

Editor: Dana Sims

Spring 2003

Issue 51

Burlington Recreation and Parks

### ANIMAL CLOSE-UP

(a close-up view of a mammal, bird, or other creature found in North Carolina)

### DARK-EYED JUNCO

(*Junco hyemalis*)

It is always an exciting day for me when the juncos appear in early winter. They just suddenly seem to be there. And, just as rapidly in the early spring, they disappear. You one day realize you no longer see them. It isn't like their numbers dwindle until there are none left. They seem to all leave at once. Does someone blow a whistle and say "Let's go guys! We're outta here."?

Juncos are darling little birds and I love listening to them. They chat when they get together. It's a pleasant sound, like listening to a group of ladies having tea.

Have you ever wondered where juncos come from each winter and head each spring? Well, they are from "up north a ways." There are some northern areas of the U.S. lucky enough to have juncos, but for the most part, the birds go to Canada. Because they show up in our neck of the woods in early winter, they've earned the nickname "snow birds."

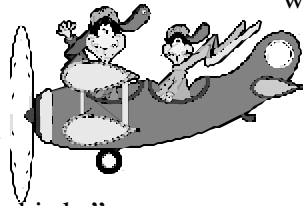
There are several types of juncos and, at one time, were considered separate species. But since they interbreed in areas where their territories overlap, they are now considered one. There are Slate-Colored Juncos, Oregon Juncos, and White-

Winged Juncos...now all referred to as dark-eyed juncos. "Ours" are sparrow sized, have a dark gray upper body with white underneath and gray breast. Although not easy to see without binoculars, they also sport pale pink bills.

They breed from late March to August in their spring and summer territory. They lay 3-6 pale green or blue eggs spotted with brown. Their nest is a well-designed cup consisting of grasses, moss, and strips of bark. They nest on or near the ground among vegetation, or on the forest floor.

Red proso millet is their favorite food at a winter feeder, followed by white proso millet, canary seed, cracked corn, and oil sunflower seeds. They also enjoy suet and peanut hearts. They will occasionally feed at a birdfeeder, but prefer eating on the ground, sometimes pecking at whatever seed other birds spill from above.

It will be a while before our junco friends return, but we'll be glad to see them when they get here. We wish them safe journey.



### DID YOU KNOW...?

A hummingbird's heart beats 500 times per minute...when he's resting! When he's flittering about, it beats over 1200 times a minute. Isn't that amazing?

## A WAR HERO

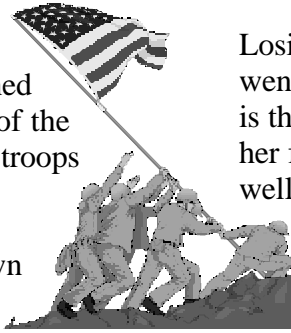
Not long ago, war news was all we were hearing. I had a 24 hour news station tuned from day one. Regardless of which side of the war issue you were on, most support our troops and believe they are heroes.

Often "battles" go on right here in our own country, in our own county even. One was waged by our friend and coworker Betsy Chandler and her devoted husband, Don. Betsy battled breast cancer for three years. The fact that she won the battle but lost the war does not detract from her heroism. In fact, I think it would be fair to say it defined it.

I got to know Betsy in the 80's when I started doing volunteer work for the Recreation and Parks Department. Betsy was assigned to be my supervisor, but soon became my friend as well, and, with time, we became very close.

Betsy was one of those people that everyone liked. Even as loveable as I am, there are a few folks who don't like me (I know, hard to imagine), but no one disliked Betsy. She was so good at her job that even when she was taken off a project to do something else, everyone still sought her advice and input. You'd often hear "Betsy, I know this isn't your responsibility, but..." More than being a good worker, she was just good, period. A decent, caring, friendly human being.

Her getting breast cancer seemed (and still seems) so unfair. How can people like O.J. be walking around and someone like Betsy be stricken with such a horrible disease? The cancer was aggressive and Betsy fought it with everything she had. Honestly, any other person would have succumbed to the cancer within the first year. Betsy battled it for three. If tenacity was enough to kill cancer cells, she would have been well again. She never would allow herself to believe she was not going to win.



Losing Betsy was and is a terrible blow. A light went out when she died. Her husband, of course, is the one to feel the pain the most, followed by her family. However, those of us who knew her well are suffering, too. I wrote a poem for her the day she died...a tribute. It seems feeble given all she was to so many. Regardless, I would like to share it with you.

The Recreation Department will be building a memorial to Betsy in City Park. In addition, a project that she and I envisioned some years ago will soon become reality. (You can read more on that on page 4). Betsy will be sorely missed, but she will never, ever be forgotten.

