



FALL

2008

BACKYARD BIRD CENTER NEWS

THE NORTHLAND'S LARGEST SELECTION OF FEEDERS, SEED MIXES & BINOCULARS

6212 NW BARRY ROAD • (816) 746-1113 • WWW.BACKYARDBIRDCENTERKC.COM

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Customer Appreciation Days

Sundays

December 7th & 21st

1:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Once again we want to show our appreciation to our wonderful customers by offering a special day of savings.

On Sunday the 7th, everything in the store, except bags of bird seed 40lbs or greater, will be 15% Off (sorry, we can not combine this with other discounts or coupons).

Aside from the great deals, we will have refreshments and door prizes, including a chance to win FREE Nut & Berry for a year from our friends at Wild Delight.



Extended Holiday Hours
December 1st - 24th
Mon - Fri 9:30 - 6:00
****Thursdays 9:30 - 7:00**
Saturdays 9:00 - 5:00
****Sundays 1:00 - 5:00**
December 24th close at 5:00
Closed 25th

Put Your Best Foot Forward

by Mark McKellar

Have you ever tried sleeping standing on a 2X4 suspended 10 feet in the air? If you have, maybe you're part bird. Most birds do it every night and never fall to the ground.

It's not hard to imagine how they hold onto limbs, just look at the shape of their feet and toes. Most of the bones in a bird's foot have fused together for lighter weight.. When we look at their legs, what looks like their knees turned backwards is really their ankles. The long single "foot bone" is known as the **tarsus**. Relative to our feet, this would be our instep. Birds walk and perch on what we think of as the ball of our foot.

The toes of birds vary in length, shape and form almost as much as their bills. The most common configuration is three toes forward and one toe back. It may seem odd, but the backward facing toe, known as the **hallux**, is actually the first or big toe. The other common configuration is of toes like a woodpecker in which two toes are forward and two toes face back.

Back to the sleeping question. Yes, the long toes of birds make it easier for them to reach around a small limb and hold on but what about when they fall asleep. Perching birds such as cardinals and juncos have two major **flexor tendons** that run from their toes to their knee. When a bird perches (squats) those tendons force the hallux and toes to tighten (even lock) around its perch. The bird can relax without fear of falling off.

Birds have so many amazing adaptations it is easy to take them for granted. Whether they are long and slender like a heron or rail, thick and strong like an eagle or webbed like ducks and geese, you can bet that birds always put their best foot forward.



Hairy Woodpecker
Photo by Lisa Owen

What Happened to the Summer Newsletter?

If you don't get the monthly e-mail updates, you don't know why I didn't get the Summer newsletter out. First my apologies for those who missed it and the Feeder Cleaning Day but our family moved this summer just when I was in the middle of writing it. If you've moved lately, you know how crazy my life has been over the past few weeks. Everything happened rather quickly and instead of putting out a poor quality product, I made the tough decision to cancel it.

I didn't stop communicating altogether. For the 1,000 or so of you that are on our e-mail list, you knew about our hikes, bird feeder cleanings and back yard happenings that I have been able to squeeze in during the mayhem. If you aren't on the monthly e-mail group, I hope you can give it a try. I DO NOT share your e-mails with anyone and it is easy to sign up. You can call us, sign up at the store or go to the website: www.backyardbirdcenterkc.com and click on the Subscribe For New Information tab in the lower left of the homepage.



Expanded Fun Stuff Area

While we have always carried a few items for children, this season we have greatly expanded that selection. We have a new shipment of the always popular Singing Birds from Wild Republic, as well as new explorer backpacks and binoculars from the same folks.

Perhaps the item that has gotten the most attention are the card games from Professor Noggin. These fun and educational games feature questions about birds, snakes, insects or North American wildlife.

We have just received a new selection of puzzles for the young and young at heart. With snow coming, a good puzzle is great family entertainment tool to have around.



