Good News - Yes, we are going to have a May Program!!! Yeah. Not so good news - It will be virtual, not live. Judy Walker has agreed to record her program on hummingbirds. It will be posted on our website (meckbirds.org) and our Facebook page on Thursday, May 7th.

One of the most beloved birds has recently begun to grace our yards again. It has been ‘relaxing’ the warm sun of Central American and has recently undertaken an arduous journey to return to your backyard. Yup, it’s the amazing, feisty Ruby-throated hummingbird. In this recorded program, Judy Walker will share some amazing facts about hummingbird migration and anatomy focusing on ‘our’ ruby-throated hummingbird.

The presentation will be available Thursday, May 7th to coincide with when our regular meeting should be occurring. So fire up your device, grab a couple of cookies and a cup of Birds & Bean coffee and imagine you are at the Tyvola Senior Center.

MAS Board Election Moves Online

Normally at our May meeting we elect new members to the MAS board. We are fortunate to have a great group of folks who volunteered to help shape the future of MAS. This year’s slate includes Natasha Goins, Janet Palmer, Matthew Withrow and Shannon Wright. Since we can’t vote in person, we need to do it online. Please vote to approve our slate of officers by going to our SurveyMonkey Ballot (https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/6KFSQYX). We will send you an email reminder on Thursday, May 7th.
Global Big Day is an annual celebration of the birds around you, and this year is no different. While not everyone may be able to leave home to bird this year, Global Big Day is still an opportunity to check in with the birds in and around where you live. Join thousands of folks on 9 May and be a part of a global birding community by sharing what birds you see around you with eBird.

Participating is easy. Wherever you are, you can be a part of the global community of birders on 9 May. Please remember to always put safety first and follow all local safety guidelines and closures. You can enjoy birds from inside your home and still be part of Global Big Day.

If you can spare at least 5 or 10 minutes, report your observations to eBird online or with the free eBird Mobile app. If you have more time, submit checklists of birds throughout the day at different times. Can you find more birds in the morning, or the evening? You never know what you might spot. Your observations help scientists better understand global bird populations through products like the animated abundance maps brought to you by eBird Science.

This year, Global Big Day will focus on the number of checklists that birders can collect as a global team. Last year, 35,209 eBirders from 174 countries collected an astounding 92,284 checklists in a single day. Will you join us on Global Big Day to make 2020 the year that we surpass 100,000 checklists of birds in one day? Help Cornell Lab of Ornithology set a new checklist record!

How to participate
• Create an eBird account (ebird.org): It’s 100% free from start to finish.
• Watch birds on 9 May: It’s that simple. You don’t need to be a bird expert or go out all day long, even 10 minutes in your backyard counts. Global Big Day runs from midnight to midnight in your local time zone.
• Enter what you see and/or hear in eBird: You can enter your sightings via our website or download the free eBird Mobile app, which makes adding what you see even easier. You can enter and submit lists while out birding, and the app tracks how far you’ve walked so you can focus on enjoying the birds. Please enter sightings before 13 May to be included in our initial results announcement.

• Watch the sightings roll in: During the day, follow along with sightings from more than 170 countries in real-time on our Global Big Day page.

Global Big Day Pro Tips
• With the spread of COVID-19, please follow recommendations from local health officials and avoid unnecessary travel.
• Use Merlin Bird ID for help with tricky species.
• Take photos and add them to your checklist—they might end up on the Global Big Day page!
• Share what you’re seeing on social media with #globalbigday!

Mecklenburg Audubon is hatching a bit of a competition to make this day even a bit more exciting and challenging. Look for more information on our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/MeckBirds/); on Meckbirds our local discussion list and via email.

Resources to help you participate in the Global Big Day.

