

Nature Notes

Outdoor Nature Club our charter...

*A nonprofit educational
and scientific organiza-
tion established in 1923
to protect and conserve
natural resources by
fostering an interest in
nature study*

ONC

Outdoor Nature Club
P.O. Box 270894
Houston, TX 77277-0894
www.OutdoorNatureClub.org



Bird Behavior — Mimicry or Not?

story by Connie Blakley, photos by Calvin Blakley

Birds are curious creatures and sometimes demonstrate curious behaviors. Aside from seeing a bird and saying, "oh ... that's a blue jay," have you ever sat in your backyard for several hours and studied behavioral tendencies.

We have quite a few birds of various species visiting our backyard habitat and have noticed over the years how they tend to mimic each other, not only within but also outside their own species. Each time Calvin installs a new feeding station, such as the suet feeder he designed and hung in our breezeway, it takes several days for the first bird to start feeding at the new contraption. In this case it was the male red-bellied woodpecker—being a

curious, adventurous fellow—who first came to the suet. Within a week we saw the downy woodpecker at the same feeder, then the Carolina wren and titmouse followed. It seems the birds watch each others' behavior and when one finds a new food source it's not long before all the birds are visiting the new feeding station.

We found the same, even more obvious, mimicking at the water bath. One of our watering stations is a concrete pedestal bird bath. To keep the water fresh, Calvin created a recirculating system with a drip tube (see photos). The drip tube serves two purposes; in addition to recirculating the water, the motion and sound of dripping water draws the

attention of birds.

A few weeks after Calvin installed the drip tube, he noticed a curious male cardinal regularly perched on top of the tube but he always flew down to the rim for a drink. Then one day we saw the cardinal perched on the tube hanging upside down to drink from the dripping water. Who knows what prompted this new behavior; perhaps the cardinal discovered the water was fresher coming straight from the tube.

Within a few days, a chickadee and then a titmouse mimicked the cardinal's behavior of hanging from the tube to get a sip of water. Now all the birds in our yard, even goldfinches, are drinking

Continued on page 4

Group Activities — March/April

(All meetings are at Bayland Community Center unless otherwise noted)

March 2009

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

April 2009

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

May 2009

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

June 2009

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

ONC Contact Information

ONC General Information
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Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary
Aaron Stoley
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Ornithology Group (OG)
Bernice Hotman
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Adam Wood
713-515-1692

Maps

All meetings are at Bayland Community Center unless otherwise noted.

Bayland Community Center
6400 Bissonnet (at Hillcroft)



Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary
2001 FM 945, Cleveland, TX



Botany/Entomology

MARCH 10, 7:30 pm
Wildflowers of Jesse Jones Park and Nature Center
by Paul Roling

APRIL 14, 7:30 pm
The Gulf Coastal Prairie
by Dr. Larry Brown

Ornithology (OG)

Learning Corner, 6:30 pm
Program, 7:00 pm

MARCH 2
Program by John Arvin;
subject to be announced

APRIL 6
Madagascar
by Jim Campbell

OG Field Trips

MARCH 7
Birding Texas City Prairie Preserve & surroundings.
See OG website for details.

APRIL 10-19
Quarterly Field Trip to Texas Panhandle, Guadalupe Mountains & Lake Balmorhea. See OG website for details.

APRIL 18
Gulf Coast Bird Observatory and surrounding.
See OG website for details.

ONC Regular Bimonthly Meeting

MARCH 12
The Small Worlds in our Backyards, by Wanda Smith and Karen Stoley

7:00 pm - Refreshments
7:30 pm - Program
Wanda & Karen are ONC members and both have been habitat gardening for a number of years. They will share their experiences and photographs of some of the "wild discoveries" in their backyards.

