

Arctic bird suffers double hit from global warming

BY ALISTER DOYLE
REUTERS

OSLO — Red knots, a type of bird that makes one of the longest annual migrations, are shrinking because climate change in their Arctic nesting grounds makes life harder during their winters in Africa, scientists say.

Snows in Arctic Russia now melt earlier in spring and many red knot chicks hatch too late for the annual peak of insect food spurred by the thaw, according to their report on Thursday, one of the first to link the impact of warming to a single species.

That food shortage means the shorebirds, known for the males' reddish plumage, grow up smaller with shorter bills that make it harder to dig up their favored shellfish that live deep in tidal mudflats in wintering grounds in Mauritania.

Eighty percent of the birds born in Russia with long beaks survived to adulthood against just 40 percent of the short-beaked red knots, which end up eating roots of sea grasses in Africa that are less nutritious than shellfish, the study found.

Studies suggest that many creatures may shrink in a warmer world, because smaller bodies can get rid of extra heat more easily

"It's worrying ... we speculate that this is a very general problem" for Arctic migratory birds, lead author Jan van Gils of the Royal Netherlands Institute for Sea Research told Reuters of the findings published in the journal Science.

Thursday's study, by researchers in the Nether-

lands, Australia, France, Poland and Russia, drew on 33 years of satellite data of snows and observations of the size and feeding habits of thousands of birds.

Many types of shorebird fly to the Arctic to nest to avoid predators, from falcons to snakes, in the tropics. Some red knots born in Alaska fly all the way to South America.

The study suggested that red knots may evolve to have smaller bodies, with big bills. Red knots were also flying slightly earlier to the Arctic, but not soon enough. In Africa "they lack the cues of an earlier Arctic summer," van Gils said.

Red knots grow to about 10 inches long. Their global population is falling, according to a Red List of endangered species compiled by experts, who reckon the species is not at risk now but may be in future.



THOMAS OLIVER

A red knot in flight at Pine Point in Scarborough in 2013.

Spring is in the air and so are my bees

For me, spring is just not spring unless I can hear the hum of bees in the yard. Last fall I had moved my bees from my house to other yards in Hampden and Carmel, and it's been driving me nuts not having any here. Well, last week I made up for it with the arrival of 70 nucleus colonies and 250 packages of bees!

Bee package pick-up day is always a challenge and a thrill at the same time. Over 100 eager beekeepers arrived through the day all excited to pick up their new girls. Many were longtime customers, but those with the biggest nervous grins on their faces were my "newbees," students who took one of my adult education beekeeping for beginners classes this spring, and were starting their first hives.

Over the last month or two, they have been coming to my store to pick up their equipment; bottom boards, supers, frames, foundation, feeders and covers. They have been building them, painting them and setting them out in that special place in the yard they had selected. Then on bee pick-up day they finally get to become beekeepers themselves.

All the bees in this shipment have gone to their new homes, and the nucs have now been re-housed and many moved to my other bee yards. The fun is set to be repeated this week with the arrival of my second shipment of 200 packages.

All these new colonies will need to be fed sugar syrup in the first month or two to help them build comb as quickly as possible. The queen bee will be laying more and more eggs as the

colony grows, reaching a peak of almost 3000 eggs per day, more than her own weight in eggs! The hives will grow quickly and require more supers for expansion. Most will provide their new owners with a super full (about 25-35 pounds) of honey to harvest by the fall.

As well as the 450 packages of bees I will have distributed this spring, I have been preparing and building up nucs, or nucleus colonies. These small startup hives require a lot of work. It's a continuous process of feeding, adding extra room, and moving extra brood from strong hives to smaller ones. I will end up preparing between 140 and 160 nucs this spring and into the summer. Inevitably, some nucs grow faster than I expected, and I've had the occasional swarm already this spring.

One swarm very obligingly left one of my nucs on the morning I was giving one of my one day, beekeeping for beginners classes at my house. As well as the morning classroom lessons and opening up six hives in the afternoon, my students got a bonus demonstration of swarm collecting.

The swarm had landed on a tree branch about 12 feet off the ground. The tree was too small to lean a ladder against, so I taped a 5-gallon bucket to a wooden pole. Then I raised the bucket up to the bees from below so that the swarm was more or less inside it.



PETER COWIN



PETER COWIN

An early season bee swarm.

One sharp thrust upwards hit the branch with a thump, and 95 percent of the bees were knocked off and into the bucket. I then quickly lowered the bucket and poured the bees into a nuc box with combs and foundation already for them. The bees quickly descended into the hive, and I just caught a glimpse of the queen doing likewise. Over the next hour or so, all the remaining bees in the tree joined their sisters in the nuc box. With a bit of time and feeding, that swarm will make a nice additional nuc.

Maybe one of those students in the class will get those girls.

Peter Cowin, aka The Bee Whisperer, is president of the Penobscot County Beekeepers Association. His activities include honey production, pollination services, beekeeping lessons, sales of bees and bee equipment, and the removal of feral bee hives from homes and other structures. Check out "The Bee Whisperer" on Facebook, email petercowin@tds.net or call 299-6948.