Getting started with the eBird website (https://bit.ly/2VMxJ3Y)
Getting started with the eBird mobile app (https://bit.ly/35kXdIX)
Recently I’ve had a lot of folks ask me about the best ID mobile apps. I always hesitate when answering because everyone has their own favorites. In reality most of the apps provide pretty much the same information – pictures, vocalizations, range maps, basic ID information, capabilities to filter by size, shape, color, etc. It’s pretty much like buying a car. All cars will get to where you need to go. It’s the other more subtle, personal preferences that cause you to buy one over the other. I personally have at least a half dozen different ID apps on my phone, but here are my top recommendations.

**Best ID Resources**

Merlin from Cornell Lab of Ornithology. This is the one I recommend to newbies because it walks you through the ID process asking questions about the what the bird looks like and where it is. You can customize it by downloading only the data for birds in your area. Because the Lab is doing international research, it also has bird packs from around the world. Another add on feature is the ability to take a picture of the bird and it will help you ID the bird. Oh, and did I say it’s FREE!

Audubon’s Birds of North America. Another good app for beginners. It doesn’t have as many bells and whistles as Merlin, but the basics are there. Plus, the photography is stunning. It’s also FREE.

iBird Pro. This app has been around for as long as the iPhone. In fact, Apple used it to help promote the sales of the iPhone. I have been using it since it was first introduced. It has come a long way over the past 10+ years. It has many of the same features as Merlin including the photo ID. Though it doesn’t have as many international species as Merlin. There are a number of different versions of that helps everyone with an Apple® or Android® smartphone or tablet accurately identify birds in their backyard, local park, or nature trail—all with the tap of a button! Just hold up your phone, record the bird singing, and BirdGenie™ will help you identify the species.

The nice thing about all of these apps, including those you have to buy, is they are constantly being updated and improved. That certainly makes them a lot more flexible than a book. All of them download everything to your phone so you don’t have to worry about internet connectivity. It’s like having a miniature library in your pocket.

**Want to know when, where, and how far will birds migrate?**

Then you need to check out BirdCast (https://birdcast.info) from Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Real-time bird migration maps show intensities of actual bird migration as detected by the US weather surveillance radar network. All graphics are relative to the Eastern time zone.
Hummingbird Superlatives

From Smithsonian’s Migratory Bird Center. For the entire article go to https://nationalzoo.si.edu/migratory-birds/hummingbirds

The Smallest Bird
The bee hummingbird of Cuba weighs only 1.95 grams, which means that, theoretically, 16 could be mailed first-class using just one stamp. The calliope hummingbird, the fourth-smallest bird, weighs in at a whopping 2.5 grams (less than an ounce) and can be found in the mountains of western North America.

The Tiniest Egg
It makes sense that the smallest birds come from the smallest eggs ... but how small? The one to two eggs in a ruby-throated hummingbird clutch are about as tiny as peas and are placed in a walnut shell-sized cup woven from spider webs and plant material.

The Avian Helicopter
Hummingbirds and swifts are able to stroke with power both on the down- and up-beat of a wing flap. Their power and small size allow tremendous agility in flight. In fact, hummingbirds are the only vertebrates capable of sustained hovering (staying in one place during flight), and they can fly backward and upside-down as well.

To their maneuverability, hummingbirds add speed and stamina. They have been clocked at close to 30 mph indirect flight and more than 45 mph during courtship dives. Migratory ruby-throated hummingbirds have no problem flying 18 to 20 straight hours to cross the Gulf of Mexico, powered by their fat stores and given a bit of help from winds.

Life in the Fast Lane
A ruby-throated hummingbird’s heart beats from 225 times per minute when the bird is at rest to more than 1,200 times per minute when it is flying. Its wings beat about 70 times per second in direct flight and more than 200 times per second while diving.

Asleep on the Job
Hummingbirds are one of the few groups of birds that are known to go into torpor. Torpor is a very deep, sleep-like state in which metabolic functions are slowed to a minimum and a very low body temperature is maintained. If torpor lasted for long periods, we would call it hibernation, but hummingbirds can go into torpor any night of the year when temperature and food conditions demand it.

Hummingbirds are the masters of torpor, because they have to be. Their feathers offer poor insulation, and they have incredibly high metabolic demands. Torpor allows them to check-out physiologically when they cannot maintain their normal 105 degrees Fahrenheit body temperature.

