



Grand Haven, Michigan

far flowing water



January 19 @ 7:30p.m.

Volume 21  Number 4
January, 2010

Bat's In Your Backyard: The Bats of Michigan **Amy Russell**

Are you scared of bats? Ever wondered what those nighttime aviators are up to? Learn to appreciate and value bats.

The presentation will focus on local bat diversity, the benefits to humans of healthy bat populations, and conservation pressures faced by local bat populations.

Dr. Russell has been studying bats for 13 years, and will be sharing her experiences of doing bat research in the Caribbean, the United States, and Asia."

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United Methodist Church of the Dunes
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Everyone is invited. Our programs are free.
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Parent's Name Chic's

Provided by: Steven Frasier, October 2009

Parrots call their baby chicks by name, German experts say.

Hamburg Germany - In a discovery that is likely to further rekindle the debate about language in the animal kingdom, researchers in Germany have discovered that some parrots appear to give their offspring individual names.

Animal behavioral scientists at the University of Hamburg say that spectacled parrotlets use a distinctive call for each of their chicks, with no two chicks being given the same 'name' call.

The small South American parrots also apparently have 'name' calls for their mates. 'The birds very definitely use a particular call exclusively with a particular bird and never for any other bird,' says Dr. Rolf Wanker, head of the Hamburg University Zoological Institute's behavioral research laboratory.



Wanker and his team have spent years assessing video and audio recordings of parrot chatter and squawking. 'What is not yet clear, however, is whether these calls can be equated with what we would call names such as Hans or Fritz or whether they could be more generic labels such as 'my baby' or 'my mate', he adds. 'For that reason we prefer to refer to these calls as labels or name equivalents.'

The studies were inspired by observations in the spectacled parrotlet's natural habitat in Colombia. There, researchers from Hamburg noted that individual parrots seemed to respond to specific calls that other parrots in the same flock ignored. 'A mother bird had the uncanny ability to utter a cry that would result in her chick returning to the nest immediately amidst the cacophony of the other parrots all around,' Wanker recalls. 'It was obvious that the baby knew it was being called,' he says.

At the Hamburg lab, studies showed that these name equivalents are fractional cries lasting between 90 and 120 milliseconds. The cry is distinctive enough to provide acoustic clues as to the identity of the individual uttering the call and also to the identity of the intended recipient bird. 'A mother bird uses a different call for her baby from the one she uses for her mate, and they respond with calls that correspondent to her identity,' he says.

Similar findings have been achieved with certain primates and with dolphins. Many years ago, British television science producer David Attenborough showed that macaque monkeys use distinctive alarm calls to alert other monkeys to danger. Macaques will use one call to identify a panther, thus telling other monkeys to climb up a tree. But they will use a different call to identify a python, thus ensuring that all the monkeys climb down a tree that has a snake lurking in its branches. The Attenborough findings are of interest because they involve primates in the wild that have had little or no contact with humans.

That contrasts with studies involving chimpanzees and gorillas in captivity in America over the past four decades, which have produced startling but highly controversial evidence that primates can learn and use deaf human sign language. Other studies have determined that birds develop regional 'accents' and 'dialects' depending on their location. Sparrows in the eastern United States, for example, are known to have subtly different chirps from their cousins on the west coast.

The German findings are the first involving parrots. The spectacled parrotlet is among the smallest parrots, only slightly larger than budgerigars. The bright green birds with a distinctive yellow ring around their eyes live in eastern Panama and northern Colombia.

In the Hamburg study, parent birds and their chicks were placed in separate cages within earshot of each other, but out of view of each other. The birds' calls to each other were recorded and later played back to the individual birds to ascertain their response. The findings demonstrated that each bird used a name specific call.

Parent's Name Chic's Con't from Pg.3

Wanker shies away from calling this labeling behavior any form of language, noting that it has yet to be proved conclusively whether humans are the only animals capable of abstract linguistic structures.

He also notes that a fierce debate has been raging for decades among ornithologists and linguists over whether songbirds might be using a form of language. But he points out that, in the avian world, parrots are a special case. 'Parrots are unique among avian species, he says. 'They are the primates of the avian world and are very highly developed creatures with complex social systems and prodigious cognitive skills.'

The Hamburg research group plans to expand its study to include macaws at the Hagenbeck Zoo in Hamburg.

There is no reason not to believe that your parrot has a 'name specific' call for you! So, pay attention, you may quickly find a 'name' call in your honor.

