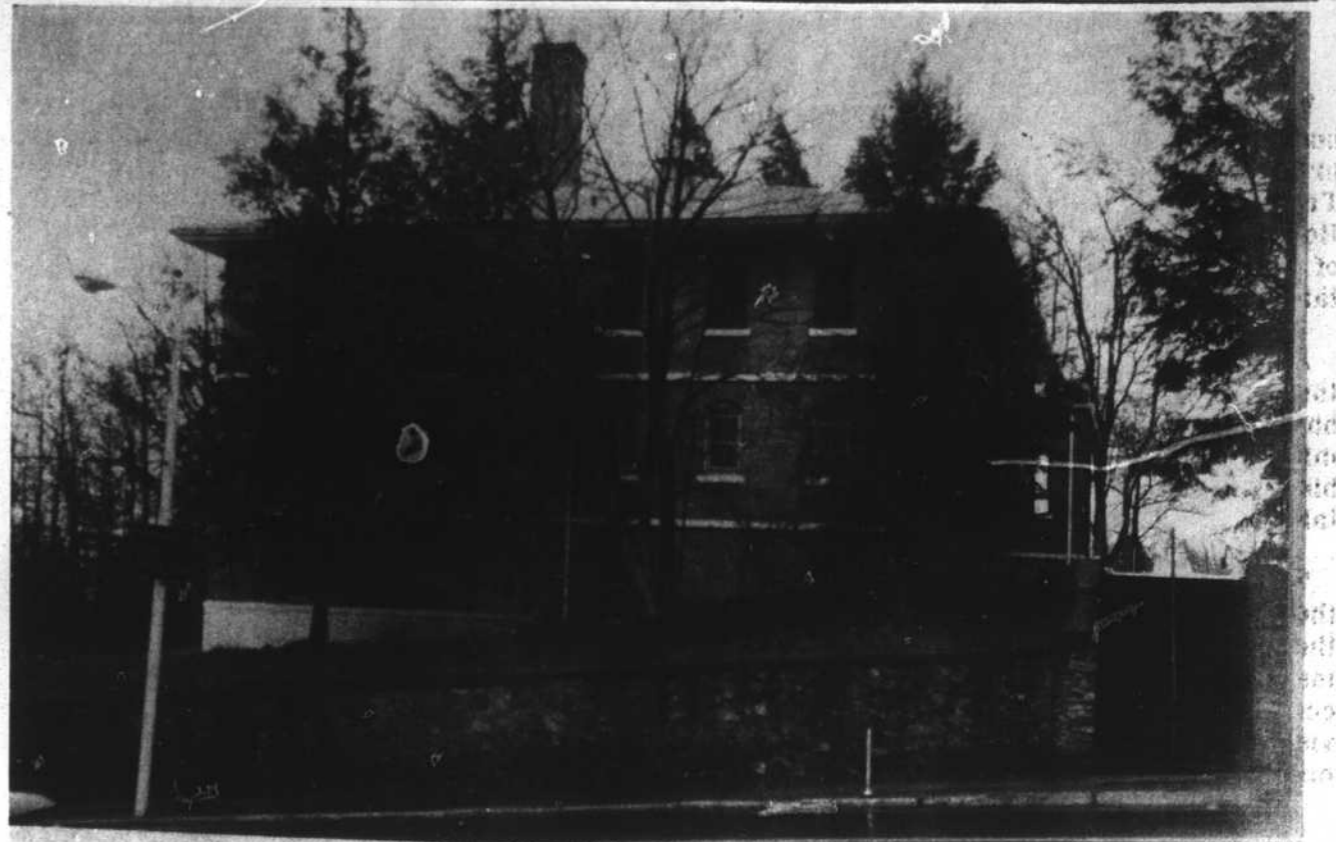
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been put forward to date. It is the hope of the committee that steps will be taken immediately to implement the suggestions contained in his proposed plan. In the implementation of these plans we pledge our wholehearted support."

Transylvania voters, in the last general election, turned down a bond issue for construction of a new facility.

At the road hearing, some of the residents of Eastatooe and East Fork are expected to complain about the plan to relocate Highway 64 north and west of Rosman. This, they argue, would increase their mileage into Brevard, and would benefit the Balsam Grove-Quebec-Goucester region of the county while not helping their area which has a larger population.



Transylvania's Jail. What's The Answer?

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