The Not-so-social Life of Hummingbirds
Hummingbirds are, for the most part, unsocial. In fact, the adjectives pugnacious and feisty are often appropriate. When more than one hummingbird is around, it is often a scene of repeated high-speed chases. In fact, male and female hummingbirds do not form a pair-bond after mating, and the female is left to care for eggs and chicks alone.

Hummingbirds do not need the help of other hummingbirds to locate food or fend off predators. Other hummingbirds are competitors for the flower nectar upon which they thrive. The help a male might provide a female does not outweigh the burden of having a male around competing for food.

What is all this fighting about? Plants take time to secrete nectar into their flowers. In an ideal world, hummingbirds should time their visits to flowers to take advantage of a full load of nectar. But they wait to feed at a flower at the risk of other hummingbirds beating them to the punch. It is therefore worth the effort for hummingbirds to chase away competitors, so they have access and control of their favorite flowers.

In many cases, hummingbirds defend small territories around a favorite flower patch, and do so even during brief stopovers for refueling during migration. Where many species live together, the large species attempt to dominate flowers to get the biggest drinks of nectar, and smaller species try to sneak in for a few sips.
Ten Ways to help Nesting Birds

Spring is the start of the breeding season for most of our North American birds. They pair up with mates, build nests, lay eggs, raise young, and then some of them repeat the cycle—as many as three times. There are some things that you can do to assist your backyard birds at this busy time of year. Here they are, in the time-honored Top Ten format.

10. **Keep your cat inside** (and ask your neighbors to do the same). Cats take an incredible toll on songbirds, but low-nesting species and their young are especially vulnerable to cat predation. Do the birds a favor and keep this unnatural predator away from places where birds nest.

9. **Provide nest boxes.** It may seem obvious, but a well-placed nest box can mean the difference between nesting success and failure for a cavity-nesting bird. It’s hard for many species to compete with starlings and house sparrows, which can take all the best cavities.

8. **Hold off trimming hedges and shrubs.** Lots of species use small hedges and shrubs for nesting. If you see a bird building a nest in such a place on your property, you’ve got a great excuse to avoid this bit of yard work for the next month or two.

7. **Put out short pieces of fiber, string, and yarn.** For birds that build woven nests (orioles, some sparrows, robins, and others), a few short pieces of yarn can come in mighty handy during building time. Offer the pieces in an onion bag or in a small basket. Keep the pieces shorter than two inches to reduce the risk of birds getting tangled in them.

6. **Offer short pieces of pet or human hair in onion bags or put in obvious places.** If you looked at a hundred bird nests, chances are that most of them would have some animal hair in them. It’s soft, insulating, and easy to gather. When you groom your pet (or when you yourself are groomed), save the hair to spread around your backyard for the birds to use. Be sure to clip long strands of hair or fur into pieces no longer than two inches to avoid entanglement by nestlings’ feet and legs. **Don’t offer lint from your dryer.**

5. **Put out eggshells for birds.** Eggshells help female birds replace calcium lost during egg production and laying. Save your eggshells, dry them out in the oven (10-30 minutes at 250 degrees), crumble them into small pieces, and spread the pieces on an open spot on the ground.

4. **Continue to feed high-protein foods such as peanuts, mealworms, and suet.** Don’t stop feeding your birds, unless you want to miss out on some fabulous behavior watching. Energy-packed foods such as those listed above will lure your backyard birds (and their young) to your feeders. These young birds will learn at an early age where your feeders are.

3. **Don’t mow meadows or brushy areas between late April and mid-August.** This means that field sparrows, prairie warblers, meadowlarks, and other birds can nest in peace.

2. **If you find a nest — stay away.** If you happen upon a bird’s nest, don’t linger, and don’t make a return visit. We human beings leave scent trails wherever we go, and these scent trails can mean an easy meal to a hungry raccoon, opossum, fox, or other predator (We leave the same trails leading to our outdoor pet-food dishes, garbage cans, and compost piles). These predators are smart enough to follow these trails to see if they might lead to a snack. For the birds’ sake, don’t help to blow a nest’s cover by visiting it repeatedly.