Source - Deutsche Presse-Agentur (English Addition)

Reprinted with permission: BUSY BEAKS, Grand Rapids Avicultural Society, October, 2009, issue, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

February
12-15

Great Backyard Bird Count

"The GBBC is a perfect first step towards the sort of intensive monitoring needed to discover how birds are responding to environmental change," said Janis Dickinson, the director of Citizen Science at the Cornell Lab. "Winter is such a vulnerable period for birds, so winter bird distributions are likely to be very sensitive to change. There is only one way—citizen science—to gather data on private lands where people live and doing this across the continent over many years. GBBC has enormous potential both as an early warning system and in capturing and engaging people in more intensive sampling of birds across the landscape."

"Each year the GBBC provides the most detailed real-time snapshot of bird distribution across North America," said Rob Fergus, Senior Scientist with the National Audubon Society. "We can see how birds are responding to changing weather patterns, available food sources, and other factors from around the continent."

Each checklist submitted by "citizen scientists" helps researchers at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society learn more about how the birds are doing—and how to protect them. Anyone can take part in the Great Backyard Bird Count, from novice bird watchers to experts. Participants count birds for as little as 15 minutes (or as long as they wish).

<http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/press/2010-gbbc-news-release>



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Birds and Transmission Towers

February 16 ~ ~ Joelle Gehring

Birding Nearby

March 16 ~ ~ Judi and Carl Manning

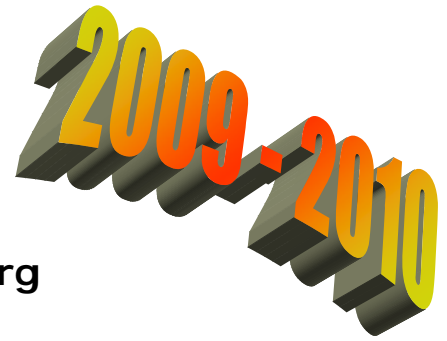
Birds of Madagascar

April 20 ~ ~ Angie and Steve Hamberg

Annual Potluck & Members' &

"Show-and-Tell" Slide Show; May 18 - 6:30

Everyone is encouraged to bring up to 20 of your favorite nature shots to share.



TAP, TAP, TAP

Judi Manning

We have all heard the *tap, tap, tap* of a woodpecker on our house. Some are excited. Some are not.

Woodpeckers, with strong toes and sharp claws cling upright on the bark of tree trunks and branches. Aided by their stiff tail feathers, they remain upright as pointed beaks chisel into wood in search of insects and sap and excavate cavities for nesting and roosting. They play a **very beneficial role in the environment by eating millions of noxious insects**, including carpenter ants and carpenter bees.

They prefer dead or decaying tree trunks, but sometimes they adlib with a house, which often occurs when the tree(s) they have used are removed.

They also drum, which does not cause damage. The rhythmic drumming may be noisy, but they drum against hard resonant surfaces to proclaim territories, send an alarm, and/or attract a mate. The surfaces include metal or plastic gutters, antennas, light posts, cedar or rough pine redwood siding, and spouts on a house or building. In one study, the birds stopped drumming 50% of the time within two weeks whether the homeowner did something or not.

To discourage drumming, modify the surface with fabric or foam and eliminate hollow spaces with caulking.

If woodpeckers are attracted to and pecking your home throughout the year, they are looking for food. Make sure you do have any insect nests as woodpeckers are attracted to infested wood. You may need to replace the affected timber, siding or roof.

In the spring, if you have a large enough area where they built a nest, wait until the young have fledged and then plug the hole and be **VERY CAREFUL YOU ARE NOT CHASING A WOODPECKER FROM OR SEALING A NEST OPENING.**

DO NOT USE any sticky repellent. These products get on a bird's plumage, impairing its ability to fly and stay warm.

Con't on Pg.4

You should begin deterrent method(s) when you first hear woodpecker activity.

