Today on Across the Fence we will see some not so common birds and learn about more calls ones that have interesting histories. Good afternoon and thanks for joining us, I'm Judy Simpson. As always on the fourth Wednesday of every month, Mark LaBarr, conservation biologist from Audubon Vermont joins us. Great to have you with us again.

Mark.: As always, great to be here.

Judy.: So you're going to be talking about some common things and some not so common things.

Mark.: Yes, I will start out with some of the not so common things. The first set of birds I want to talk about are not common in two ways. First off, their birds and we see in numbers every so often, 2, 3, or 4 years will see more than we normally do and also the very secretive birds, so they're not birds like a Robin per se that we would see. You hear them more than you would see them. They are often very secretive and hang out in places that are not visible, and these are the cuckoos. A very interesting bird, there's two species that we have here. We have the black-billed cuckoo, and this bird as you can see, as the black bill and the nice red hiring, and it does the traditional cu-cuu-cuu and you can hear that people have been hearing these across the state now, and there's the other one which is the yellow-billed cuckoo, and this one has a slight yellow underneath the bill, hence its name, and I'm not very good at the yellow-billed cuckoo; it's more like I don't think I'm even going to try, but that's really interesting about these two species, they love caterpillars. It becomes a main food source, and this time of year, there's been information that shows once they're finished and breeding they begin to disperse around looking for a good caterpillar food source for the next year's breeding. We're now seeing them or more people are seeing them across the state that could very well be birds looking for to see if Vermont is going to have another good year. We had a good year with cuckoos this year, and we had a good year in 2007 when we had a caterpillar outbreak, and then. This is a bird that's very specific on its food source and has adapted to finding where that food source is to make its next breeding season that much better.

Judy.: How does it know the next year that the caterpillars will be back?

Mark.: Just by searching around it picks up on clues. I'm not exactly sure to be honest. If it is about and then like I said there's potential we might. Whether we will see a lot of them next year or not, we'll have to see but we did have a four-year hiatus since the last big year that we had.

Judy.: Excellent. What else have you seen that's not so common?
Mark.: There have been reports more over the past couple years of merlins. Merlin's are very small falcons. I saw one for the first time this year out coaching my son in soccer and there was a Merlin up at the Richmond elementary school.

Judy.: No kidding here he is.

Mark.: A small little falcon not all that. Kind of brown a very fast flyer in with a cestrols and some of the larger falcons peregrine falcons and things of that nature. These are birds that used to be very uncommon but now as breeders are becoming more common. Always a great bird to see cackling about. Then the other bird which is an interesting species is actually a Vermont endangered species. This is called the sedge wren. I know this is a great shot. This bird is a bird that uses the wet sedge areas or places where there are lots of reed's or canary grass and its wetter. We sometimes see in Vermont sometimes don't see it in Vermont. There was one that was located in South Burlington this year which had a lot of birders in a bit of a tizzy because it's a good bird and it was very visible and folks to go see it. It's an interesting one that has an interesting breeding cycle and when we see it we may actually be seen their second breeding attempt that they may have bred somewhere further north and then they come to Vermont for their second time around. There's new information coming in on this species but when it's around it's an exciting bird for lots of birders.

Judy.: A guess so. Now for some of our more common feathered friends you brought some interesting histories tell us about.

Mark.: I have I did this is one of those things as folks know I run the banding station down at the Audubon center and we've had a great year this year with recaptures which are birds basically that I have banded at some point before and we've recaptured them again. This is one of Vermont's more common and popular birds the black cap chickadee. This is a chickadee that I've banded for the first time about three years ago. It's really cool to be able to recapture that. You can see the band right there and that number is the partial number their of the band so reading that number I can check the computer records to see when that bird was first banded. This is a resident bird that we know has been sticking around and has hung out for quite some time at least at the center. The next species is another bird this one is even better this is a downy woodpecker. You can see the band on that bird and this bird was banded seven years ago. Again another resident part of the banding program that we're looking at when we banded birds at the Audubon is we're trying to gauge how long birds live so this is great.

Judy.: I was going to say seven years as a longtime.

Mark.: It's kind of starting to push it for these the guys. We had a veary that we banded which was also seven years old. That's a nonresident so that's a bird that didn't stick around but flew all the way down two Central South America and flew all the way back seven times safely. A couple other birds that we banded at the station that had bands on them are the chestnut sided warbler this is a great small little bird that nests in early secession will habitats. This bird was banded about two years ago at the center so our habitat is just now growing back and this bird is just moving back in. This is a nice mail in you can see that chestnut side. We also caught a very common bird that you would see around any small or wet area meadow. The common yellow throat. This bird goes whchidee whchidee whichidee whichidee and this is a bird that oftentimes if you're walking around and they have young you can hear their chicks calling and letting folks know they're not really pleased. This bird abandoned last year so again we're picking up. This is another long distant migrants so it's going somewhere very far away and coming all the way back and messy information and banding can really give us. And the last one from the banding station is our swap Sparrow. This is a great little bird in nests out obviously in our beaver ponds and swampy areas. It has a straight trill. Folks know what a chipping Sparrow it's a brrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr and if you're in a swap and here was sounds like a chipping sparrow is a good chance here are it's a swap sparrow. The beavers have moved in change the habitat so this bird was actually four years old and when I'm just getting swamped
sparrows back in. Where that bird went in the intern we're not sure but it's decided to return to the Audubon center in Huntington.

Judy.: Interesting.

Mark.: This is a short distance migrant it doesn't go as far as chestnut sided warblers.

Judy.: So you actually can get a lot of information just from return trips.

Mark.: Right. What banding really does is it tells us how much the survivorship as well as the catching a lot of the young birds that are associated with these adults so it gives us productivity numbers and how well the birds did was far as getting kicks off.