1. **Provide water for bathing and drinking on hot days.** Actually, provide water all year long, if you can—but make sure to keep it clean. Your birdbath may be the first place in your backyard a parent bird takes its offspring. Lots of family-style bathing takes place at summer birdbaths, and young birds can be dependent upon the only water source they know. So, keep your bath filled and clean. Make sure the average water depth is less than three inches. Birds appreciate shallow water.
Pop Quiz:
How Much Do You Know About Nesting Birds?

From Bird Watcher’s Digest - https://bit.ly/3f93BYs

Most birds build or use some type of nest to produce and rear their young, but only a relative handful of birds use human-provided nest boxes, or birdhouses. These species include chickadees, titmice, nuthatches, wrens, bluebirds, and tree swallows. Being a landlord to the birds is a thrilling experience. You are treated to an intimate peek inside the lives of your “tenants” and rewarded with the presence of their offspring, if nesting is successful. Enjoy our fun quiz to learn more about nesting birds!

1. True or False?

- True: Studies have shown that adult male bluebirds sometimes feed female offspring twice as often as they feed males.
- False: The explanation might be that sons might someday compete with their fathers for mates, while daughters pose no such threat. (Answer: True)

2. About how many North American breeding birds use nest boxes?

- a) 12  b) 55  c) 85  d) 100

- Answer: c) About 85. In North America only about 85 of our 650 breeding birds use cavities for nesting or roosting. (Answer: c)

3. Which of these duck species sometimes use nest boxes?

- a) Wood Duck
- b) Common Goldeneye
- c) Bufflehead
- d) All of the above

- Answer: d) All of the above. Across the boreal forest of Canada, common goldeneyes, common mergansers, and buffleheads are cavity nesters that will use nest boxes. In the Pacific Coast, Barrow’s goldeneye can be added to the nest box list. (Answer: d)

4. Which of these warbler species sometimes use nest boxes?

- a) Hooded warbler
- b) Prothonotary warbler
- c) Black-throated green warbler
- d) All of the above

- Answer: d) All of the above. Along the Pacific Coast, from northern California to Alaska, Barrow’s goldeneye can be added to the nest box list. (Answer: d)

5. Which of the following can pose a threat to backyard cavity nesters?

- a) Snakes  b) Raccoon  c) Wasps  d) All of the above

- Answer: d) All of the above. They can slither, fly, climb, and jump, and they want your birds. The most effective anti-predator strategy is to rig a baffle on the mounting pole below the nest box. This baffle might be a commercially purchased metal cylinder, or it could be a homemade sheet metal skirt. Nest boxes with predator baffles enjoy vastly higher rates of nesting success since they virtually eliminate access by climbing predators. To discourage wasps and bees from nesting in your boxes, rub liquid soap, or a light coating of petroleum jelly, on the inside roof of the nest box. (Answer: d)

6. True or False?

- True: Crushed eggshells are a rich source of calcium for nesting birds.

- Answer: Yes! Eggshells help female birds replace calcium lost during egg production and laying. You can see the shells, from your feathered friends, point to their favorite spots. (Answer: True)

7. When is the best time to put up a backyard nest box?

- a) Winter  b) Spring  c) Summer  d) Fall  e) Today!

- Answer: e) Today! Generally, we advise that backyard birders erect their nest boxes in January. Nonmigratory cavity nesters, such as nuthatches, chickadees, and titmice, investigate potential nest sites throughout the winter and are ready to nest as soon as spring weather arrives. On the other hand, it’s never too late. We’ve put up new boxes in mid-June and had bluebirds move in 24 hours later. (Answer: e)
Even with the shelter in place order there were some places of refuge. Richard Pockat took advantage of a friends offer to let him park across from Latta Park in Dilworth. Here’s some of what has been seen over the past two weeks in the park. All photos were taken by Richard.