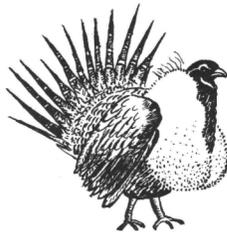


PLAINS & PEAKS



VOL. 42 - Iss. 4

APRIL 2008

Murie Audubon Society

Casper Wyoming - Monthly Publication
<http://www.murieaudubon.org>

Calendar

- **April 11** - Gen Mtg.
- **April 12**—Sage Grouse Field Trip
- **April 21**—May newsletter article deadline
- **April 24, May 1 & 8**— Bird ID classes— Audubon Center at Garden Center
- **April 26, May 3 & 10**—Field trips - Bird ID class follow-up
- **May 17**—CHPAS Big Day
- **May 30—June 1**—CHPAS Summer Annual Birding Campout - hosted by MAS/ Casper
- **June 6-8**—Wings Over Carbon County Birding Festival

Inside this issue:

Best Year Bird	2
Flight Barn near Gillette	2
Sage Grouse Field Trip	3
Annual Summer Camp-out	3
2008-09 Slate of Officers	4
Bird Notes	4
Layton Flight Barn	4
Nightjar Surveys	5
"Thanks Folks	5
Rich Levad	6
This ~N~ That	6
Audubon News	6
Small Bird—Forests	7

Honey Bee and Pollinator Decline: What's the Buzz?

As if a miniature, blood-red arachnid called the varroa mite wasn't causing enough havoc with beekeepers in North America, a new even deadlier malady known as "Colony Collapse Disorder" (CCD) is sweeping through apiaries, leaving many hives almost completely devoid of adult bees. The bees appear to abandon their hives and just disappear.



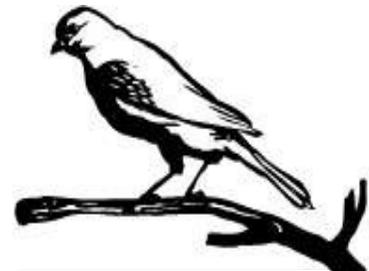
Honey bees are in effect six-legged livestock that both manufacture agricultural commodities – honey and wax- and more importantly, contribute a major agricultural service – pollination. Close to 100 crop species in the U.S. rely to some degree on pollination services provided by this one species. Collectively these crops make up approximately 1/3 of the U.S. diet. While not all plants rely upon animal pollinators, most fruit, vegetable, and nut crops may be dramatically affected by the continued loss of bees and other animal pollinators. Bee colonies are moved from season to season depending upon what crops are in bloom. A hive may start the year in California, pollinating almond trees, move up the west coast to fruit orchards, and end up the summer in the Dakotas near clover or alfalfa fields.

Dr. Will Robinson, who teaches biology and animal behavior at Casper College, will be our guest speaker and will tell us about the importance of bees

and other animal pollinators as well as the latest news about the status of CCD.

Please join us on Friday, April 11, 2008 at 7 pm at the Oil & Gas Conservation Commission Building at 2211 King Blvd.— the program is free and open to the public!

Program Chair— Bruce Walgren



BRUCE'S BRANCH

Spring has arrived – at least according to the calendar. Spring birds are beginning to arrive; gulls, waterfowl, Killdeer, and Red-winged Blackbirds have all been observed. However, do not rely solely on the call of a bird for ID as you may be hearing a mimic – the ever-present European Starling. A recent online discussion became somewhat of a contest as to what everyone could come up with that a Starling has mimicked. The discussion began with someone saying that they had a Red-breasted Nuthatch but it turned out to be a starling. Personally, I have heard them make the call of Killdeer, Red-winged Blackbirds, and Western Meadowlark. The list of bird calls that various

people had heard included the following: Snow Goose, American Wigeon, Mallard, Northern Bobwhite, Red-tailed Hawk, Common Nighthawk, Eastern Phoebe, Black-capped Chickadee, Eastern Bluebird, American Robin, Cedar Waxwing, Northern Cardinal, American Goldfinch, Northern Mockingbird, Eastern Wood-Pewee, and the whinny of a horse! So just like being fooled about spring being here, the next time that you hear a bird but don't see it, you may want to see it before you can identify it!

I'm looking forward to this month's program about pollinators and their importance to our lives, hope to see you there.