If you live in a wooded area, this is the time of year to keep you eyes open for visiting Flying Squirrels. This character was eating Wild Delight Total Cuisine at a customer's home in Parkville.
photo by Linda Orr

WIN A PAIR OF NIKON BINOCULARS

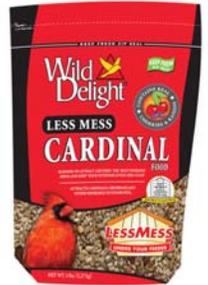
Less Mess From Wild Delight® Presents: Seeing Is Believing



Nikon Action 8X40 have a extra wide field of view. They are valued at \$99.99

Someone from our store will win a new pair of Nikon Action binoculars. Stop by the store between now and December 31st and check out the Less Mess Cardinal

Food display and register.



THE 10 P.M. OWL

by Karin Frank

tolls the hour
in silence.
Moonlight marks
his strikes,
dark of moon, not.
Until he swoops
only his head swivels –
an immobile
fence ornament
that culls
the unwary.



DO YOU WANT TO \$AVE MONEY?

**ERVA
BAFFLES
20% OFF
THROUGH
JANUARY**



*Raccoon Family
Photo by Carrie Van Zandt*

*Erva Squirrel & Raccoon Baffles
Save You Money!*



How many pounds of bird seed do you loose to squirrel and raccoons each day? How many feeders have you had destroyed by raccoons and squirrels? In most cases, one well placed baffle can stop them.





Have Binos, Will Travel!

The fall birding season is always interesting. It begins in August when shorebirds (generally birds who were unable to find a mate) start moving south. Warblers and other songbirds really pick up in September and hawks filter in with their numbers peaking in December. Most of our true fall birding is concentrated around area lakes. Kansas City is well positioned for waterfowl migration. The numbers of gulls can be impressive as well as the number of different species. Ducks, grebes and loons filter in with each cold front and Ospreys and eagles can be seen with relative ease this time of year.



*Did you know that one of the common names for the Common Goldeneye is Sizzle-britches?
Photo by Rick Jordahl*

❖ **The hikes and programs listed below fill on a first come first serve basis.** ❖
PLEASE call the store to register (816) 746-1113

Identifying Birds In Your Backyard (in store class)

Thursday, January 15th 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Back by popular demand! Are you tired of not knowing the names of the birds you are seeing at your feeders? Do you get frustrated trying to figure out if it is a House Finch or a Purple Finch? Join us for an evening of Backyard Bird ID and we will solve some of the most common frustrations that new birders struggle with. Fun Bird Game Night (in store)

Thursday, January 22nd 7:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.

Winter's weather quite often doesn't cooperate with birding field trips so join us indoors for some fun and games. We will have puzzles and nature-oriented games out for everyone to try and we'll play bird trivia for prizes. No one will leave the store empty-handed.

All puzzles and games will be specially priced!

Mid-Winter Eagles of Smithville Lake

Sunday, January 25th 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

There is no way to know what the weather will be like, but mid-winter birding can be very productive. We will search the lakes for eagles, loons, Snow Buntings, Lapland Longspurs and Short-eared Owls. Dress warmly and bring a thermos of something hot.

Meet at the Litton Center at 2:00 p.m.

Photographing Distant Birds (in store class)

Thursday, February 12th 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

If you are regular reader of this newsletter, you have no doubt seen Rick Jordahl's pictures of birds on many occasions. Rick's favorite tool of his trade is his digiscoping outfit and he is very good with it. Rick will share lots of images he has taken and some of his secrets for successful photography with us.



*Acorn Woodpecker
photo by Rick Jordahl*

Local Field Guides Really Help

by Mark McKellar

I love books. I especially love books about birds and nature. When I plan a trip to a location that I have never birded before, you can bet I search out any local guides that may help me. Do we have any good local guides for this area? You bet we do.

