

# Chirp 'n Chatter News

Chirp 'n Chatter, Tega Cay Village Shopping Center, Fort Mill, SC

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## Facts About the West Nile Virus

The West Nile virus is a mosquito-borne virus that can cause encephalitis (inflammation of the brain) or meningitis (inflammation of the lining of the brain and spinal cord). The virus is spread to humans and other mammals by the bite of an infected mosquito. Generally, a mosquito becomes infected by biting a bird that carries the virus.

For many years the West Nile virus has been commonly found in humans, birds and other vertebrates in Africa, Eastern Europe, West Asia, and the Middle East. The virus first appeared in the US and the Americas in 1999. It is not known where the U.S. viral strain originated, but it is most closely related, genetically, to strains found in the Middle East.

### Where Have Cases Been Reported?

Since 1999 cases of West Nile Virus have been reported in 13 states and the District of Columbia as shown in Figure 1. Those states shown in lighter gray have had reports of infections in both birds and humans while those in the darker gray have had reports only in birds or mosquito pools.

In 1999, 62 cases of severe viral disease, including 7 deaths, attributed to the West Nile virus, were reported – all in the New York City area. From January through September 2000 there were 17 reported cases of infection including one death.

Through August 3, 2001 North Carolina has reported a single crow which tested positive and there have been no reported cases of human or avian infection in

South Carolina. There have been two reported cases of human infection in 2001 – both in Madison County, Florida.

It is encouraging to note that according to the Centers for Disease Control fewer than 1% of mosquitoes in areas where mosquitoes carry the virus are actually infected. Further, the chance of contracting a severe viral infection is likely in less than 1% of the people who are bitten by an infected mosquito. Those most at risk for contracting a severe viral infection

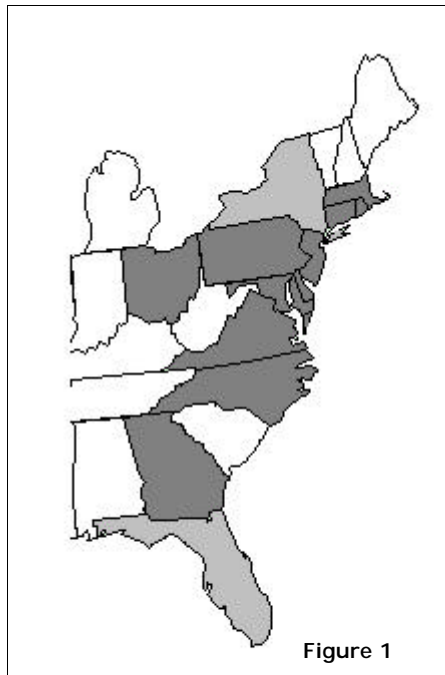


Figure 1

include people over 50 with the risk increasing in the elderly.

### Symptoms of West Nile Viral Infection

Most people who are infected with the West Nile virus either have no symptoms or experience mild illness such as fever, headache and body aches before fully recovering. Some people also develop a mild rash or swollen lymph glands.

In those most at risk, severe symptoms include rapid onset of severe headache, high fever, stiff neck, confusion, loss of consciousness or muscle weakness. Medical treatment should be sought immediately if any of these symptoms occur

### Steps to Take to Protect Yourself

Since mosquitoes lay their eggs in standing or slow moving water, by eliminating mosquito breeding areas, we can protect ourselves and our birds from mosquitoes and the West Nile virus.

1. Remove all old tires, tin cans, plastic containers and similar water-holding containers from your property.
2. Make sure roof gutters drain properly.
3. Clean and chlorinate swimming pools, outdoor saunas and hot tubs. Drain water from pool covers.
4. Change water in bird baths every other day.
5. Turn over plastic wading pools and wheelbarrows when not in use.

A product called Mosquito Dunk® is available that contains a larvicide – bacillus thuringiensis israelensis (BTI) – for use in areas of standing water around the home. We recommend careful reading of the hazards label, directions, and details regarding safe storage and handling of any larvicide.

Careful use of pesticides may prevent the spread of the disease. However, in a study reported by the Audubon Society in its Conservation Newsletter 49% of the birds tested in the New York area were

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actually killed by toxins from pesticides such as Dursban and Diazanone, while only 31% tested positive for the West Nile Virus. Reporting Dead Birds in the Carolinas

In North Carolina dead birds should be reported to the Public Health Pest Management division of the North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources at the West Nile Virus Alert Line at 1-877-790-1747 or by e-mail at [cwnv@ncmail.net](mailto:cwnv@ncmail.net).