Until next time...Bruce

BEST YEAR BIRD

Bruce Walgren sent a query to the WyoBirds ListServe asking about a favorite bird of the past year (2007), where it was found and why it was a favorite. Here is the second half of the responses.

My best bird of the year was the Yellow-throated Warbler that serenaded us for two days in the top of the cottonwood trees in our yard west of Casper. It's amazing what birds show up far out of range. **Gloria Lawrence – Casper, WY**

Traveling: Anhingas, Wood Stork, White Ibis, Tri-colored Heron, Mississippi Kites (gorgeous birds), black Vulture. Close, but not in WYO: Streaked-back Oriole in Loveland. WYO: My favorite bird would have to be the Northern Harriers. They are way cool, with their 360's on a dime and their aerobatic mating displays (Hutton Lake area) **Carol – Cheyenne, WY**

I have to get in on the act. I was leading a group of first graders on a field trip to Scotts Bottom Nature

Area along the Green River Greenbelt. We were on a "Discovery Hike". I had several pairs of binoculars and each child had a magnifying glass. We were busy looking at ant hills and occasionally a bird would fly over along the river. One observant child noticed a black and white bird in a tree and I casually looked up expecting a magpie. To my delight we had a Rose Breasted Grosbeak. This was on May 29 which also happened to be my birthday. It was a good day with 80 first graders and the birds cooperated. **Fred & Fern – Green River, WY**

Now that I live on the Oregon Coast, I see loons by the dozens every year - Common Loons, Red-throated Loons, Pacific Loons, and even, just this month (January), a rare and vagrant Arctic Loon. But almost all the loons I see are in winter plumage in coastal estuaries and in the offshore surf. Every once in a while a Common Loon will molt into its breeding plumage before it flies north. Until last summer, I had never, ever, HEARD a loon. It's been on that list of things you have to do before you die!

In June I stopped at Lewis Lake in Yellowstone National Park, stepped out of the car, and heard two loons calling to each other across the lake!! I alternated between leaping in glee and wiping tears from my eyes. It was that wonderful to me. **Diane Cavaness - Brookings, Oregon (formerly of Riverton, WY)**

For a backyard bird, our dark-eyed juncos. They show up faithfully every winter and liven up the landscape with their color and antics. Otherwise, a Yellow-throated Warbler, observed during a visit to Brownsville, Texas, as part of the Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival this past November - a really striking combination of vibrant colors. **Chuck Seniawski**

I would have to say that if I had to pick a favorite bird, it would be the Cedar Waxwing. It's a stunning bird with its black mask, and seems to command attention with its presence. I find the berry passing behavior quite fascinating. **Claylene Fitz - Torrington, WY**

Surf Scoter in Greeley--finally found one in northern Colorado after few years of misses up here. Streak-backed Oriole was nice, too, Loveland. **Gary Lefko –**

Nunn, CO.



My favorite this year was a Blue Grouse couple I saw up Yellowstone way. They hung around for a few photos and it just fun hangin' with them. **Ray Silvey – Cheyenne, WY**

My favorite for 2007 has to be the Northern Pygmy Owl seen along the Loop Road outside of Lander. Thanks to my buddy, Del Nelson, for spotting it and inviting me to see it even though it was early in the morning. **Jim Downham – Lander, WY**

Mine was the Swallow-tailed Kite which hung around Mitchell, S D. long enough for me to see it. What a magnificent bird. **Jean Adams – Sundance, WY**

REHAB CENTERS IN WYOMING FLIGHT BARN PLANNED NEAR GILLETTE

Currently in Wyoming, there are five licensed wildlife rehabilitation facilities; the Layton's here in Casper, the Raptor Center (Roger Smith) in Jackson, Ironside Bird Rescue (Susan Ahalt) near Cody, Janet Britt in Riverton and Northeast Wyoming Bird Rescue and Rehab (N.E.W. Bird—Diane Morse) near Gillette. All of these organizations primarily work with raptors (birds of prey).

Northeast Wyoming Bird Rescue and Rehab (N.E.W. Bird) began assisting Wyoming's wildlife resources in 1991 in response to the need for avian rehabilitation, public education, and wildlife conservation. Founder Diane Morse and the volun-

teers of N.E.W. Bird have remained dedicated to the care and rehabilitation of injured and orphaned birds for the last 17 years, with the ultimate goal of returning rehabbed birds to their natural environments. In the early years, N.E.W. Bird worked with all avian species. However, as time passed, it became clear that raptors (birds of prey) were experiencing the greatest impacts, and the organization has focused exclusively on that group of magnificent birds for the last seven years.

