



Inland Sea Chronicle

Volume 6, Issue 2

www.lakenormanwildlife.org

LNWC Mission Statement

The Mission of the Lake Norman Wildlife Conservationists is to protect and enhance the natural resources and wildlife habitats of the Greater Lake Norman area for all to enjoy.

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Certify your yard, sell your house Huh?

By Don West, President

Last year,” says Mark Wexler, “when my wife and I put our house in Washington, D.C. on the market, our realtor created a brochure that listed all of the property’s attributes. Among them: Our yard had been officially designated by the National Wildlife Federation as a *Certified Backyard Wildlife Habitat*, meaning that we had used native plants and additional natural features to provide an oasis for birds, butterflies and other creatures.

“That designation, it turned out, generated more comments from prospective buyers and their agents than any of the other attributes on the list. And ultimately it helped sell our house. The couple that bought it told us that our attractive, low-maintenance garden was a key factor in their decision.”

Apparently, some people seeking to purchase homes in other parts of the country have come to similar conclusions. In a 2010 National Association of Realtors survey, 88 percent of buyers said environmentally friendly features were an important consideration when purchasing a home.

New York journalist Janet Marinelli examined recent research showing that nature-friendly



practices can reduce maintenance costs and increase property values. In one study, she writes, “University of Michigan researchers report that people are willing to pay more for well-designed yards with mostly native plants than for properties dominated by lawn. The Michigan residents surveyed showed a marked preference for more native

flowers and shrubs, rather than less. The least favorite landscape was a conventional lawn.”

Sustainable landscapes are growing the value of homes. Many realtors recognize that attractive landscaping can increase property values. The No. 1 green home improvement recommendation is planting native trees and flowers—the foundation of a healthy and beautiful backyard habitat.

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the average U.S. household used about 30 percent of its water outdoors. In arid areas, the figure may be as high as 70 percent. Simply by using native plants appropriate for the property, outdoor water use can be reduced by 20-50 percent, reports the agency.

Nothing improves environmental performance and curb appeal more than a wildlife-friendly, sustainable home landscape. Get your home certified and mark it **Sold!**

**Working Together
for
Wildlife
Conservation
on
Lake Norman**



DID YOU KNOW?

As a chapter of the North Carolina Wildlife Federation, LNWC is a non-profit organization

that depends on donations. Our Tax ID is 20-8576936. Please send

donations to:
P.O. Box 4296
Mooresville, NC
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Confessions of a Bird Watcher

By Sid Smith, Director At-Large

My name is Sid Smith and my wife Carol and I moved to Cornelius about a year ago. We came here from a small farm in Tennessee that we had pretty much dedicated to wildlife habitat. We had woods, a couple of ponds, and one hay field that we had converted to native warm season grass. Carol planted native trees and many types of flowers to attract birds, butterflies and bees. It was really our own little nature refuge. Maintaining that refuge was always hard, but satisfying work. Attaching the bush hog and the tiller to the tractor was never easy and after my 70th birthday it became too hard. (I sure did love running that bush hog though.) We also found that after 10 years that farm was controlling our lives. We love to travel – most of our kids live on the West Coast, Carol has relatives in Australia, New Zealand, and Scotland – all very pleasant and somewhat exotic places to visit, and I had a job that took me to Singapore with sight-seeing trips to other parts of Southeast Asia about once a year.



We have had a connection with Charlotte and the immediate area since our daughter married a man from here in 1991, and promptly moved here. We had many visits with them and learned that this could be a fine place for us to retire. In the fall of 2010 we decided that it was time to let someone else have the farm and started looking for places near our daughter. After a detailed search we found and bought this place in Cornelius. I was sure that there was no way that I could ever find a place that could satisfy my love of birds and watching them the way that the farm had. Counting seasonal migrators we consistently had slightly over 30 species of birds that visited our farm. I was sure that I could never approach that number in a city neighborhood.

Our Cornelius place is on a large pond that is surrounded by trees and native plants. We do put out feeders. The neighborhood is relatively quiet and peaceful. We have two cats in the neighborhood – one is ours – and they spend so much time arguing over who is the boss cat that they leave the birds alone. We have a bird watcher's paradise here. Counting seasonal migrators and the ones that just pass through, we have counted over 60 species of birds in our yard, on the pond or just passing by.

I have been a bird watcher most of my life. It has been a hobby – some call it an obsession – for at

least the last 40 years. Bird watchers usually are of two types: listers who keep great long lists of what and where they have seen specific species and behavioralists who try to understand why birds do what they do. I believe that I'm a hybrid – I have bird lists in various field guides from the places where we have birded and sometimes I tally those lists. I have a list that gives me some bragging rights, but as a whole I've seen a very small portion of the world's bird species. It is still always exciting to be able to add a new bird to the list.

