

Friends Connecting to Friends

Issue 13, March 1, 2021

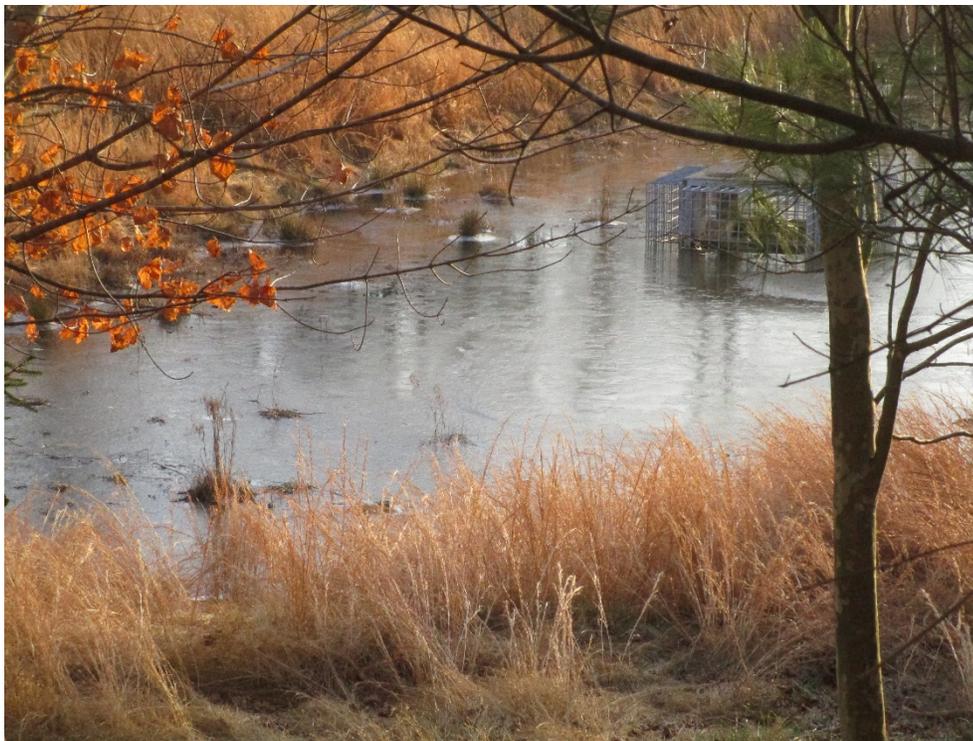
In My Neighborhood by Mary Beth Mattison

Two months ago, I was thinking about the pandemic and wondering how long it might last. I wanted to do something special during this time, so I started a nature photography journal. I decided to take several nature photographs every day for one year or until the pandemic is substantially controlled in the world. Since it was winter, I knew I might not be able to go outside every day so, during inclement weather, I take photos from my living room window. Once a week, I post my favorite photo on social media.

As time went on, I realized my photo project was putting more joy in my daily life – that was an unanticipated benefit. Photography is my favorite hobby anyway, but this project has been quite good for me. I also noticed I'm spending more time thinking about the composition of my photos and working to improve them.

I must admit that one day I forgot to take any photos. I think it was the day the water was shut off unexpectedly at our apartment complex, but I figured it was okay that I missed one day.

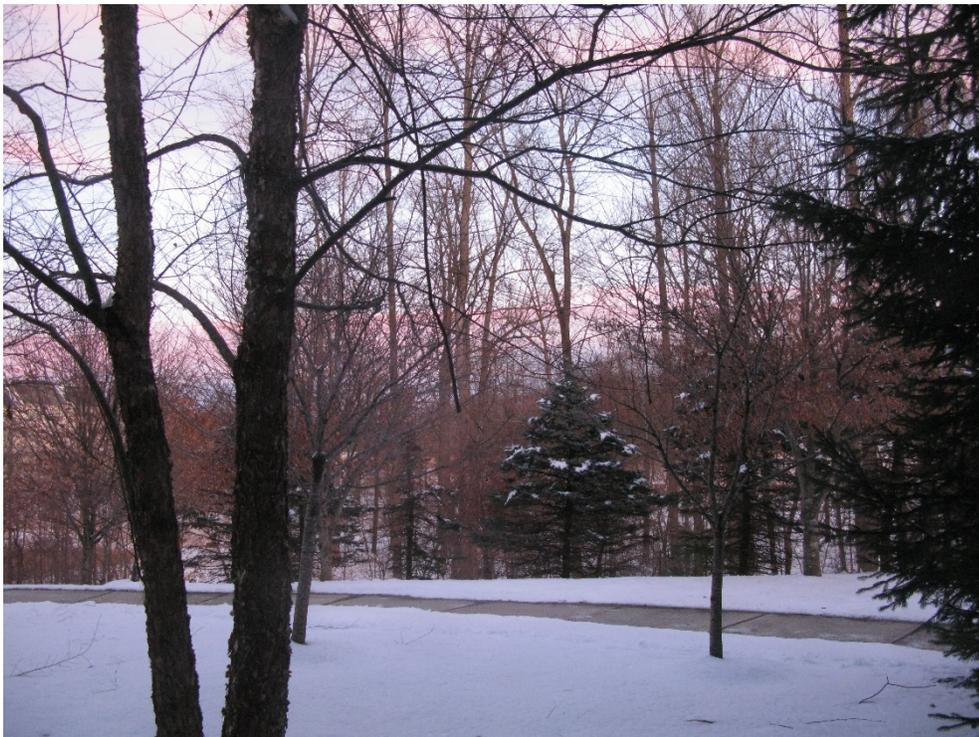
I've seen so many beautiful photos in Friends Connecting to Friends, and I've chosen a few photos to share with you. One is of the ice on our retention pond at the apartment complex. One is a fawn and doe on our mini-prairie. And the last one I took from my living room window one evening when the sunset was red.