The dramatic increase in energy development and the expansion of residential and business development to accommodate and support that growth has directly impacted the number of birds that have been admitted to N.E.W. Bird, particularly since 1999. Collisions with vehicles / equipment or electrocution on overhead power line structures are the main causes of injuries to birds that are being treated.

N.E.W. Bird currently has two flight areas, seven holding pens, a treatment room, an isolation room, and an educational barn. Each facility serves a unique purpose that accommodates the various phases of treatment and rehabilitation, and all are necessary to maximize the chances of returning rehabbed raptors to the wild.

To fully prepare the larger birds (eagles, some hawks and owls) for their release, a flight chamber must be long enough and/or tall enough to allow linear or vertical flight paths of sufficient distance for the bird to gain momentum and build endurance. N.E.W. Bird's current flight chambers work well for the smaller hawks and owls, but are not large enough to truly provide the level of conditioning needed for the larger raptor species to regain their former levels of strength and endurance. The compromise is that the eagles and larger hawks must be kept in captivity longer to give them

adequate time to fully recover, which increases the financial and structural demands of maintaining that bird.

In previous years, N.E.W. Bird addressed the need for a larger flight barn by transporting eagles and large hawk species to the Layton Flight Barn near Casper. A large raptor flight barn in close proximity to N.E.W. Bird's existing facilities would be beneficial in two significant ways. First, the stress associated with the transport of raptors to the Casper flight barn would be eliminated, increasing the probability of full recovery. Second, N.E.W. Bird could re-allocate the time and financial resources utilized when transporting raptors to Casper. Currently there are two Ferruginous hawks and one Golden Eagle from N.E.W. Bird in the Layton Flight Barn. Conversely, we have sent six raptors to N.E.W. Bird since the beginning of the year.

Unfortunately, the fate of the operation here in Casper is an unknown at this point, not only for the birds currently housed here, but also for the continued availability of facilities sufficiently large to accommodate the conditioning needs of eagles and the larger raptor species from N.E.W. Bird prior to their release back into the wild. To treat such raptors and then fail to provide the proper "physical therapy" before returning them to the wild would decrease their chances for survival and waste the time and financial resources devoted to them up to this point.

N.E.W. Bird is therefore in the process of trying to raise funds to build their own flight barn almost identical to the Layton Flight Barn. In Kind Donations and cash raised to date have put a dent in this fundraising goal, yet with the increase in building costs in recent years, \$77,000 of the required \$196,000 has yet to be raised. If you would like to donate to this effort, please send your donations to N.E.W. Bird, 325 Cook Road, Gillette, WY 82716. N.E.W. Bird is a 501 (c)3 (non-profit), tax exempt, charitable organization and receives no funding from the county, state, or federal governments.

Bruce Walgren

SAGE GROUSE FIELD TRIP

The annual field trip to observe Greater Sage-Grouse will be held Saturday April 12, 2008. This is an early morning field trip and in my opinion, the best time to watch the grouse. We will meet at the east side Safeway parking lot at 5:30 AM to car pool to the lek. The Hat Six lek has got to be one of the most watched leks in the state. Even though you may think that the birds are used to people, please stay in your vehicles as you watch them. Hope to see you there! For information about this trip, please contact Stacey Scott at 265-6213.

Bruce Walgren, for Stacey Scott

8th Annual Wyoming Audubon Chapters' Campout

Murie Audubon Society members are hosting the 8th annual campout for Audubon chapters in Wyoming May 30 - June 1--although participants need not be Audubon members and with motels near by, camping is optional.

There will be 12 free camping spots available at Edness Kimball Wilkins State Park. To reserve one, please contact Ann Hines, 307-266-3160, wilmerhines@bresnan.net. Please contact Ann to register even if you won't be camping so that she can send you directions and late breaking details if necessary. There is no registration fee to participate in any of the weekend's events.

Here's the schedule:

Friday evening, 6 p.m., Edness Kimball Wilkins State Park (EKW) - Picnic

Meet at the shelter on the west side of the park. Murie Audubon will provide meat and everyone else can

pitch in with other picnic foods. Murie Audubon will also provide evening entertainment TBA.

