Birds are curious creatures and sometimes demonstrate curious behaviors. Aside from seeing a bird and saying, “oh … that's a blue jay,” have you ever sat in your backyard for several hours and studied behavioral tendencies.

We have quite a few birds of various species visiting our backyard habitat and have noticed over the years how they tend to mimic each other, not only within but also outside their own species. Each time Calvin installs a new feeding station, such as the suet feeder he designed and hung in our breezeway, it takes several days for the first bird to start feeding at the new contraption. In this case it was the male red-bellied woodpecker—being a curious, adventurous fellow—who first came to the suet. Within a week we saw the downy woodpecker at the same feeder, then the Carolina wren and titmouse followed. It seems the birds watch each others' behavior and when one finds a new food source it’s not long before all the birds are visiting the new feeding station.

We found the same, even more obvious, mimicking at the water bath. One of our watering stations is a concrete pedestal bird bath. To keep the water fresh, Calvin created a recirculating system with a drip tube (see photos). The drip tube serves two purposes; in addition to recirculating the water, the motion and sound of dripping water draws the attention of birds.

A few weeks after Calvin installed the drip tube, he noticed a curious male cardinal regularly perched on top of the tube but he always flew down to the rim for a drink. Then one day we saw the cardinal perched on the tube hanging upside down to drink from the dripping water. Who knows what prompted this new behavior; perhaps the cardinal discovered the water was fresher coming straight from the tube.

Within a few days, a chickadee and then a titmouse mimicked the cardinal’s behavior of hanging from the tube to get a sip of water. Now all the birds in our yard, even goldfinches, are drinking.

Continued on page 4
### March 2009

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**ONC Contact Information**

**ONC General Information**
Calvin Blakley
281-358-5407

**Botany/Entomology Group**
Russell Jeffords
713-504-9215

**Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary**
Aaron Stoley
713-781-1372

**Ornithology (OG)**
Bernice Hotman
713-782-7889
Adam Wood
713-515-1692

**Maps**
All meetings are at Bayland Community Center unless otherwise noted.

### April 2009

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**ONC Regular Bimonthly Meeting**

**MARCH 12**
*The Small Worlds in our Backyards*, by Wanda Smith and Karen Stoley
7:00 pm - Refreshments
7:30 pm - Program
Wanda & Karen are ONC members and both have been habitat gardening for a number of years. They will share their experiences and photographs of some of the “wild discoveries” in their backyards.

**APRIL 9, 7:00 pm**
ONC Board Meeting

**Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary**

Spring is a favorite time at LTNS. Dogwood and redbud trees are blooming; butterflies are hatching and feeding on the myriad wildflowers in bloom. There is also a chance of seeing migrating songbirds. Plan to camp on Saturday night and perhaps do some stargazing if weather permits.

**MARCH 14-15, Visitors Weekend**
Get away from it all and enjoy a weekend in LTNS.

**APRIL 4-5, Visitors Weekend & Highway Trash Pickup (8:30 am)**
Saturday, April 4, is our quarterly trash pickup along FM 945. Bring gloves, hat, water; pickup takes about an hour, then enjoy hiking the trails at LTNS.
Activities at LTNS
We had a good turnout in January for our winter highway pickup along FM 945 adjacent to the sanctuary.

Thanks to volunteers Thomas & Gina Autry, Calvin & Connie Blakley, Leland Day, Kellene Jarratt, Aaron Stoley, and Charlie Smith for volunteering to pick up the trash. After the hard work, everyone enjoyed hiking the trails and visiting around the campfire.

The seismic crew that was surveying our property has completed their work and did a very nice job of cleaning up all their marking tape.

Nomination of Officers
It is once again time to fill vacancies in our slate of officers. ONC’s board has vacancies for President, VP-Conservation, VP-Sanctuaries, and Secretary. We are in dire need of someone to fill the Secretary position, someone who can attend our quarterly board meetings and record and file minutes of the proceedings. If you can serve or would like to nominate someone, please contact acting President Calvin Blakley.

Membership Renewal
If your label says “EXPIRED” please take a few minutes to complete the renewal form and mail your check for 2009 dues. Even if you cannot join us at meetings or field trips, your membership is important to the health of our organization. Thank you for your continued support.

Donations to General Fund
Karen & Phil Beekman
Bill Clendenen
Jerry Gips
Bill Godley
Deborah Lancaster
William & Kathryn Meford
David & Pat Lewis
Mary Helen Pritchett

Donations to Little Thicket Nature Sanctuary
Ron Anderson
Chuck & Priscilla Bauer
Calvin & Connie Blakley
Cissy Donaldson
Alice Grant
Flo Hannah
Lois Lentz
Thomas Maddox
Bob Martin
Barbara Neal
Aaron & Karen Stoley
Monroe & Edith Waxman

ONC Member Renewal Information
(Renewal form also available at www.outdoornatureclub.org)

Name:_____________________________________
Address:__________________________________
City/St/Zip:_______________________________
Phone:_________ E-mail:_____________________

Regular ($8)______________________________
Family ($15)______________________________
Supporting ($40)__________________________
Life ($250)_______________________________

Ornithology Group (you must be member of ONC to join OG Study Group)
Add $14-individual, $19-family_____________

DONATION_________________________________

TOTAL DUES/DONATIONS________________

Mail to: Outdoor Nature Club
PO Box 270894, Houston, TX 77277-0894
Bird Behavior (continued from page 1)

in the same fashion. Coincidence? We don’t think so. We think they are opportunists, and if one bird discovers a new source of food or water it’s not long before others in the yard follow suit.

I now find myself observing bird behavior whenever and wherever I can. Recently I was in my car at a stoplight and noticed about 10 grackles sitting on a utility wire across the intersection. They were fairly well spread along the wire, then the bird on the left flew up and landed between two birds at the other end of the wire. Soon, the next bird on the left flew up and landed between two at the opposite end. This behavior continued until all the birds had moved down the wire a short distance and were bunched closely together. I wondered if there was some pecking order in their behavior; surely it wasn’t just random movement along the wire. Oh well, I’ll never know because the light turned green and I moved on to my destination.

Have you observed interesting behavior among the species in your backyard and would like to share with us? If so, please submit an article for publication in Nature Notes. Editor’s contact information can be found in the information box next to your address label. Thanks … and Happy Birding!