Some deterrents:

- Attack spider is a large spider that drops down 18 inches at the first knock through sight and motion. The spider then climbs back up the string. Woodpeckers do not like spiders.
- Netting is the most effective method of excluding woodpeckers from damaging wood siding. Place the lightweight plastic netting made specifically to keep birds off your home over the area. A one-half inch mesh is recommended. Leave at least 3 inches of space between the house and the net. Be sure to secure the netting so the birds cannot get between the house and the netting. When the birds have moved, you may take the netting down.
- Shiny visual repellents like Mylar 1 inch wide tape, foil strips, tinfoil, aluminum pie plates, or CDs or DVDs that hang freely and blow in the breeze.
- Windssocks hung from house corners also work and are less intrusive.
- Handheld windmills especially with reflective vanes attached to your house often discourage woodpeckers.
- Bird-B-Gone Balloon, is a vinyl balloon with mock-predator eyes around the exterior.
- Place aluminum flashing over areas where the woodpecker is pecking. This works because it is metal, it changes the sound, and woodpeckers do not like shiny objects.
- Noise repellents:
 - like loud rock music near open windows
 - bird distress calls effectively discourage birds
- Try a movement detector that makes noise when it senses movement.
- Try a few wind chimes hanging from areas of your home
- Put up a woodpecker house.
- Hanging an appropriate sized suet feeder will distract woodpeckers from your house.
- Leave dead or decaying trees for them.
- Have a garden hose with a sprinkler set to reach where the bird is drumming. After a few squirts, the woodpecker leaves because they do not like hanging on to wet structures.
- Fake owls, but you have to move them daily.
- Fake snakes tacked to the side of your house and move them around from time to time.



Hairy Woodpecker

You might need to use more than one deterrent at a time.

DO NOT SPRAY ANY INSECTICIDE ON ANY INSECTS YOU FIND. IF YOU SPRAY INSECTS AND THE BIRDS EAT THEM IT WOULD HAVE A HARMFUL/DEADLY EFFECT ON BIRDS.

Are birds attacking your window? They are trying to chase off the intruder on its territory. Here are some hints I found:

- ✧ Cover the window with screens
- ✧ Rub the window with a bar of soap to decrease reflection.
- ✧ The mylar tape or balloons held.

THE 1918 MIGRATORY BIRD TREATY ACT PROTECTS ALL NATIVE BIRDS. IT IS ILLEGAL FOR ANY REASON TO POSSESS BIRDS, DEAD OR ALIVE, NESTING MATERIAL, EGGS, FEATHERS AND BONES OF A BIRD, WITHOUT THE PROPER PERMITS FROM THE U.S. FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE AND THE STATE OF MICHIGAN. IT IS ILLEGAL TO HARM OR KILL A PROTECTED BIRD SPECIES. IT IS ALSO ILLEGAL TO REMOVE OR DESTROY NESTING MATERIAL FROM A NEST ONCE AN EGG HAS BEEN LAID.

References: Avoiding Problems with Woodpeckers, Chicago Wilderness, A Regional Nature Preserve, <http://www.chiwild.org/childchi/livingwild/wildtrouble/woodpeckers/index.dfm>; Woodpeckers Cause Thousands of Damage Each Year, 7/7/08 editor <http://www.eviving.com/2008/07/07/woodpecker-damage>; 10/1/09, Lansing Wild Birds Unlimited, source MSU Extension, <http://lansingwbu.blogspot.com/2009/10/how-do-i-stop-woodpeckers-from-pecking.html>; http://www.birds.cornell.edu/wp_about/control.html; How to Get Rid of Woodpeckers, <http://getridofthings.com/get-rid-of-woodpeckers.htm>

Winter Bird Feeding

Tired of watching snowflakes? Instead, watch colorful birds in your yard. A bird feeder in your yard can attract birds where you can easily see them. Lots of excitement will be outside your window. It may take time for birds to find your first feeder. Your location, abundance of natural food nearby, and the weather can all affect our bird feeding efforts.

Bird feeding is fun and more importantly, helps birds through harsh winter conditions when food may be hard to find or buried under the dead snow. Insects in freezing weather are hidden, dead or dormant. In spring and summer, most songbirds eat mainly insects and spiders.

If you already have a feeder, add one or more with other food choices. The more variety of food, the more diversity of bird species. Place feeders at different heights above ground.

Winter feeder care:

Do not put feeders out and forget about them.

Keep the feeders full as many birds will rely on them as a regular place to eat.

It is very important to keep feeders clean. Birds can get sick from moldy bird seed or pass diseases on from your feeder to another bird.

Place feeders where they are free of disturbances, easy to see, and convenient to refill. They should be close to natural shelters (trees, shrubs). Evergreens provide maximum cover from winter winds and predators. Feeders should be 10 feet from "jumping-off places". Place large, loosely stacked brush piles nearby to provide resting places and escape cover.