Saturday morning, 7 a.m. - Birding at EKW

We may also bird at the Puddle, depending on how the birding is at EKW.

Saturday noon - 1 p.m. - Lunch at Bear Trap Meadow on Casper Mountain

Bring your own lunch and beverages.

Saturday afternoon, 1 p.m. - Birding Casper Mountain

Begin birding on the mountain and end at Rotary Park.

Saturday evening, 5:30 p.m., Audubon Center at Garden Creek - Potluck

A kitchen is available at the Center if you need to heat up your contribution to the traditional Saturday night potluck. There's also a trail to bird.

Sunday - More Birding Options

For those not in a hurry to get home, groups may decide to bird the Crossroads walkway along the North Platte or Grey Reef or Alcova reservoirs.

Barb Gorges

2008-2009 SLATE OF OFFICERS

President: Jim Brown

Vice-President: still twisting arms

Recording Secretary: Laurie Fletcher

Treasurer: Chris Michelson

Board of Directors - Term expires 2009

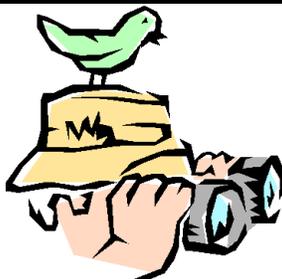
Fred Eiserman, Ann Hines, Laurie Longtine, Stacey Scott, Bruce Walgren, Donna Walgren.

Board of Directors - Term expires 2010

Brenda Baalhorn, Mike Braley, J. P. Cavigelli, Lisa Fujita, Rose-Mary King, Bob Yonts.

A big "Thank You" to all who have agreed to serve on the Board. Election will be at the May General Meeting.

BIRD NOTES



The vernal equinox occurred on March 20 – loosely translated as the “first day of spring.” It’s true that waterfowl are moving northward, sage grouse are active on the leks, and male Red-winged Blackbirds are singing on territory! But has spring really come to Wyoming? From a weather standpoint, that remains to be seen. For a birder, the beginnings of spring migration are here; everyone is marking off each new First of Year bird. The weeks ahead will be interesting as migration picks up speed. Spring can be a busy time, but take some time to get out and enjoy it!!!

February Yard Birds – For the month of February, Wayne and I received 175 yard bird selections from 20 states plus Yukon Territory, Madagascar, Mexico, Christmas Island, and the Virgin Islands with 73 different species reported. Observers are still seeing large flocks of waxwings (especially Bohemians), but robins are becoming more numerous and Red-winged Blackbirds are now showing up (the boys are back!!!). February’s most reported bird was American Robin with Red-winged Blackbirds in second place. Coming in third were the Bohemian Waxwings. There was a three-way tie for fourth place: Mountain Chickadee, Brown Creeper, and

Pileated Woodpecker.

Casper: Jim Herold – Northern Flicker, Rose-Mary King – Bohemian Waxwing, Chris Michelson – Purple Finch, Casper College Greenhouse – Townsend’s Solitaire, Stacey Scott – Common Redpoll, Bruce Walgren – House Finch, Donna Walgren – Ferruginous Hawk; **Buffalo:** Deane Bjerke – Mountain Chickadee; **Cheyenne:** Barb Gorges – Mountain Chickadee; **Lovell:** Glen Olsen – Pine Siskin; **Riverton:** Suzanne Hargis – Black-capped Chickadee, Bob Hargis – Dark-eyed Junco.

Thanks to all who helped with the Yard Bird Project in February!! Birds are moving; hopefully you will have some “interesting action” in your yard and neighborhood. Send your bird notes and yard bird reports to Donna Walgren, 4311 S. Center St., Casper, WY 82601, or email to Piranga@bresnan.net, or phone 234-7455.

Donna Walgren

LAYTON FLIGHT BARN ACTIVITIES

After much discussion and many phone calls, we were finally able to get the two young Bald Eagles out of Lois and Frank’s back yard and shipped off to Woodford Cedar Run in the Pine Barrens of New Jersey. These birds could not be released back into the wild, so this wildlife refuge/education and rehab center is a great home for them. After receipt of the birds, Jeanne Woodford, president of the facility, said that they would like to name one of the birds “Layton.” That would certainly be fitting!!