If you find a dead bird in South Carolina with no obvious signs as to the cause of death, you should report the bird to your local County Health Department. You will be advised whether the bird should be taken to the Health Department for testing.

Remember, when handling a sick or injured birds, be sure to wear gloves and to thoroughly wash your hands after contact.

Sources: New York City Department of Health, General Information on West Nile Virus Fact Sheet. Centers for Disease Control, Division of Vector-Borne Infectious Diseases, West Nile Virus Fact Sheet. NCDENR, Public Health Pest Management, West Nile Virus Alert Fact Sheet. The Audubon Bird Conservation Newsletter, June 27, 2001. Environmental Risk Analysis Program, Cornell University Center for the Environment, Ithaca, NY.

Take the Hummingbird Challenge!



Answer the following true or false questions:

1. Hummingbirds prefer no perches on feeders.
2. It is okay to hang your hummingbird feeder in a pine tree.
3. Using honey or artificial sweeteners in place of sugar is okay.
4. Feeders need to be cleaned just once a month.
5. Leave feeders empty for too long, and the hummers may seek food elsewhere and not return.

6. Hummingbirds prefer feeders with red flowers and eat only nectar.
7. Ruby-throated hummers will chase blue jays when defending a food source.
8. To attract more hummers-just add red food coloring to their nectar.
9. To keep ants and bees from your hummingbird feeders, spray the feeders with insecticide.
10. Hummers fly by rotating their stiff wings up to 180 degrees horizontally at the shoulder, their wingtips moving in a figure 8 pattern. Slight adjustments allow them to fly forward, backward or, even, upside down – at speeds of up to 65 miles per hour!

(Answers at right)

Hummingbird Mornings™

Bill Hilton, Jr., executive director of Hilton Pond Center for Piedmont Natural History, is one of only about 60 people authorized to capture and band Ruby-throated Hummingbirds and his presentations have delighted hummingbird enthusiasts around the country.

Join us on Saturday, August 18, as we help to sponsor Bill's presentation at:



Find out how to attract these amazing feathered dynamos to your yard and then get up close

and personal with a hummer as Bill captures and bands it. You don't want to miss this chance to learn from a nationally known expert.

There will be two presentations, one at 8:30 AM and the other at 10:30 AM with an admission charge of \$5.00 per person. The proceeds help to support the work of Hilton Pond Center and the RibbonWalk.

To reach the RibbonWalk from the south, take I-77 North to I-85 North. Exit from I-85 at Statesville Road. At the top of the ramp, turn left on to Statesville Road and go 0.6 miles to Nevin Road. Turn right on to Nevin Road. Go 1.2 miles and turn left at RibbonWalk's entrance at Hoyt-Hinson Road.

Time is Up! Answers to the Hummingbird Challenge!

1. **False** – Perches are useful features on a feeder. If a feeder has perches, hummers will use them, if not they will just hover over the feeding ports. Hey, give 'em a perch and let 'em take a load off.
2. **False** – Hang the feeder near flowers that are attractive to hummingbirds, are protected and where there is some shade.
3. **False** – **NEVER** use honey or artificial sweeteners – they can ferment and cause a fungus that affects a hummingbird's tongue and can be fatal.
4. **False** – Clean feeders every 2 to 3 days. You can add vinegar to the hot wash water to remove mold. Add a small amount of bleach to get hard-to-clean feeders clean, but make sure the bleach is rinsed thoroughly before filling and re-hanging the feeder.
5. **True** – Once hummers start

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- coming to your feeder, make sure you keep it filled.
6. **False** – Hummers feed at flowers of many colors, but they soon learn that red tubular flowers contain the most nectar. Hummers also catch insects – even robbing them from spider webs – and eat tree sap from holes drilled by sapsuckers.
  7. **True** – Females will even chase a human that gets close to her nest.
  8. **Hmm** – The use of red food dye to color nectar is an ongoing controversy. It *may* harm the birds, and most people are now choosing not to use it. There is red on most feeders anyway.
  9. **False – Please!** Don't spray insecticides on feeders. To get rid of ants use an ant moat or chemical ant guard. To get rid of bees, try moving the feeder to a shady area or make a strong sugar water solution, put it in a bowl and place it a short distance away from the feeder. The stronger sugar water solution will attract the bees and keep them off the feeder.
  10. **True** – Hummers fly even better than Harrier jets.
- If you got these all correct – We salute you! You're a real birder! Or at least a real humm-dinger! And, if you missed a few, well, at least *now* you know *all* the answers so you're still a *winner!*

## Adding Water to Your Birdscape

There is no better way to get birds flocking to your yard than a good source of fresh water. A bird's need for water through every season of the year is so strong that even species you never expected will be attracted to a strategically placed water source.