Ice retention pond: photo project day 27



Fawn and doe on mini-prairie: photo project day 21



Red sunset: photo project day 50

Where Did 63% of the World's Bird Species Spend Valentine's Day Weekend? by Ken Cohen

There is no way to know where 63% of the world's bird species spent Valentine's Day weekend, is there? Yes there is! The National Audubon Society, Cornell University, and Bird Studies Canada sponsor the GBBC or Great Backyard Bird Count. This event encourages everyone all over the world to watch birds for a minimum 15 minute time period over a four day period surrounding the second weekend in February and then report their sightings. Watchers can submit as many lists as they desire. One person in Guernsey submitted one list reporting no birds. At the other end of the spectrum one person in Columbia submitted multiple lists reporting 274 bird species. All told people reported observing 6,351 species in 179 different countries or geographical areas around the world. Columbia watchers submitted more than 1200 checklists reporting 1,135 different species for first place. United States watchers submitted 219,000 checklists reporting 663 different species for eighth place. No one in North Korea submitted any lists or reported any species, however, South Korean observers reported 148 species. Similarly, no one in Mar-a-Lago reported any species, but observers in Palm Beach reported 165 sightings, none of which contained yellow hair or a red tie.

Observers in Prince George's County kept the compilers busy. They submitted 481 checklists reporting 97 species. Watchers at Lake Artemesia reported 54 different species for first place. Watchers at Governor Bridge Natural Area reported 7 species for twenty-ninth and last place. Lake Artemesia watchers received a boost in their totals from waterfowl including Canvasback, Ruddy, Bufflehead, and Shoveler Ducks. Watchers at Patuxent Research Refuge South Tract submitted 4 checklists reporting 30 species which rated the Refuge tied for seventh out of thirty places with Paint Branch Trail watchers who also submitted 4 checklists. We saw Cardinals, Juncos, White-throated Sparrows, Robins, and Canada Geese. Our highlights included Hooded Merganser, Ruddy Duck, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Common Raven, and Hermit Thrush. We had some big misses. We did not see or hear Bluejay, Mourning Dove, or any vultures. We were at a disadvantage because the refuge's grounds were closed on February 15th, the last day of the event. These 30 sightings at South Tract were one species higher than the 29 sightings reported at North Tract, in Anne Arundel County. Their highlights included Yellow-rumped Warbler, American Woodcock, Northern Harrier, and Golden-crowned Kinglet. The big miss at North Tract was Canada Goose.



White throated sparrow hopping



Junco



Field sparrow

The easy parameters of this event encourage participation. Simply start at any time, watch for at least 15 minutes, and report your sightings. Cornell makes reporting easy. Log into eBird, hit submit, identify your location, the date, duration of observation and the website provides a list of birds. Pop in the number seen of each bird. When you are finished hit the submit button and it's over. If you have photos you can easily upload them to any list you have submitted when you have finished editing them. Unlike Project Feeder Watch you count all the birds you see and know are not repeats. If a male Cardinal comes to a feeder, leaves and a female Cardinal comes to the

feeder, you know you have seen two Cardinals. Under project Feeder Watch you would only count one Cardinal because only one was at your feeder at a time. If a Turkey Vulture flies over, it counts. Since Turkey Vultures don't visit your feeder (they better not and uncovered garbage cans do not count as feeders), you cannot count that bird for Project Feeder Watch. Since you only bird when you want to, it is much easier than the Christmas Bird Count where you are out all day counting every bird you see in a given territory. It is also easier because you can select where you bird. That weekend the weather kept me close to home, but if I had decided to bird Oxbow Lake, no problem. I would have submitted a separate list for that area. This citizen science project has enabled ornithologists to locate wintering ranges of many of our Maryland breeding birds. It has helped identify crucial habitat for their winter survival resulting in protecting our birds in Latin America. My Valentine to the birds was a lot of extra seed in the yard and in my feeders. They seemed to enjoy it. Consider participating in the GBBC next year.