MICKY BEDELL | BDN

Vicki Fox collects driftwood, pine cones and bark to create collages that reference the Maine seacoast region where she lives.

Smitten with the Maine woods

‘Stick chick’ transforms pieces of forests into art

BY MICKEY BEDELL
BDN STAFF

HANCOCK — "Look at this stick," Vicki Fox urges me, placing a hunk of driftwood on the table beside us. "I mean this is a really cool — it's ugly. But, it's just got a lot of character. And I'll look at it and say, hm. What can I make with that?"

Things you learn very quickly when you start an art blog: anything in this world can be made into anything else. Even sticks. Or, in Vicki's case, especially sticks.

Vicki's been smitten with sticks since 2001, after taking an art course on "stick making." (I didn't know it was a thing either.) It turned her into the kind of person who yanks her car over to the side of the road to pick up a particularly interesting piece of driftwood or an "unusual pinecone." She's actually mailed boxes of sticks back to herself while vacationing halfway across the country.

She is a self-proclaimed "stick chick," turning sticks into mirror frames, chairs, clocks, lamps and more. Well — mostly sticks. Shells, cactus needles, animal skulls, moss make appearances. Honestly, Vicki picks up anything that catches her eye in nature. Since 2008, Vicki has walked the forests and beaches of the Maine coast, collecting pieces of the world that most of us would step on or over.

Everywhere you look in Vicki's studio there's art, or pieces of things that will eventually be made into art. Besides her stick creations, a lingering gaze around the space reveals wood carvings, clay pots, furniture, paintings, drawings. You name it. Vicki says she's always had "the bug." The spark. And plenty of outlets for it.

It started when she was 3 years old, she said, hovering around her uncle's wood shop. Then there was an introduction to clay, and wood carving. When she was much older she went to art school for illustration, and that eventually morphed into graphic design. When the computer got to be to



MICKY BEDELL | BDN

Artist Vicki Fox, the "Stick Chick," transforms pieces of Maine woods into art.



MICKY BEDELL | BDN

A detail of a wood collage by Vicki Fox, the "Stick Chick."

much she learned the gardening trade, started her own landscaping business and submerging her life in nature.

Through the twists and turns of life Vicki has taken art classes in anything and everything. Woodburning, carving with power tools, raku firing, jewelry design. "I sound like a groupie," she says, raising her eyebrows at me and cracking a small smile.

Vicki's actually at a point where she's almost forbidden herself to collect more materials and learn more techniques. Her studio is overflowing, and she already knows so much. But that "almost" becomes abundantly clear as I ask her a follow-up and she tells me about a course she's traveling across the country for in a few weeks. You can never know enough about what you love.

Art courses for Vicki are

her escape from the everyday; a way to submerge herself in creating. It's not often people allot themselves a substantial chunk of time to just focus on one piece or art form. She says she also likes to surround herself with people who can influence and inspire her.

Vicki describes each class, each learning experience as a "facet of a diamond." In and of itself it's beautiful, sure, but moreso because of the detail it adds to the whole. Each class is a facet of her total artistry.

"I'm constantly chipping away at what I want to be when I grow up," she says quite matter-of-factly. I can certainly relate to that.

Mickey Bedell is a visual journalist and writes the blog Made in Maine for the Bangor Daily News. Rural New England holds her heart and soul.

Maine-based series may be on its way to your television screen

CBS 13

BRUNSWICK — Teagan Wright of Brunswick always has his eye on a target. Usually it's when he's shooting a hundred arrows every morning, but recently his focus has been on his newest television project.

"Nothing has been more important to me in a career or work aspect than this project," he said.

Wright is working on an adventure docu-series all about Maine.

"I live with them, work with them side by side to just get a better idea of who they are, their lives and their lifestyles,"

Wright's been working on the idea since last summer. He's shot 25 hours of footage just for the trailer. However, he says he needs the community to help him raise the rest of the money he needs to complete six episodes of the series.

Wright launched a Kickstarter, hoping to raise \$35,000.

"That's not a small amount of money at all, but it is the sort of 'white knuckle' amount that I need to get this



WGME

Teagan Wright (left), creator and star of "From Away," talks with a Harpswell lobsterman. Wright's show will explore the lives of hardworking Mainers.

series done in a way that I feel good about."

Working in television is nothing new for Wright. He lived in Los Angeles for several years working behind the scenes in reality television. Recently he's stepped in front of the camera, on a national TV show "House- Smarts" and starring in an HP commercial.

His hope is that he'll raise the money and then get the show picked up by Netflix of Hulu.

In a best-case scenario, Wright will expand the show to include other states. For

now, though, he says he wants to focus on the state he calls home and inspire others to love it as much as he does.

"Traveling is really learning," Wright said. "You travel somewhere, you learn about their ways, and I just think that makes people closer and just care for each other more."

TALES TOLD

Peruse our blogs.
bangordailynews.com/maine-blogs