Birds are opportunists. If no birdbath is available, they will accept water in almost any indentation, even miniscule puddles that wouldn't wet your shoes. By adding a water feature to your landscape, you can have a focal point that benefits you and your feathered friends.

The most natural spot for a bath is close to the ground, but water at higher levels not only appeals to some species, it reduces the birds' exposure to cat attacks. Soaking wet birds are no match for feline agility. Putting a birdbath near trees improves security against hawks and branches are an easily reached perch from which to preen in safety.

Motion on the water's surface or the noise of falling water is like a magnet to the birds. If you don't have room for a waterfall, any device that moves the water or creates a sound will do the trick. Drippers, misters or small pump driven fountains have the added benefit of preventing mosquito eggs from hatching.

### Misters

Misters attract a wide variety of birds and are particularly appealing to small birds such as hummingbirds and warblers. They are most effective when set up to wet the foliage of a nearby shrub or small tree. Birds can then leaf bathe by rubbing up against the wet foliage. Additionally, if this wet foliage is above a bath or pond, the water dripping off the leaves creates appealing ripples.



### Drippers

Drippers can be one of the most effective means of attracting birds to your yard in hot weather. As the name implies, drippers drip fresh water, typically into a birdbath or pond. When used with a pedestal birdbath, drippers create ripples on the water's surface which can be seen from a long distance by the birds.



Birds will be drawn to a bath with a dripper far more often than to just a stagnant birdbath. Frequently birds, such as gold-

finches, chickadees and titmice, will perch on the dripper tube to inspect the bath, and drink the fresh water from the dripper tube as it drips.

### Dripper-Mister Combos

Dripper-Mister Combos can be set up either as a dripper, an adjustable flow rock mister, or operated simultaneously as a dripper and a leaf-mister. Although slightly more expensive than either the mister or dripper individually these provide all of the advantages of either product.

### Installation

Typically a mister or dripper is installed by adding a Y-valve to your outdoor faucet. An adaptor is added to the one side of the Y-valve which reduces to fit 1/4 inch tubing. Each dripper kit contains 60 feet of 1/4 inch tubing, a dripper regulating valve, a support base for the dripper tube and the dripper tube.

Drippers can be adjusted to a flow rate of one drip per second which consumes about 3 gallons of water in a 24 hour period.

Sources: "Drippers for Wild Birds", Bill Fintel, Avian Aquatics, 7/10/2001. [The Bird's Eye reView](#), Vol. 12, No. 4 July & August, 2001.

## Coming Events

### Bird Walks

*August 25*

*September 8 and 22*

*October 6 and 20*

Meet at Chirp 'n Chatter at 7:30 AM. We'll carpool to the birding location. Bring your binoculars. Loaner binoculars are available.

### Children's Bird Walk

**October 13.** Please pre-register your child and plan to accompany him or her. Call the store at 803/802-6677 for details.

### Extended Hours

#### September and October Hours

Monday-Thursday 10:00 AM – 7:00 PM

Friday 10:00 AM – 8:00 PM

Saturday 10:00 AM – 7:00 PM

Sunday 1:30 PM – 5:30 PM

## Let Us Recommend

**Birds of the Carolinas, Field Guide**, by Stan Tekiela. Tekiela is a Minnesota naturalist and award winning author, columnist and radio personality.

The book has an easy-to-use color index and contains photographs of 140 birds found in the Carolinas. Range maps, descriptions and the author's comments are found on a single page facing the picture so the need to flip back and forth through the book is eliminated. Published by Adventure Publications, Inc. Suggested retail: \$14.95

### Contact Us

Contact us with your questions, comments, or concerns at:

Phone: 803/802-6677

Fax: 803/802-5062

E-mail: [Chirpnchatter@aol.com](mailto:Chirpnchatter@aol.com)

We look forward to hearing from you.

Dave & Marion Davenport, Owners

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