There are still several birds housed at the Layton Flight Barn where they can stretch their wings and build up the strength of those muscles that will be needed when they are released back into the wild.

Current Flight Barn residents are 3 Golden Eagles and 4 Ferruginous Hawks. In the nearby "HOE House" are 3 Great Horned Owls. These birds still need to be fed daily, which means meat needs to be prepared and taken out to be them, (kind of a "meals on wheels" for birds!) Several people have been helping with this. Long time volunteer Lynn Lange continues to help with Murie's Bird Hospital. More recently Robin Kepple has been helping to feed at the Flight Barn. In the last month, Dr. Evert Brown's Field Ecology class at Casper College spent an afternoon preparing meat for the raptors, as have a few others. We want to thank them for their help: Adam Brown, John Bruno, Michael Day, Melanie Hitchen, Dusty Johnson, Ryan Jones, Eric Latka, Mariah Ream, Lisa Smith, and Emily Conkin. **Your time and effort is greatly appreciated!! Thanks!!!**

We can always use some help – especially with the meat preparation, it's the most time-consuming. If anyone would like to volunteer some time, contact us at 234-7455 or email Timperley-Walgren@bresnan.net.

Bruce and Donna Walgren

NIGHTJAR SURVEYS

For anyone interested in bird conservation there are several "citizen science" opportunities available around Wyoming. One of the newest is the Nightjar Survey Network. Last year the Center for Conservation Biology at the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, VA began collecting data on distribution and population trends of nightjars in the United States.

Nightjars comprise the group of birds (of the family Caprimulgidae) adapted to feeding at night on

flying insects. This family includes night-hawks and poor-wills found here in Wyoming. Nightjars roost on the ground or in trees during the day and are most active at night. These species are particularly valuable as "bug zappers"; it is estimated that a nighthawk eats more mosquitoes in one night than the average purple martin does in its lifetime.

Not much is known about these birds. Because of their nocturnal lifestyle, basic information, such as habitat requirements and population density, has been difficult to acquire. Consequently, it is difficult to determine what needs to be done for the conservation of these species.

The Nightjar Survey Network is carried out by volunteers, and these surveys are conducted in much the same way as the annual Breeding Bird Surveys that many of you do every year – and in fact, are plotted along the first 9 miles of the BBS routes. It is known that nightjar behavior is strongly influenced by moonlight. Calling and foraging increase under bright moonlight and breeding may be linked to the lunar cycle. The surveys are conducted at night, when the moon is at least 50% illuminated. The observer drives and stops at 10 points along the 9-mile route, counting all nightjar species seen or heard at each point during a 6 minute period. No playing of recordings is to be used.

There are many nightjar survey routes available in Wyoming. Anyone interested in doing a route should contact Michael Wilson at the Center for Conservation Biology. He can be reached by phone at 757-221-1649 or email mdwils@wm.edu. (Please include Nightjar Survey on the subject line of any email contact.) You can also check out the website: <http://ccb-wm.org/nightjars.htm>.

There are also other types of avian surveys being done around Wyoming and volunteers are always needed. If you are interested in helping with any of the following projects, please contact Andrea Cerovski (non-game bird biologist with Wyoming Game & Fish in Lander) by phone at 800-654-7862 or email to Adrea.Cerovski@wgf.state.wy.us. She is

the coordinator for the following projects:

Waterfowl/Shorebird Brood Surveys - Pathfinder Brood Survey, Pathfinder Brood Survey, Soda Lake WHMA Survey

Waterfowl/Shorebird Migration Surveys - Pathfinder NWR, Seedska-dee NWR

Breeding Bird Surveys - Routes available statewide

Great Blue Heron Heronry Monitoring - Statewide

MAPS Bird Banding - Garden Creek Station, Laramie Station, Red Canyon Ranch Station

Colonial Waterbird Surveys - Bucklin Reservoirs, Soda Lake, Cokeville Meadows NWR

Yellow-billed Cuckoo Surveys - Sybille area, Kaycee area, Yellowtail area, Laramie River, Others?

Merlin Surveys - East-central Wyoming, Northeast Wyoming

Note: Andrea is not the coordinator for the Nightjar Surveys, but she is very interested in the project and the data it is gathering.

Donna Walgren

**AW SHUCKS! THANKS
FOLKS**

Thanks very much for inviting me to distribute pain and suffering not just to undergrads, but to a large crowd. I was very impressed by the attendance, and by everyone's willingness to contribute by buying raffle tickets and participating in the silent auction.