Hints:

- ♦ Check your feeders for safety. Sharp edges can scratch birds and make them susceptible to infection. Make sure the feeder opening is large enough to prevent a bird from getting stuck.
- ♦ Give seed feeders, especially thistle and tube feeders, a shake before refilling them to dislodge compacted seed. Dump out wet clumps of old seed.
- ♦ Clean all hulls off platform feeders and out of seed trays daily.
- ♦ Clean and scrub feeders with 2 ounces of bleach and 2 gallons of water feeders before refilling them. Rinse and allow feeders to dry before refilling with seed.
- ♦ Wash your hands after filling or cleaning feeders.
- ♦ Do not allow large amounts of seed to become wet on platform feeders. When it is wet outside, feed from covered feeders to keep seed dry or put out only a handful of seed at a time on platforms.
- ♦ Clean beneath the feeders. Decomposing hulls may harbor bacteria that could spread bird diseases that could kill the birds.

The following 9 foods are extremely popular with all backyard feeder birds:

Black-oil sunflower is the "hamburger of the seed world." Almost all birds will eat these nutritious and high in fat black-oil sunflower seeds. The thinner outer shell is easier to crack and the kernel is larger than striped sunflower seeds.

Peanuts-unsalted, deshelled, and dry-roasted are high-protein, high-energy food. There are many sturdy, efficient tube-shaped peanut feeders. Woodpeckers, jays, nuthatches, chickadees cardinals, finches, and titmice eat peanuts.

Suet is an excellent source of energy. Get plain beef suet from a grocery store butcher counter or buy some of the prepared suet squares mixed with seed.

Good mixed seed have a large amount of sunflowers, cracked corn, white proso millet and some peanut hearts. **BAD MIXED SEED** has lots of filler that most birds do not eat and can include dyed seed meant for pet birds, wheat, and red milo which only birds in the Desert Southwest eat. Cheap bags of mixed seed sold at grocery stores can contain the least useful seeds. Buy mixed seeds from a specialty bird store.

Nyjer/thistle seed is eagerly eaten by finches, pine siskins, and redpolls. A thistle sock is a sock-shaped, fine-mesh, inexpensive synthetic bag. Thistle can go rancid or moldy quickly in wet weather. This feeder has space for a lot of birds at one time. There are also steel thistle feeders with access by many birds.

Safflower enjoyed by many birds is a favorite of cardinals. Safflower can be put in a sunflower feeder. Avoid feeding safflower on the ground in wet weather. It quickly becomes soggy and inedible.

Cracked corn is eaten by sparrows, blackbirds, jays, dove, woodpeckers and squirrels.

Mealworms are consumed by most birds.

Fruit is an important dietary food for birds. Set out grapes, slices of citrus fruits, apple or banana slices and watch what birds appear. I still put grapes out and cardinals and woodpeckers eat them. In summer, many, many species of birds are eating the grapes.

Water. Birds need water to drink and bathe in. Clean feathers provide the best insulation. Water heated with an immersion-style bird approved water heater will also help attract birds. Clean it often and keep filled with fresh water.

References: <http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/caer/ce/eeek/nature/winterbird.htm>; <http://birdwatching.com/tips/birdfeedingwinter.html>; Bill Thompson, III, http://birdwatchersdigest.com/site/backkyard_birds/top_ten_bill_top_10_winter.aspx; BirdNotes, Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology newsletter, Winter Bird Feeding.

Check one

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Far Flowing Water is published eight times per year. If you would like to contribute to the next issue, **please have your articles to me by Feb. 1st**

Our programs are made possible, in part, by an Emilie Baker Fund for the Environment grant from the Grand Haven Area Community Foundation.

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Owashtanong Islands Audubon Society Mission Statement

a 501(c)(3) Nonprofit Corporation

Provide stewardship of local Grand River island wildlife sanctuaries owned by the Michigan Audubon Society;

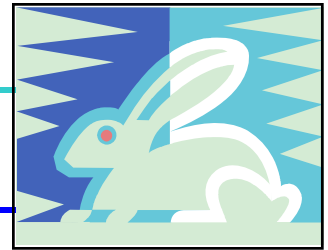
Achieve through education, public recognition of the value and need for protecting and preserving wildlife, plants, soil, water and other natural resources as well as an understanding of their interdependence;

Promote an interest in our native birds and as well as native flora and fauna, and their habitats because of their great economic, cultural and recreational value; and

Aid the Michigan Audubon Society in its study, conservation and research efforts.



Rabbits communicate with each other by thumping their feet



Owashtanong Islands Audubon Society

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PLEASE FORWARD

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

**BATS IN YOUR
BACKYARD
JANUARY 17**



**BACKYARD BIRD COUNT
FEBRUARY 12—15**