There are several good books and CDs that apply to the birds and wildlife of our area. We carry guides to Missouri's birds, wildflowers, reptiles and others. They all make great gifts. Some our best sellers:

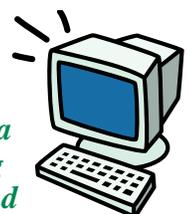
- > *Birds in Missouri* by Brad Jacobs
- > *Birds of Missouri* by Stan Tekela
- > *Birds of Kansas* by Stan Tekela
- > *Tallgrass Prairie Wildflowers* by Doug Ladd
- > *KC Wildlands* by Larry Rizzo
- > *Thayers Birding Software: Missouri & Kansas Birds*
- > *Missouri Bird Calls CD*

Two excellent new titles:

- > *The Guide to Kansas Birds and Birding Hot Spots* by Bob Gress and Pete Janzen.
- > *A Photographic Guide to Butterflies in the Kansas City Region* by Betsy Betros



People on the monthly e-mail list know about more bird hikes than the postal list. Quite often I can squeeze in a hike (especially if something good is reported) and will send out an e-mail at the last second. Sign up today!





SPECIES PROFILE: Northern Mockingbird

photo and story by Rick Jordahl

This songster is a year-round resident and a common and conspicuous sighting on many outings. Known for its frequent and varied vocalizations and active defense of nests and territory, the Northern mockingbird is a true entertainer found in towns, farms, roadsides, parks and thickets.

While many species of birds do imitations, the Northern Mockingbird (*Mimus polyglottos*) is probably the champion. It mimics not only songs of other birds but also animals and mechanical sounds such as alarm clocks or car horns. Individual males have repertoires of 50 to 200 songs, continually adding songs throughout its life. Unmated males even sing at night.

At 9 to 11 inches, the Northern Mockingbird is usually easy to identify with its long slender tail and mostly gray body with prominent, flashy white wing patches.

Mockingbirds forage on the ground or in vegetation, eating insects, berries and seeds. The nest, often begun by the male and finished by the female, is usually made of twigs in a dense shrub or tree which it vigorously defends.

Mockingbirds are found in suburban and urban areas alike and often nest near homes or businesses. They are gregarious and often interact with people. One of my favorite encounters was with a mocker that regularly sat just inches above a busy front entrance to my workplace, watching people come and go.

The Northern Mockingbird is a member of the Mimidae family and is related to the Gray Catbird and all thrashers. This popular songster is the state bird of Florida, Texas, Arkansas, Mississippi and Tennessee.

Like so many southern species, mockingbirds numbers have increased greatly in our area in recent years. Unfrozen water in winter is often the key to their survival. so heated birdbaths are like magnets for them.. Landscaping with berry producing trees and shrubs is best but a mixture of peanut butter, cornmeal and raisins will often capture their attention at your feeder station.



CONSERVATION CORNER:

Birder's Exchange Sharing Tools, Saving Birds



So often when we hear about problems that our birds face in other countries, we feel bad because we think there is little or nothing that we can do as individuals to help them. The American Birding Association is operating a unique program that got its start in 1990 at the Manomet Center for Conservation Science that provides birders with a chance to help.

The concept is simple. Birders donate old binoculars, spotting scopes, field guides, digital cameras, laptops, etc. and the Birder's Exchange folks get them into the hands of researchers and educators in Central America and the Caribbean. By getting this equipment into the hands of the local conservationist we better enable them to protect ecosystems and wildlife.

You can visit the website www.americanbirding.org/bex for more information about the program and details of their equipment needs. We will be taking donations here at the store and shipping then out to Colorado after the first of the year. Check the side bar here to learn how you can trade in your old equipment against a new set of binoculars.

TRADE IN OLD BINOS

Do you have an old pair of binoculars packed away somewhere you just not using anymore? Or do you have a pretty good current pair but want to upgrade? Why not trade them in?

Here is how it works. Bring in a clean, working pair of binoculars or spotting scope and we will allow you a trade in value from 5% to 15% depending on the type of binocular or spotting scope. I'm sorry but I can not combine this with any other coupons or specials.



We can only take one trade in per binocular or scope but we will take others as well as old field guides they list to ship to The Birder's Exchange program as a donation.





Time To Ask Mark...

Q. Where have all of my woodpeckers gone?

A. As I almost always do with this kind of question, I look to what kind of summer we have had and what the natural food supply is like going into winter. The cool, wet summer has really produced a bountiful natural food supply and birds are reacting to that. Many woodpeckers, especially Red-headed are driven by acorn supplies and will sometimes concentrate in areas where they are heavy. Rest assured that when times get tougher (low temperatures, ice, snow) they will be at your feeders just as often as any year.