### AN EXTRA STAR

There's an extra star  
In the sky tonight  
But it seems so far away.  
I'm not sure  
It can fill the void...  
The light that went out  
When you left us.  
But happy memories  
Of your smile  
And your laughter  
And all that made you you  
Those memories  
Will have to hold us  
Until that time  
When we, ourselves,  
Become part of the stars, too.



written 2/20/03  
in loving memory of Betsy Brown Chandler  
by dana sims

## "BLIND" BIRDS

For several years now Kindred Spirits Wildlife Center has been receiving calls about "blind" birds. Sadly, the calls are on the increase. The end of last year and so far this year, the numbers are disconcerting.

The birds are usually finches, thus the nickname "finch conjunctivitis." The real name is mycoplasma conjunctivitis and it can affect birds other than finches. Mycoplasma conjunctivitis is a highly contagious avian disease. It is not transmissible to you or your cats and dogs, but it is contagious to other birds. The disease has been on the increase, in part because of our desire to help the birds. Feeding them is controversial. On the one hand, we, as humans, have taken away so much habitat and food sources from all wildlife that giving back seems like the right thing to do, not to mention how enjoyable it is for us to watch them. On the other hand, we are causing birds to gather in ways they never would naturally. This leads to situations, such as hawks hanging out near feeders, or the spread of diseases, like this one.

If one does feed birds, it is important to keep the feeders clean. A diluted bleach solution will kill germs or, if you are into natural things like I am, vinegar straight from the bottle kills 99% of bacteria and 97% of viruses, so it is a potent disinfectant as well. Feeders where the bird has to stick his head into an opening to retrieve seed is more likely to spread this illness than open feeders. Each time the bird puts his head through that opening, its face touches it and then the next bird that comes along rubs against the same area.

If you find a bird with this illness and would like information on what to do, call Kindred Spirits (or your local wildlife hospital). Although this disease is almost always fatal, we can give recommendations on how best to handle the situation.

## SAD REMINDER

A N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission law now makes it illegal to assist sick, injured, or orphaned deer. Fawns are now being born and hundreds upon hundreds will be killed as a result. If your dog brings up a fawn, you find orphans by their mother's dead body, or you accidentally run over one with farming equipment, by law you are to call a wildlife officer. He may tell you to put the baby back, which is impossible if it's injured or you don't know where it came from. When he is able to get there, he will take the fawn to a wildlife official and that person will transport to a vet to be euthanized, or administer euthanasia himself (he, of course, is not a vet.)

In the Commission-published magazine, they mention rehabbing deer will no longer be permitted by "private individuals" (leading many to falsely assume it is legal for a wildlife hospital or vet). Nowhere do they mention, or even imply, the May fawns will be killed.



No one denies that Chronic Wasting Disease (the reason for this law) is a serious concern. Closing our state borders to transported deer and elk, which has been done, should keep this disease out. It is not in any state even close to us. Identified 30 years ago, CWD has not run rampant in that time. In states with CWD, percentage of infected wildlife are extremely low and those states have a fawn rehab program.

The Commission stresses there are no known cases of CWD in our state. "None of the rules and procedures to protect N.C.'s wild deer herd from CWD will interfere with normal hunting activities. Nor are there new rules for hunting in N.C. that pertain to CWD." It will still be legal to hunt deer, raise deer to sell for meat, even hunt out West (where the disease IS a concern) and bring the meat back. It will be illegal, though, to provide assistance to a deer. The Commission's website is: [www.wildlife.state.nc.us](http://www.wildlife.state.nc.us) Phone numbers of various officials are listed if you have questions or concerns. The referenced article is also on their website if you would like to read it in its entirety.

## INFINITY...AND BEYOND

(After-Death Choices for the Environmentally Minded)

If you thought your choices after death were burial, mausoleum, or cremation, think again. For a fee, Houston's Celestis can launch cremated remains into space. A small amount of your ashes are placed into a lipstick-size container, put in a launch vehicle, and sent into orbit. I guess it's not enough that we pollute the Earth while we're alive, we get to litter space after we're dead? For those concerned with the environment, however, Memorial Ecosystems in South Carolina offers burial in biodegradable caskets (and no embalming fluids so toxins don't leak into groundwater). Another choice - Eternal Reefs mixes cremated ashes with an environmentally safe concrete which are lowered into the ocean to help repair damaged reefs. This Georgia based company has had nearly 300 people do so since 1999. (Cost: \$1500 - \$5000). LifeGem out of Illinois (for \$4,000 and up) can compress carbon extracted during cremation to make a manufactured diamond. The resulting diamonds are blue-tinted due to the boron present in human remains. A number of companies will insert cremated remains into anything from fishing rods to necklaces to musical instruments. And in Arizona a company called EternaLight will seal ashes into an electric "eternal flame" candle.

