



The Tuneful Warbler

A Dunwoody Village Wildlife Committee Publication, Summer 2021



Lucy Irwin tends the blue bird boxes on the woodland trails. On a recent trail walk she found birds—and their fledglings—nesting inside.

BIRD WATCH

You May Feed the Birds Again

Good news. Scott Tuttle reports that the number of birds suffering from the “mystery” illness has dropped in the last few weeks. Many “birders” in our area are feeding the birds again.

Nevertheless, remember to:

- Keep the feeders clean.
- Look for signs of disease: crusty, swollen eyes and lack of balance and/or paralysis.
- If more than one bird is found dead in your yard, remove your feeders for two weeks.

Birds die constantly of natural causes. Just because you see one dead bird, it doesn't mean they have this new illness.

Blue Birds Moving In

The bird house Sally and Duane Malm received as a gift is stunning. A family of blue birds moved right in. Could it be they heard about the neighborhood from other blue birds raising families near the East Country houses?

A Snapping Turtle “Mom” Calls Dunwoody Home

As Trevor Weiss and Bill Potsic were finishing their walk on the Southeast Woods trail, they came across an apparently stranded snapping turtle on the hillside near the path. They immediately called for reinforcements. Several maintenance men and Eloise Smyrl came to their aid.

“We were prepared to rescue it and transport it to the ‘sink,’ a small pool of water behind one of the Penrose Houses,” said Eloise. “Then it dawned on us that ‘it’ was a perhaps a ‘she’ who was laying her eggs. After consulting by phone with someone who has experience with egg-laying turtles, we were convinced that this was indeed the case.”

When the good Samaritans moved the turtle, they found a hole. Turtles dig deep to hide the eggs from predators — raccoons, foxes, and other critters. They usually lay their eggs on a hill, not necessarily close to water.

Eloise will keep checking on the eggs and perhaps, later in summer, she'll snap some photos of the babies—if a racoon doesn't get there first.



Trevor approached the snapping turtle respectfully.

Residents Transform an Atrium into a Garden

The community garden is nowhere near as lush as the Garden of Eden —yet. Wait a few weeks, please. Our dedicated community gardeners are expecting an abundant harvest of vegetables and flowers this summer. The beds will be overflowing with tomatoes, zucchini, cucumbers, beans, carrots, scallions and two pumpkin vines.

Bill Hohlfeld and his crew in the grounds department and Jorie Nailor designed the raised beds with economy and organic gardening in mind. The original estimate to build the beds with lumber approached \$15,000 for only eight beds. Bill found instead a premade modular raised bed system made with Aluzinc steel. This alloy is more corrosion resistant and will not contaminate the soil.



Jorie suggested an organic soil mix to fill the beds. The gardeners organized watering teams. The only rule is no chemicals allowed.

Get ready for the all-organic zucchini onslaught.

Where Have All the Fireflies Gone?

Fireflies are magical. As children we chased them. As adults we sit on the porch and marvel as they glide through the night. When visitors come from the west, they can hardly believe their eyes. There are no fireflies west of the Rockies

But this summer there are far fewer than in years past. The same is true of butterflies, particularly the Monarch, and many other species of birds and insects.

Naturalist Doug Tallamy estimates that we lost 3 billion birds in the last 50 years, and the decline of global insects is equally severe.

Tallamy and other scientists attribute these losses not only to pesticides and herbicides but also to loss of open space—our meadows and grasslands, fields and wooded areas—to urban development.

Each meadow has a unique biosystem where native plants and insects, birds and butterflies feed and support each other. We may see native plants as weeds, but to our woodland friends they are dinner.

British biologist Doug Goulson wrote this month in the *Guardian*, “Few people seem to realize how devastating this is, not only for human wellbeing – we need insects to pollinate our crops, recycle dung, leaves and corpses, keep the soil healthy, control pests, and much



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Hummingbirds, Butterflies, Milkweed: Perfect Together

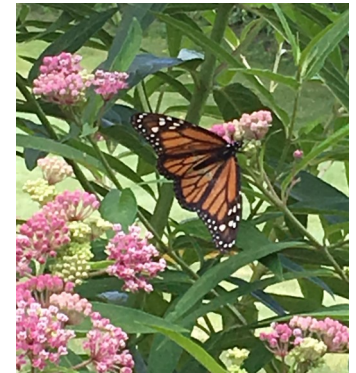
Milkweed's bright color and sweet nectar attract bees, hummingbirds, butterflies and a host of more humble pollinators. Gardeners like both its blossoms and the wildlife it attracts.

This hearty perennial (*Asclepius syriaca*) can be found on hillsides and fields and in many Dunwoody gardens. It grows wild in Dunwoody's east meadow, behind the cypress trees at the bottom of the west lawn, along the east driveway, and in the rain garden near the Penrose houses.