Q. Are bird seed prices going to ever come back down?

A. Yes. As I referred to in question #1, the cool, wet summer has had a very positive effect on the sunflower crop this year as well. As I type this, bulk bird seed prices have already declined once and I anticipate another drop to happen soon. Check with us as soon as you read this and I should know what the prices are going to be for the winter.

Q. What are the big hawks I see sitting along the highways these days?

A. Plain and simple, almost all of them are Red-tailed Hawks. They can range from very light to almost black in color. Each fall we see the push of hawks into our area as weather conditions get worse in their northern breeding grounds. It was amazing to see the, seemingly overnight, arrival of hawks recently. Do you think it was merely a coincidence that it happened right after the blizzard in the Dakotas?

Q. I just love the little White-throated Sparrows and Juncos. What do they like to eat?

A. These two native sparrows are among the easiest birds to keep happy. They love white proso millet spread on a flat surface. A nice tray feeder low to the ground helps keep the seed dry but the sparrows are perfectly happy eating right off of the ground.



SOME OF OUR MOST REQUESTED GIFT ITEMS EACH YEAR



Heated Birdbaths are a "hot" seller!



They may not be back until March, but Purple Martin Houses are great gifts.



Windchimes, windchimes, windchimes.



Squirrel-proof bird feeders not only provide entertainment but reduce stress for the squirrel frustrated among us.

Staff Recommendation

- * Ruth likes a hood to keep the snow off your feeders.
- * Joyce likes the mailbox wraps with a different bird for every season.
- * John likes a new Aspects feeder with the new EZ Clean base.
- * Mark likes the easy to clean Kozy Bird Spa heated bird bath.



Tilley Hats not only look great but they are the only hat endorsed by the Mayo Clinic for Skin Cancer Protection.

BACKYARD BIRD CENTER
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KANSAS CITY, MO 64154
(816) 746-1113

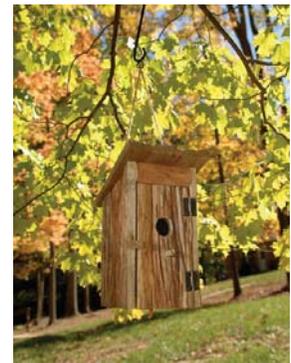


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THINKING OUTSIDE THE (NEST) BOX

Most of our customers are coming in for bird feeders and houses to use in the traditional manner. A surprising number of them can be used in other ways around the house. If you are, as I am, a bird lover who likes to have your hobby represented in your decorating, we can help. Aside from our gift items like the great kitchen towels and cutting boards, regular feeders and houses can be adapted for household use. We have a cute gumball machine feeder that we have been using as a people feeder in the store, a beautiful painted seed can that could store anything or even be a wastebasket, an outhouse birdhouse that looks great in the bathroom holding tissues or spare toilet paper and a window feeder that can go on the inside of your kitchen window to hold small pots of herbs. I'm excited about a new cast iron dish feeder what will be holding Hershey's kisses at my house this holiday season. Our long handled feeder brushes could be just what you need to clean the lint out of your dryer. Of course, all of our shepard's hooks and deck arms can be used to hold potted plants or windsocks as well as feeders. The next time you are in, take a look around and maybe you'll see something outside the nestbox.



How many uses can you think of for the Outhouse Birdhouse?.



Project FeederWatch has helped us monitor the population growth of birds like this Carolina Wren.

Photo by Rick Jordahl

PROJECT FEEDER WATCH

Join us for the 22nd season of Project FeederWatch. Last year 115,000 Checklists from Citizen Scientists across the U.S. and Canada were submitted to Cornell. It's not too late to get involved. Counts go from November through April. If you only want to count once a month or you can't feed birds at your house, consider volunteering at the Martha Lafite Thompson Nature Sanctuary in Liberty (816-781-8598). For more information on Project FeederWatch visit www.birds.cornell.edu/pfw or call 800-843-BIRD (2473). There is a \$15.00 fee to pay for materials.