A Swedish scientist, concerned because cremation uses fossil fuels and creates air pollution, has devised a freeze-drying process where the body is immersed in liquid nitrogen and shattered with sound waves resulting in a powder. This procedure is not yet available, however.

Who says we can't still be concerned about the environment even after we're gone?

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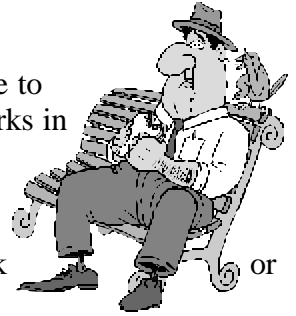
Kids' Page answers: (in order)

owl, raccoon, bluejay, hummingbird, beaver, snake, woodpecker, gray squirrel, frog, fox, opossum, vole

## NATURE IN THE PARK

As more and more of our county, state, country, and world disappears to human habitat, there are less and less places for wildlife to live, eat, and raise a family. Gone are the days of most folks either living on a farm or having relatives who run one. Children can no longer easily find places where they can see animals, either domestic or wild.

Alamance County is fortunate to have some of the loveliest parks in the state. Each is unique. It is not surprising there are wild animals living in places like Town & Country Nature Park or Lake Mackintosh, but you may be surprised at the variety of wildlife that live in or visit, for example, Joe Davidson or Burlington City Park. To help children and adults learn about the wildlife that share our parks, the Recreation and Parks Department is planning a series of "Nature Around Us" nature stations. Our first series of stations will premiere in Burlington City Park. They will be strategically placed throughout the park and will feature various wildlife that reside there. These attractive and informative displays are available for sponsorship. You or your business can sponsor an entire station or a half station. Cost for a full station is \$200; half is \$100 (tax deductible). Your name, family's name, or business name will appear on the station or you can have it done in memory of a person or pet. This is a fantastic opportunity to educate young and old alike about wildlife and nature, and your sponsorship will make that possible. Thousands of folks each year will read about the nature surrounding them as they enjoy their day in the park.



If you have questions or would like an application form, contact our nature consultant, Dana Sims at 336 376-8602. She can also let you know which animals or species signs are available for sponsorship.



# Kids Page



CAN YOU MATCH THE BEHAVIOR/  
DESCRIPTION WITH THE CORRECT WILD  
ANIMAL? (answers on page 4)

**BEAVER**

**FOX**

**GRAY SQUIRREL**

**BLUEJAY**

**VOLE**

**WOODPECKER**

**HUMMINGBIRD**

**OPOSSUM**

**RACCOON**

**OWL**

**FROG**

**SNAKE**

\_\_\_\_\_Suns itself on rocks or on banks,  
but jumps quickly into water when  
you approach.

\_\_\_\_\_Secretive mammal with fluffy tail.  
Hunts by pouncing on insects or  
small animals.

\_\_\_\_\_Been around 60 million years. Has  
a hairless tail.

\_\_\_\_\_Burrows underground and nibbles  
on plants.

\_\_\_\_\_Hunts at night. Flies silently.

\_\_\_\_\_Gray, black, and white, rings on  
tail, and wears a "mask."

\_\_\_\_\_Noisy bird. Males and females  
colored alike.

\_\_\_\_\_Eats insects and nectar. Can hover  
in place.

\_\_\_\_\_Cuts down trees for food and for  
lodging material.

\_\_\_\_\_Crawls on belly. Cold blooded.

\_\_\_\_\_Long beak designed for drumming  
on wood and prying insects out of  
decaying trees.

\_\_\_\_\_At home in trees. Big fluffy tail.



## HOME SWEET HOME

Pollution is a serious problem for our planet, but in America the air inside our homes is three times more polluted than the air outside. Much of this is due to paints and finishes that can release low levels of toxins into the home for years after being applied. These volatile organic compounds (known as VOCs) are a class of carbon-based chemicals. Exposure over time can affect health. For folks with chemical sensitivities, or who care about the environment (or both), there are alternatives to paints with VOCs. Some are made from naturally derived raw materials, such as natural pigments, citrus peel extracts, and essential oils. Some are 100% plant and mineral based using ingredients like carnauba wax or beeswax.



Natural paints are not new, but a decade ago the color choices were severely limited. Today you can go natural, yet still choose from a wide variety of hues. Natural paints do cost more than conventional and you may have to mix it yourself if you want a variation on the basic colors.