We have studied bird behavior in a number of places and it has been wonderful; watching baby Laysan and Black Foot Albatrosses learning to fly on Midway Island; observing the flying circuses that ravens perform in the wind surrounding an old volcano cinder cone in California; following the pink penguin poop trail that krill-eating penguins leave on Antarctic ice; watching a convention of young male turkeys acting like young males of any other species; seeing 20,000 nesting pairs of gannets on Bass Rock in Scotland. We have had our adventures and birds have always been a big part of them. However, our backyard and neighborhood has permitted us to get up close and personal with a bunch of feathered friends. Watching the interaction of species at the feeders has provided much pleasure. There is a definite pecking order between house finches and goldfinches. Robins are great to watch when they are hunting – the way they walk a few paces, tilt their heads and go after lunch. Mockingbirds are so full of energy that they make me want to do something. A brown thrasher always looks like it is in charge. Chickadees, nuthatches, and titmice with their dainty eating habits just make me feel good. And then there are the kingfishers whose staccato rattle lets you know that the fishing is good.

Over the past three months I have been recovering from cancer surgery. I have had many calls from friends around the country wishing me well, I have lots of cards, and I've had the birds in the backyard. There has been much talk about my having a guardian angel that helped with the early discovery of the cancer and who has kept an eye on me during my recovery. I have also had a whole host of feathered angels that have given me the will to get out of bed and go be with them. Watching a brown-headed nuthatch going head-first down a tree works like a new type of energy pill for me. A cardinal is a light on the world that lets you know that all is ok. Hearing a pair of

(Continued on page 3)

Youth

Steve,

I can't thank you enough for all the hard work that you did for our scouts in making and teaching us how to make those GREEN bird houses.

I really feel that scouts need to get back to nature and your organization is awesome for offering so many opportunities for it.

Please let us know about any upcoming events or projects we can do to help the LKN Wildlife Conservationists.

We look forward to many more get-togethers.

Shannon Gamble
Pack 316

Activities!



LNWC Volunteer Steve Turley and these young scouts are helping our group continue its Wild Over LKN! Community Wildlife Habitat designation! Last year, this pack participated with the Lake Norman Home Builders Association in cleaning up their adopted island.

Children and Families Go Wild!

By Lilly Vicens, Youth Activities Chair

This spring/summer season marks the launch of the new LNWC Youth Activities Program and an exciting slate of monthly events planned to connect children to wildlife and nature in the Lake Norman area. As always, we need volunteers for our planning committee and upcoming events.

Save The Date—Preregistration required for the following events. Contact me at lilly.vicens@gmail.com or 910-603-4929 to register or for more information.

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male Carolina wrens trying to out-sing one another lets me know that I have some real cool neighbors.

Birds have been a very important part of my life. They have been entertaining, they have been healing, and they have given me a heightened awareness of their needs and the importance of doing my part to ensure that they have a healthy place to live and that the migrators will know that their winter or summer spot is here waiting for them. My Cornelius neighborhood and Lake Norman has proven to be a place beyond all expectations where I can enjoy my hobby and thereby making my life very enjoyable.

May 26: Take Flight With Butterflies

June 16: Amazing Critter Cruise—Three hour pizza/pasta cruise held onboard Lady of the Lake at Queen's Landing in Mooresville. Cost—\$20 per person (children and families only by prepaid reservation). Narrated program provided by Catawba Riverkeeper Foundation. Live animals!

July 28: Wildlife Photography Hike

Aug. 25: Family Fishing Day at Camp Dogwood in Sherrill's Ford



A Special Thanks to all our volunteers for contributing materials and time to our Fairy House Building activity at the World of Wonder booth at the Davidson Farmer's Market. The children created artful homes for fairies, gnomes and tiny creatures from natural materials found in nature. The magical structures even met the four criteria for Certified Backyard Habitats—Food, Cover, Water and Places to Raise Young. We appreciate the opportunity and support provided by the WOW program, the Davidson Lands Conservancy and Woodlands Discovery. Check out more kids events at the WOW market booth every Saturday morning! Visit LNWC's Facebook page and website for fairy house photos.

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We're on the web!
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Conservationist News & Views

LNWC Membership Report

Treasurer **Don Higgie** reports LNWC has received dues from **10 new members** so far this year! It's easy to join our group. Just visit our website for membership information. We have a link to pay your dues using a credit card. Joining our chapter of the NC Wildlife Federation means you have state-wide opportunities to make a difference in wildlife conservation. Also, a paid membership means you will be first to receive announcements of upcoming local events.

Button Bush Planting Project

Want to help stabilize the Lake Norman shoreline to prevent erosion of our islands? If you are interested in helping on Saturday, April 21, sign-up at: lakenormanwildlife.org/button-bush-planting. A crew leader will follow-up with details.

Don't Miss Spider Man!

Invertebrate specialist Dr. **David Grant**, professor emeritus of biology at Davidson College, will educate us with LIVE spiders (and whatever else he can catch) at LNWC's last free library program before summer break. The program starts at 7 p.m. Thursday, May 10 at Mooresville Public Library, 304 S. Main St. in the Youth Services Room. After summer break, the next library program will be Sept. 13.

Social Networking for Wildlife

Don't forget to join our new LNWC Facebook page! There's a link on our website or enter "Lake Norman Wildlife Conservationists" on the FB search bar. Not only will you get up-to-date information and photos of conservation projects and events in our area, you will be able to network with fellow wildlife and plant enthusiasts. There's several great photos by project leader **Ken Teeter** of the March 29 platform nest build.

LNWC

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The *Inland Sea Chronicle* is published by the Lake Norman Wildlife Conservationists, a chapter of the North Carolina Wildlife Federation. Direct comments and inquiries to jchiggie@yahoo.com