APRIL 9, 7:00 pm
ONC Board Meeting

Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary

Spring is a favorite time at LTNS. Dogwood and redbud trees are blooming; butterflies are hatching and feeding on the myriad wildflowers in bloom. There is also a chance of seeing migrating songbirds. Plan to camp on Saturday night and perhaps do some stargazing if weather permits.

MARCH 14-15, Visitors Weekend
Get away from it all and enjoy a weekend in LTNS.

APRIL 4-5, Visitors Weekend & Highway Trash Pickup (8:30 am)
Saturday, April 4, is our quarterly trash pickup along FM 945. Bring gloves, hat, water; pickup takes about an hour, then enjoy hiking the trails at LTNS.

Other Notes of Interest

(Submit news and articles to editor – see back page for contact info)

Activities at LTNS

We had a good turnout in January for our winter highway pickup along FM 945 adjacent to the sanctuary.

Thanks to volunteers Thomas & Gina Autry, Calvin & Connie Blakley, Leland Day, Kellene Jarratt, Aaron Stoley, and Charlie Smith for volunteering to pick up the trash. After the hard work, everyone enjoyed hiking the trails and visiting around the campfire.

The seismic crew that was surveying our property has completed their work and did a very nice job of cleaning up all their marking tape.

ONC Appreciates Your Donations

Donations to ONC are always appreciated and gratefully acknowledged. Memorials and Honor Gifts are used to support Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary or to fund special projects as designated by the donor. Thanks, everyone, for your generosity.

Donations to General Fund

Karen & Phil Beekman

Bill Clendenen

Jerry Gips

Bill Godley

Deborah Lancaster

William & Kathryn Meford

David & Pat Lewis

Mary Helen Pritchett

Donations to Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary

Ron Anderson

Chuck & Priscilla Bauer

Calvin & Connie Blakley

Cissy Donaldson

Alice Grant

Flo Hannah

Lois Lentz

Thomas Maddox

Bob Martin

Barbara Neal

Aaron & Karen Stoley

Monroe & Edith Waxman

Nomination of Officers

It is once again time to fill vacancies in our slate of officers. ONC's board has vacancies for President, VP-Conservation, VP-Sanctuaries, and Secretary. We are in dire need of someone to fill the Secretary position, someone who can attend our quarterly board meetings and record and file minutes of the proceedings. If you can serve or would like to nominate someone, please contact acting President Calvin Blakley.

Membership Renewal

If your label says "EXPIRED" please take a few minutes to complete the renewal form and mail your check for 2009 dues. Even if you cannot join us at meetings or field trips, your membership is important to the health of our organization. Thank you for your continued support.

ONC Member Renewal Information

(Renewal form also available at www.outdoornatureclub.org)

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/St/Zip: _____

Phone: _____ **E-mail:** _____

Regular (\$8).....

Family (\$15).....

Supporting (\$40).....

Life (\$250).....

Ornithology Group (you must be member of ONC to join OG Study Group)

Add \$14-individual, \$19-family.....

DONATION

TOTAL DUES/DONATIONS.....

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Bird Behavior (continued from page 1)

in the same fashion. Coincidence? We don't think so. We think they are opportunists, and if one bird discovers a new source of food or water it's not long before others in the yard follow suit.

I now find myself observing bird behavior whenever and wherever I can. Recently I was in my car at a stoplight and noticed about 10 grackles sitting on a utility wire across the intersection. They were fairly well spread along the wire, then the bird on the left flew up and landed between two birds at the other end of the wire. Soon, the next bird on the left flew up and landed between two at the opposite end. This behavior continued until all the birds had moved down the wire a short distance and were bunched closely together. I wondered if there was some pecking order in their behavior; surely it wasn't just random movement along the wire. Oh well, I'll never know because the light turned green and I moved on to my destination.

Have you observed interesting behavior among the species in your backyard and would like to share with us? If so, please submit an article for publication in *Nature Notes*. Editor's contact information can be found in the information box next to your address label. Thanks ... and Happy Birding!

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see form inside
thank you!**