Milkweed, in fact, is the only food source for the Monarch Butterfly. The female lays her eggs on the plant. When the caterpillars hatch, they feast on the leaves,

and two weeks later the butterfly emerges. Toxic chemicals in milkweed leaves accumulate in the insects' bodies and protect them from predators.

Historically milkweed has played an important role for humans. Pillows and mattresses have been stuffed with its silk for centuries. During World War II the U.S. used it as filling for military jackets. And while the plant is poisonous, it has been used for medicinal purposes.



Rare Cedar Wax Wing Sighted Near Dunwoody Construction Site

This stunning brown-gray bird is rarely seen at Dunwoody. It sports a pointed crest on its head, a bandit-type black mask, red waxy tips on its secondary wings and a yellow tipped tail! Watch for them in the tops of trees and near bushes bearing berries and fruit--their favorite snacks.

Cedar Wax Wings have an active social life. They build nests near each other and dine communally. You will find them in abundant numbers near junipers and cedars, dogwood, wild cherries and near small fruiting trees and shrubs. They build nests in summer when the berries are plentiful. (Many other species prefer to start their families



in early spring.) Look for nests some 6 to 20 feet off the ground. The nests look like open cups of grass, weeds, twigs, and plant fibers, lined with moss, rootlets and fine grasses.

Three Cedar Wax Wings have been feasting on the viburnum shrubs loaded with bright red berries growing between the apartments and the new building site. For those of us living intimately with daily construction noise and dust, having this handsome but elusive bird as a new neighbor is a welcome treat.



GARDEN VIPS*
**Butterflies,
Birds, Bugs, Bees**
*VERY IMPORTANT
POLLINATORS



Shall we call a bee?



No Space Is Too Small for a Garden

Sigrid Meier's garden is buzzing with birds and bees, flying from the sunflower and milkweed to the very tall black-eyed Susans and back. Recently seen dining on her third floor balcony were humming birds, butterflies, cedar wax wings and goldfinch, among others. Her neighbors watch the birds as attentively as they do the construction. The tall plants have the added advantage of screening her view of the construction site. The birds seem not to mind the noise.

Garden Walks Near Dunwoody

Here are some exceptional gardens and natural parks to enjoy. Each has areas of easy to challenging walking.

Stoneleigh Land Trust

www.stoneleigh.org

Easy paved walking paths. Wheelchair accessible. Beautiful mature trees and native plants surrounding the Haas family mansion in Strafford.

Hildacy Land Trust

www.landtrust.org

Grasslands and woods. Wide, well maintained cut grass paths, meandering through grasslands and woods, including one trail with bluebird boxes

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more. Larger animals, such as birds, fish and frogs, rely on insects for food. Wildflowers rely on them for pollination. As insects become more scarce, our world will slowly grind to a halt, for it cannot function without them."

Doug Tallamy agrees. "If we disrupt this delicate balance, we risk losing our pollinators and our food supply.... We'll be goners."

Edible Flowers To Savor

Feast your eyes, smell their fragrance —then with due thanksgiving, eat them. These flowers can grow either in your garden or on your balcony.

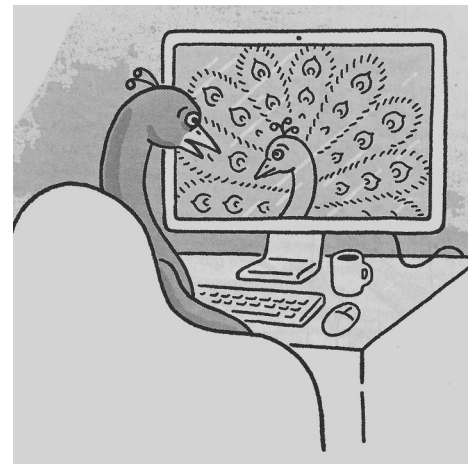
Bee Balm: Brew into tea plain or with another tea. Its flavor is like the bergamot in Earl Grey tea.

Marigold: Use the petals like saffron to color risottos or omelets. Add to salads for a slight citrusy taste and mild peppery zing.

Nasturtium: Colorful, with a peppery taste like watercress or rocket; lovely in salad.

Lavender: Adds a fruity, spicy zing to baked goods, drinks, jells or sorbet. It's strong, so use sparingly.

Day Lilies: Stir fry either the flowers or buds that are ready to open or that day.



I thought we agreed — no dressing up for video chats. Credit: *New Yorker*

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, Jorie Nailor, Dee Owen, Eloise and Peter Smyrl, Scott Tuttle and Delores Broberg.

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