

# DEL MESA BIRD & NATURE NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2021

**BAY NATURE(magazine) SUMMER 2021:** I will put my copy in the Del Mesa library. What may be of note for all of us is the news on “FIRES”. Please do not remove this copy from the library.

**SUMMER BEHAVIORS IN OUR NEIGHBORHOODs:** Take note of dragonflies on your walks through neighborhoods with flowering plants since late summer is mating times. The males have three clapper-like appendages on their abdomens which they use to entrap the female’s head as he drags her along. The female then curls her abdomen up to his thorax to catch sperm to fertilize her eggs which are dispersed, a few at a time, over moist vegetation in the area.

Also, note that beavers often act as ‘conservators’ as they form their dams pooling water in forested areas and amassing moist vegetation which has been found to provide some sanctuary for small animals during fast moving fires. Researchers found that areas without beavers are 3x more affected by fires.

**NEW WORLD HOT SPOTS:** Death Valley drops behind as NASA notes hottest spots as the LUT Desert in Iran & the Sonora desert near the US/Mexico border at 80.8C. Still listed for ground thermometers is 56.7C in 1913 in Death Valley. Maybe some earth scientist will figure out this record keeping!

**BIRD DEATHS:** This spring and summer numerous outbreaks of bird deaths have occurred in multiple states. The death have been in what appeared to be health juveniles of Amer.robins, blue jays, grackles, and European starlings. The birds show lack of balance, crusting of the eyes, and general malaise. They have been tested for multiple ailments without success. Nature centers have found euthanasia to be the only solution. Disposal of dead birds is also a concern. Many area centers have informed their populations to take down feeders and baths to curb possible exposure. (Eastern US)

**HEAT WAVES:** Temperatures experienced once in a millennium are now hitting areas every 2-5 years. On the West Coast this year, Caspian terns that had previously nested in an abandoned cement factory complex experienced widespread injury and deaths as newly hatched young tried to scamper away from 108 degrees heat in their roof top nests to drop to the cement surfaces surrounding them. In this area of West Seattle 52 chicks were brought to a wildlife center but only one half survived. Additionally, 45 songbird and 31 raptors were brought in for heat related issues. One center worked with 43 Violent-green tree swallows suffering heat-shock disabling their sense of balance for landing and perching.

\*of note: birds can’t sweat, therefore, they can’t cool easily.

**SONG BIRDS?** Scientifically what does that mean? They all have to fit the following: they all are perching birds; they all possess an organ "SYRINX": managed by sets of muscles; they all are born with a template for song; and they all seem to need tutorial help. The "oscines" appear to have the super mastery of the muscles. Some song birds have only till they're fledged to learn their songs from parents while others learn, change and mimic throughout their lives. In the Northern hemisphere male birds primarily sing. In tropical climates both sexes may exhibit songs not just calls or tweets and some don't sing at all.

**LAWSUIT VICTORY:** A piece of Reagan passed legislation that was to protect coastal beaches and land that laid coastally from the Barrier Islands and Coastal Atlantic to the Gulf of Mexico, to Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands to allow for breeding species in these areas. That protection was disallowed and mining was initiate to remove large sections of sand that had eroded in residential or commercial areas. Now thru the Audubon lawsuit the coastal areas will be somewhat protected. There is no such news for the Pacific coastal areas.

**CHINA & OTTERS:** There have been three major otter species in the country. The otter populations have dwindled to near endangered. Previously, the otters were killed for pelts and parts for medicine. They were also dispatched because of their hunting in the fish ecosystems run by the government or when removing their habitats for other uses. Otters are considered by some to be a "flagship species,"an indicator of the health of fresh water ecosystems.

**ALBATROSS RESCUE?** The black footed albatross of the Midway Atoll, is a particular favorite of ours since my husband spent many an afternoon with them on their beaches in the late 60's! Now, they are at risk of extinction because of rising tides on their low beaches(breeding territory) and uniqueness of their mating timing. The birds are large ocean going birds that mate once every several years. They spend the majority of their lives at sea. In an effort to save this species and others many people have been working on changing breeding sites. The story is long and somethings have been tried. The possible site for a transfer is to the Baja Mexico areas of beach! First, they had to move out the 40,000 goats and 1200 feral cats accumulated there, raise money and develop a plan that would secure young birds before they imprinted on Midway as Home! Using Layson albatross from Hawaii that experienced loss of their young to be step parents for blackfooted chicks and move them all to relocate in MEXICO by airplane. Then create a sanctuary for family albatross living until breeding could be watched....etc. amazingly this is all in process!

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Del Mesa Enrichment Committee

(supported)