Judy.: Excellent I know you get lots of questions from viewers and you brought some with you today.

Mark.: I did this first one is from Jim dyer of Sharon Vermont it's on the same scene of our banding piece. He has a hairy woodpecker that he saw that is feeder this winter and jam am still working on trying to figure out where this bird is from plate was actually able to see a number of the different numbers on the band. Some of the numbers flipped around in his letter so he was obviously working really hard on what the numbers actually are and their very difficult to read. He's and Sharon so this bird is not a migrant it's a bird that sticks around and there is a banding station over at the much air museum which has been run by the Vermont Center for eco studies for the last two or three years. That's just over the hill from Sharon so my guess is that maybe where the bird is coming from. If it was a migrant it could be coming from anywhere. All work with this Jim all try to figure it out and get something out to you as soon as I get a chance.

Judy.: All right our next letter is from bob spring of Crown Point New York he says I watch a show on channel three. We have not notice many smaller birds or bugs whenever that hover around the blossoms and feeders with the hummingbirds they act like hummingbirds. But I'm told there really bugs about the size of a large bumblebee have you heard of this? This is the first that we have ever seen this event.

Mark.: Yes this is the hummingbird moth.

Judy.: If you've never seen these these are fascinating.

Mark.: Yes they're very cool and as you can see from this picture it basically is looking at those flowers in the same way a hummingbird is. It's got the big curled perboscus for getting deep down has and it hovers.. Hummingbirds are one of the few birds that can do that as well so in many ways the hummingbirds is acting more like the moth then the moth is acting like it. Again they're going for the same food source so they have some similar tools for getting that nectar out.

Judy.: Excellent.

Mark.: Then we have one more from Lee Francis. This was a great shot that she took. Thought you might be interested in our latest visitor to our backyard. The great horned owls have a nest up and the pine trees behind our neighbor's house for several years. We have listen to them all spring and her the little one screen for the last several weeks. He'd been flying around the woods and obviously he decided to join the gnome in the backyard. This is a great shot an you can see it's a little bit fluffy still it's able to fly but it's got those juvenile feathers.

Judy.: What kind of owl will is that?
Mark.: This is a great horned owl. You can almost see the two little horns or talks on the top of the head that are just started now.

Judy.: That's cute but it's really funny.

Mark.: The next one I think you have from David Emery.

Judy.: I do this is a really interesting story. He said recently I've been watching a large adult crow not a raven scooping up a mouthful of sunflower seeds from the gravel driveway where I spread about 2 quarts of it every morning. He walks across the lawn and stops try this is because into the ground multiple times until his because buried to the hilt he then empties the sunflower seeds into the hole that he's created. The first time I saw this he proceeded to the edge of the driveway and picked up a thatch of dried brown grass that was left after mowing he walked back to the whole in place the water grass over it and tainted down with his beak and I was flabbergasted.

Mark.: My guess as the crow you know very intelligent birds are storing food. He's got to have an abundant food source and he's just using the ground as a means of storing that food or caching that food for future use potentially in the wintertime.

Judy.: And a smart enough to know that driveways get plowed in the winter?

Mark.: I guess but the fact that he's actually doing that. Acorn woodpeckers often will hoard acorns and trees and things like that so that would be my guess as to what the crow was doing again very intelligent birds the Crows the jays the ravens. He obviously we'll figure out where it is or they'll be lots of sunflowers in their yard next year.

Judy.: Exactly.

Mark.: And I wanted to make one mention about the letters and I get from viewers and emails and stuff. That rise best I can to get to all the letters and answer all of these sometimes a little slow. I really do try to get them on sometimes it takes me a couple months so I thank the viewers for being a little bit patient with me with a viewer mail. A lot of it's me because I talk too much and by the time we get to the end of the show we don't have time to do viewer mail.

Judy.: you need to mention that too.

Mark.: I think we have time for one more little thing. This is interesting it's another insect related thing. I had a friend of mine from Boston led a blue jay nests on her porch one of the fledglings flew off she went down to get it and in bringing it back and putting it back into the nest she was covered in bird mites. This is an interesting insect here they are they're very tiny they suck blood and they're usually associated with birds but they will migrate once birers leave into people's homes. You have to be conscience with that. Jon Turmel who's the state entomologist I spoke with him about it he said I can tell almost every year when the pheobes fledge. Oftentimes phoebes nest underneath eaves because people will call in once the fledglings leave the nest then the bird mites need another food source so what they do is they will migrate if they're close enough into the house and they'll actually bite humans. Talking a hand he says they only lived for about a week and humans are not a great food source so if they do get in there you want to try to washer porch off or do it you can to keep them out.

Judy.: Should you remove the nest?

Mark.: That's a tough one because it's federally as far as nest you're not supposed do that so I won't give advice on that piece but you can often washer porch down. I have a letter here from Joanne Varga who said she had phoebes these that actually all died in the nest and it could be from an abundance of mites
but she was able to spray her whole porch down and get rid of them. Another interesting thing in bird world.

Judy.: It's not all fun and games.

Mark.: It's not all fun and games no it's not.

Judy.: If you of a bird related question for mark pass it along he will get to you it might take a little while as he explained but keep the letters coming because they're really interesting. You can contact mark at Audubon Vermont at the address on your screen or if you prefer UK and email mark the addresses MLabarr@Audubon.org send in the questions and he'll try to answer them on upcoming editions. Always great to see you.

Mark.: Always great to be here.

Judy.: Busy time of year.

Mark.: Very much so we're getting to the end of the season but there's breathing of the other side.

Judy.: Excellent. Thanks a lot mark. Thanks for joining us that's our program for today we will see you again next time on across the fence.

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