Paints classified as low VOC are water-based rather than oil-based and release a lower level of toxins. Zero-VOC paints contain less than .5 grams per liter. Colors add more VOCs to the paint.

### **For more information on low or zero VOC paints, contact one of the following:**

Sherwin-Williams, "Harmony"  
www.sherwinwilliams.com  
1-800-321-8194

Benjamin Moore, "Pristine Eco Spec"  
www.benjaminmoore.com  
1-800-344-0400

American Formulating & Manufacturing, "Safecoat"  
www.afmsafecoat.com  
1-800-239-0321

Pittsburgh Paints, "Pure Performance"  
www.pittsburghpaints.com  
1-888-774-7732

ICI DuLux Paints, "Lifemaster"  
www.iciduluxpaints.com  
1-800-984-5444

Glidden, "ProMaster"  
www.icipaintstores.com  
1-800-834-6077

Eco-Wise, "ChemSafe"  
www.ecowise.com  
210-657-5321

### **For information on paints made from plants and minerals, contact:**

EcoDesign, "BioShield"  
www.bioshieldpaint.com  
1-800-621-2591

Natural Home, "Auro"  
www.naturalhomeproducts.com  
707-824-0914

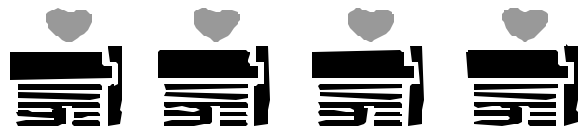
Environmental Bldg. Supplies, "Aglaiia"  
www.ecohaus.com -  
503-222-3881

### **For information on milk paints (which are made from milk, clay, lime, and earth pigments), contact:**

Old Fashioned Milk Paint Co.  
www.milkpaint.com  
978-448-6336

Antique Drapery Rod Co., "Healthy Milk Paint"  
www.antiquedraperyrod.com  
214-653-1733

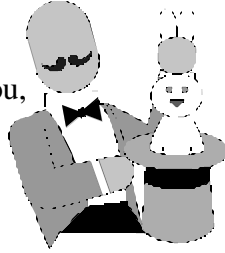
Sawyer Finn, "Natural Milk Paint"  
www.sawyerfinn.com  
816-421-3321



## MUSINGS FROM THE COUNTRY

### THE ART OF APOLOGIZING

I have a colleague I accuse of magician apologies...now you see it, now you don't. He will say "I'm sorry I upset you, but I'm not used to dealing with such sensitive people." "I'm sorry I made you cry, but you take things too seriously." His apologies appear genuine, but in actuality, he is shifting the blame from himself to me. I am too sensitive. I don't know how to take a joke. He is "apologizing" while pointing out that the real problem lies with me. "I'm sorry, BUT..."



Another typical response when a person is confronted with their mistakes is to become angry or try and turn things around to divert attention from them. The victim, often uneasy at the burst of anger or confused over the issue being contorted, ends up feeling guilty for being upset to begin with, even though they were justified.

Apologies are actually quite easy. But I didn't learn that until I was in my early 30's. Until then I was just as guilty of magician apologies as the next person. I learned how to really apologize while working at a vets' office getting experience for my wildlife license. One day two of us messed up. Person #1 forgot to put ID on an animal and I compounded the error by putting it in the wrong cage. Fortunately the veterinarian realized this was not the one there for surgery, but had he not been familiar with this pet, the results could have been disastrous. I knew the vet was extremely upset and my first impulse was to point out that I would not have made my error if Person #1 hadn't made hers. But I took a deep breath and, before he could say a word, said, "I am SO sorry. I know how serious this was and if you want

to yell at me, I don't blame you. I promise to be more careful so this doesn't happen again." I prepared myself for an onslaught of fussing, but watched in amazement as all the anger went right out of him. It was like a balloon deflating before my very eyes. He quietly said "I am not going to yell. This could have been bad." I said, "Yes, sir. I know. I'm sorry." And that was the end of it. He never mentioned it again and I learned a powerful lesson that day. I realize that had I gone in there pointing the finger at someone else, I would have only made things worse. It was by taking responsibility without placing blame at someone else's feet that I defused the situation. And, because he recognized the apology was sincere, lost his anger.

I'm not going to tell you this works 100% of the time. I have given a sincere apology and still gotten chewed out, but for the most part, the other party forgives and moves on, and I feel better knowing I did the right thing. I now always apologize this way. If I mess up, I say so, apologize sincerely, then state how I will remedy the situation or keep it from happening again. Not that I've had a lot of practice, mind you. After all, I don't make mistakes very often! But on those "rare" occasions, I give real apologies...not the kind that are followed by "but." That way I don't end up looking like one!

With country wishes,

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