Thanks also to Ann Hines for her moving tribute to Ken Keffer. It's always good to see a former student do well (bouncing back from the pain and suffering of their education!). Despite Anne's concern, I was very heartened by the lively enthusiasm of the young folk. To be able to ask the kinds of questions they did, after the speaker has droned on end-

lessly at them into the wee hours, suggests that we have a new crop of dedicated naturalists that will carry the torch. Thanks also to the many (Chris M and Rose-Mary K among others) who made it a smooth and elegant affair. My only regret is missing those snowbirds, Jim and Gloria (though perhaps that's just extreme jealousy about all the great birds they're seeing, while I desperately try to turn ravens into Snowy Owls ...).

I had great fun, and hope my talk more or less hit the mark for some of you.

All the best, Dave McDonald

RICH LEVAD

For those who attended FlammFest 2005 or otherwise knew Rich Levad, I'm sorry to share the news that Rich passed away February 27th after nearly 4 years battling ALS. Rich worked with me on special species monitoring in Wyoming, and was instrumental in discovering the breeding populations of Flammulated Owl and Purple Martin in the Sierra Madre. With enough time and health, I have no doubt that he would have found nesting Black Swifts too if they occur in the state. Those were three species for which he had a special fondness. He recently completed a book, "The Coolest Bird: A Natural History of the Black Swift and Those Who Have Pursued It". A consummate naturalist, he pursued his passion for birds long after he could no longer be in the field.

I have very fond memories of our time in the field, especially canoeing the N. Platte River from Saratoga to Torrington and the day he found the Purple Martin colony on Savery Stock Road. While driving down Savery Stock Road, we came to a place where Rich stopped the truck

and said "Martins have to be here". We crept forward surveying the area, when Rich stopped the truck again, raised his binoculars, and called a distant speck a Martin. Within the hour we would find the colony some of you have been to.

Rich, thanks for all of the wonderful memories. You will be sorely missed.

Doug Faulkner

THIS ~N~ THAT

1. Plastic containers — 8 oz size, approximately 25 — are needed to make new raffle ticket holders for the banquet raffle items. Also, if you have birding mags. you aren't going to keep, I can use the bird pictures to put on the containers.
2. Newsletter folders — if you can help fold Murie's newsletter once a month — about 1 hour of your time — please call me.
3. Newsletter on the Web — if this newsletter is in your hand but you have Internet access and would be willing to read your newsletter at Murie's website, please call me. You will be helping Muries to saving paper, printing, and postage costs.

For all the above contact Rose-Mary King at 577-0568 or rking7453@bresnan.net.

AUDUBON IN THE NEWS MARCH 27, 2008

The National Audubon Society and Toyota yesterday launched *TogetherGreen*, a nationwide Audubon program to fund conservation projects, train environmental leaders, and offer volunteer opportunities to significantly benefit the environment. ***TogetherGreen* is funded through a generous \$20 million grant from Toyota. Audubon President John Flicker and Patricia Salas Pineda, group**

vice president of Toyota Motor North America, announced the alliance in a press conference. Below is a highlight of the early stories published, with more to follow!

Toyota Gives lift to National Audubon Society's Conservation Efforts

<http://www.bizjournals.com/sanantonio/stories/2008/03/24/daily21.html>

Toyota Gives Audubon Society \$20 Million for Conservation Work

<http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=newsarchive&sid=aK6uDahw.fRA>

GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT

A record-breaking 85,000 checklists were submitted during the Great Backyard Bird Count this year, tallying more species than ever before - 635. The Audubon and Cornell Lab media teams also had a banner year, generating 450 stories coast to coast.

SMALL BIRDS MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE IN WESTERN FORESTS

A study recently published by a doctoral student at the Univ. of CO shows that the feeding habits of bird species such as the Mtn. Chickadee, Red-breasted and Pygmy Nuthatches, and Yellow-rumped Warbler increased the growth of western pine forests by as much as one-third. The birds' foraging habits remove beetles, caterpillars, ants, and aphids from branches, increasing the vigor of the trees.

"The study shows that pine canopies are very complex systems with an unexpected level of biodiversity. Forest managers really need to look at the big picture of the ecosystems," said study author Kailen Mooney.

(From Birds Calls—March 2008)