Bluejay

Saving Our Wild Birds – Strike Prevention by Jeanne Latham

Personal Story

One of the first personal bird strike experiences that made a lasting impression on me was the time a Carolina chickadee hit our sliding glass door, dropped on the deck, and lay with its feet up. It was a shock to see this beautiful wild bird, which had been one of the regular bird visitors to our backyard, in a dreadful condition. Since it was wintertime and very cold outside, I went out on the deck, scooped up the bird in my hands, and held it for about 15 minutes. I could feel the warmth of its body and feet; the body and eyes not moving much. Then, the chickadee seemed to come round a little; the eyes blinked. Since I felt quite chilled and didn't want to put the bird down just yet, my husband came out to hold the bird for a while. Finally, the chickadee rallied, moved its head and feet, and squirmed so much that my husband decided to put it on the deck. It flew off, to our relief.

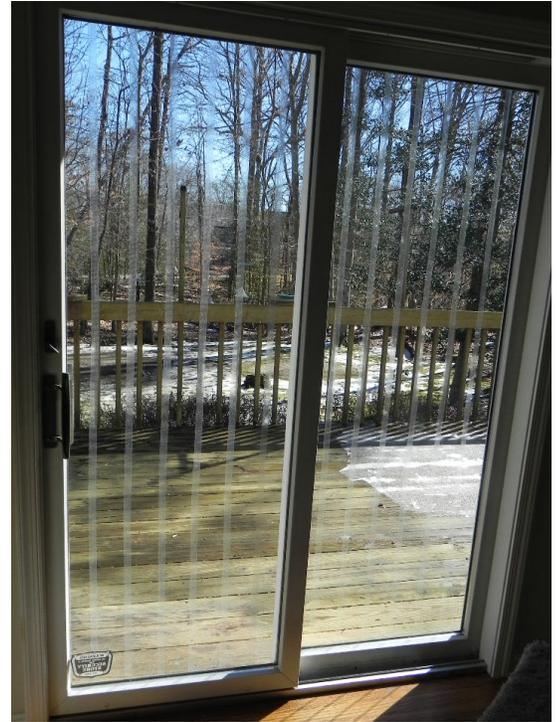
Last year a male Brown-headed cowbird hit the sliding glass door – hard. When I went out on the deck and picked it up, I realized that its neck was probably broken and suffered instant death. That made me feel really sad. A number of times in the past other birds hit the sliding glass door and we were able to “save” them – Tufted titmouse, Dark-eyed junco, North Carolina chickadee, female Purple finch. Holding the injured wild birds makes an impression on you – seeing the bird stunned; watching as it comes around; feeling its warmth and aliveness; hoping it survives; letting it go and feeling good that it “made it.”

More recently – about 5 weeks ago – I saw an American robin hit the sliding glass door just off our kitchen. I noticed a clump of feathers stuck on the door and some feathers on the deck. The bird was obviously stunned; and it sat still for about 15 minutes with its eyes open. Then it flew off. We had taken one step previously to thwart bird strikes - we attached “stickers” to the doors, but obviously these proved ineffective. Recently we decided to look at solution options, so we would not have more bird strikes. We searched the internet and wild bird websites for effective solutions. We opted to try a type of $\frac{3}{4}$ inch tape purchased from CollidEscape". It was fairly easy to install, and now we hope for the best for our wild backyard birds. Below are some photos of the “before view” from the inside and outside the house; and the “after view.”



*Outdoor photo of window,
before (left) and after
(right) installation of tape*





Indoor photo of window, before (left) and after (right) installation of tape

Wild Bird Organizations Insights About Bird Strikes

One figure that I've seen cited many times is that 1 billion wild birds are killed per year in U.S. because of them striking glass surfaces. This is a staggering and disturbing number of bird deaths.

One quote from the Portland Audubon is "Window strikes are among the top three human-related cause of bird deaths, along with cats and habitat destruction. Up to one billion birds die each year in the United States due to collisions with windows and research shows that 54-76 percent of window collisions are fatal." (<https://audubonportland.org/our-work/rehabilitate-wildlife/being-a-good-wildlife-neighbor/birds-and-windows/>)

According to the American Bird Conservancy, "Birds don't understand the concept of glass as an invisible barrier that can also be a mirror. They take what they see literally: glass appears to be habitat they can fly into, whether that habitat is reflected or visible through glass.

Why do birds hit windows? Birds collisions occur for two primary reasons: 1. They perceive glass reflections of vegetation, landscapes, or sky to be real, and 2. They attempt to reach habitat, open spaces, or other attractive features visible through either glass surfaces or free-standing glass.

Birds tend to collide with glass at high speeds and their small bodies, composed of hollow bones, leave them particularly vulnerable to injury."

The American Bird Conservancy also sheds light on the aftermath of collisions of birds with glass doors and windows. "After colliding with glass, some birds may be only temporarily stunned and without lasting injury — but often they are not so lucky. In many of these cases, birds suffer internal hemorrhages, concussions, or damage to their bills, wings, eyes, or skulls. While they may be able to fly temporarily, birds with even moderate injuries are much more vulnerable to predators and other environmental dangers." (<https://abcbirds.org/blog/truth-about-birds-and-glass-collisions>)

Solutions for Helping Prevent Wild Bird Strikes

For several bird strike prevention solution options, check out Cornell Lab of Ornithology's ideas at: <https://www.allaboutbirds.org/news/why-birds-hit-windows-and-how-you-can-help-prevent-it/> .