

Our Feathered Friends - April 18

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Another weekend has come and gone, and my little friend next door has gotten a year older. Birthday wishes goes out to Andrew Boyd, son of Ashley Boyd, who just turned 4 years old on the April 15. It is very easy to remember his birthday because it comes on tax day each year. I hope you got yours filed.

Sitting outside this morning there were a couple of Tree Swallows checking out one of my extra Bluebird houses that was put out just for that particular species. Most of the time they are flying up above the large hay field out back, soaring back and forth with the Purple Martins, as they do their thing to decrease the insect population. That sure beats the old mosquito wagon that we older kids used to chase after on our bicycles, just to ride in the fog. Maybe, just maybe, that might account for some of my brain damage and memory loss.

From down in Central America and the southern United States, where they spend the winter, another harbinger of spring returns to Tennessee and on up to northern Alaska and Canada. The Tree Swallow (*Iridoprocne bicolor*) is one of the earliest of morning singers, uttering its sweet, liquid twitter as they take to the air. Now you know why they call the internet website "Twitter" after the constant twittering.

By June mated pairs have moved into tree cavities and bird boxes as far north as Alaska. The birds favor a home site in an open field where water is close by. I have that one covered. The nest is constructed with dry grass where they pile a lining of feathers, often arranging them where they will curl over the clutch of four to six white eggs. I do believe that 14 days in, the magic number in which most songbirds eggs will hatch after, she sets the clutch and another 14 till they leave the nest.

Delta wings give this bird speed and agility in flight. The Tree Swallow also has a diet that not only consists of insects, but also will dine on vegetable food and bayberries along with other fruits. Its colors consist of a snow-white breast and a dark blue back. I hope the picture I finally took will reproduce in the newspaper where you will get the full effect of its color. There should be plenty of Mulberries to tickle their palate in the coming weeks, unless the starlings strip it

clean first.

Sheila Smith sent me a new picture of her Bluebird family. The tiny mouths are a bright yellow-red which prompt mom and dad to want to poke food into it. One egg did not hatch, but the parent birds leave it be to help provide support for the other hatchlings.

Dotty Kim called me this past Sunday describing to me a new bird in her yard. She perfectly gave me a description of a White-Crowned Sparrow. Dotty has really improved on her bird identification since she has moved out in the country. In the old days, she just rolled out to my house and asked, "what am I looking at?"

Here is another reminder to attend my upcoming bird program on Saturday, April 28, at 7 a.m., and later at dark-thirty an Owl Prowl. The timing is perfect to see a bunch of our Warblers and other song birds on their way north to their breeding ground. For those of you that are feeding black oil sunflower seed, keep your eyes out for Rose-breasted Grosbeak.

We would love to hear from you as to what's lurking about in your neighborhood and at your feeders. You can e-mail Karen Franklin at karen.feathered@gmail.com or write me at 606 Fairview Avenue, Lebanon, TN., 37087, or e-mail me at ourfeatheredfriends@yahoo.com

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