



BACKYARD BIRD CENTER NEWS

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

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Fall Feeder Cleaning

**Saturday, Oct. 17th
9:00a.m. to 4:00p.m.**

It's that time again! Fall feeder cleaning day is just in time to get ready for the fall feeding season. Once again we will have a power washer on hand and as many spare parts as we can gather. You can drop off your feeders and we will give you an estimated pick up time.

The cost will be \$3.00 per feeder for cleaning and \$5.00 for repairs with this fall's proceeds going to the Martha Lafite Thompson Nature Sanctuary in Liberty.

**Here Birdie, Birdie**

Though he probably just climbed up there by chance, this Grey Rat Snake looks like he is ready for a quick meal. Photo by Mike Dellay in North Carolina

Battling Bees

by Mark McKellar

First and foremost I want to make sure that you understand that I have nothing against bees and wasps. They are very important parts of our ecosystem and many, many plants depend on them for pollination. That being said, they can be a pain in the "bee-hind" when it comes to hummingbird and oriole feeders.

While some may have bees find their feeders early in the season, luckily, it is a problem that doesn't really get bad until late summer. I say "luckily" because I don't think there is a solution for jelly feeders but it tends to occur at the same time (late July/early August) that our orioles are pulling out for parts far south of here.

Certain nectar feeder are pretty effective at discouraging the bees. Two of our oriole nectar feeders have bee guards that have been successful for many. The Fliteliner Jr. from the Birding Company has beads in the port that orioles easily push through to get to the nectar while the bees cannot. Perkey Pets' oriole feeder features weighted perches that pull the bee guards out of the way when the oriole lands on it.

Hummingbird feeders are a whole different story. The struggle with bees can be a rather easy one to solve or really frustrating. Feeders that are gravity fed (the nectar is in a bottle above the ports) are almost impossible to keep bees away from. The nectar is always right at the surface of the port and the short proboscis of the bee can easily reach the sugar water. We much prefer flat feeders like the Hummzingers from Aspects.

By filling a Hummzinger only half full, the sugar water is kept a good distance from the port opening above, making it very hard for a bee or wasp to get its first taste and therefore discouraging them from coming back. Aspects also features Nectar Guard Tips for some of their feeders which add another level of protection from bees. I understand they are working on a version that will fit their oriole feeder.

A trick that I read about once was washing the top of your hummingbird feeder with a strong vinegar water solution and not rinsing it. You let it air dry and place it back on. Hummingbirds like most birds have a poorly developed sense of smell and will continue to use the feeder but bees tend to shy away.

The battle with bees and nectar feeders has been raging for years. With a little patience and creativity, it can be won.



Honey Bee swarm where it belongs ... in the woods. photo courtesy of Linda Williams



Aspects' Hummzinger Small Fancy Fuschia



Fall Berries Are Bounty For Birds

by Mary Nemecek

When the shortening days of late summer give way to fall, most people notice a substantial decline in activity at their feeders. Mother Nature provides a bounty that lures the birds from the feeders to something more tempting. Ripening berries abound and one way to keep the birds in your yard is to grow some of the preferred berry-bearing natives. They have excellent wildlife value and are attractive in the landscape as well. In addition, birds that are not normal yard visitors may show up for the fruit feast. Keep a close eye and you may see waxwings, warblers, vireos, thrushes, bluebirds and kingbirds among many others. Many of these native plants provide cover and nesting sites for birds throughout the spring and summer. All of the following are native to Missouri.

- **American Beauty Berry** (*Callicarpa americana*) deciduous shrub 3-5ft with spectacular bright violet berries in late September or early October. Full sun/part shade. May die back to the ground in winter.
- **Black Haw** (*Viburnum prunifolium*) Shrub grows 12-15ft, white, flat top flowers in spring, purple-black fruit in fall. Burgundy fall foliage. Fruit tastes like raisins. Full sun/part shade
- **Rusty Black Haw** (*Viburnum rufidulum*) 10-15ft, white flowers in March-April and clusters of red berries in September. Red fall foliage. Full sun/shade.



Eastern Bluebirds heavily depend on fruit to survive our winters.
Photo courtesy of Pat White

berries in late summer/fall on female plants. Aromatic leaves, yellow fall foliage sun/shade but for best fall color plant in sun. Also host plant of the spicebush swallowtail butterfly.

- **Serviceberry** (*Amelanchier arborea*) small tree 10-20ft, fragrant white flowers in March-April, red fruit enjoyed by birds and people, orange fall foliage full sun/shade
- **Fragrant Sumac** (*Rhus aromatica*) spreading shrub 3-9ft, yellow flowers in April, female plants bear red fruit in late summer/early fall, fabulous fall color ranging from orange to scarlet to reddish purple. Sun/part shade



Cedar Waxwings love fruit. Photo courtesy of Mary Nemecek

Last Chance at Some Great Optics

Every so often binocular companies change models and close out others. Right now seems to be a time for that to happen. With change, often comes a chance at great deals and we have a few in the store now. While supplies last, you can get some of the finest optics ever made for good prices. Some examples (as we go to print):

Nikon SE

This is one of the most decorated binoculars in the birding world. It has been hailed as the best birding binocular for over 10 years by betterviewdesired.com. I can't believe Nikon has discontinued it but . . .

(4) 8X32's left Reg \$699 . . Now \$559.99

Vortex Viper

Another binocular that has won awards from outdoor magazines for its many features and outstanding warranty.

(1) 8X40 left Reg \$479 . . Now \$379.99

Audubon Equinox HP

Though they are not being discontinued by Eagle Optics, we are closing them out. A really good binocular loaded with top features and warranty.

(1) 8X42 left Reg \$249 . . Now \$189.99



Nikon 82mm Fieldscoope Outfit

Everything you need to get started with a high end spotting scope. Kit includes the scope, zoom eyepiece, a full-size tripod and a window mount

(1) left Reg \$1,399 . . Now \$1,099.99



I don't know how long these will last but with the prime birding season upon us, you will never regret getting the absolute best view of a bird that you possibly can. Don't cheat yourself.



Have Binos, Will Travel!

I moved to Missouri in 1992 and was treated by a great Spring migration season. The next year was very good as well. It has taken until this year to have that kind of wonderful spring birding again. During the early part of May our weather patterns set up just right to keep migrating birds here for a few days giving birders great opportunities to get out and enjoy themselves. For our birding groups, we had outstanding days pretty much everywhere we went. Watkin's Mill State Park, Weston Bend State Park and possibly the best day of them all at the Martha Lafite Thompson Nature Sanctuary in Liberty. If you were not, I wish you could have been with us!

**The hikes and programs listed below are available to our store customers
(not organized groups, they can be arranged separately)
space is limited and fill on a first come first serve basis.**

PLEASE call the store to register (816) 746-1113



*Spring migration this year was as good as I have seen it for 15 years.
photo courtesy of Rick Jordahl*

Thursday Morning Bird Hikes

While Fall migration is less dependable than Spring, it is still a great time to get and see birds. Every Thursday morning during September and October, Ruth, John or myself will lead a morning bird hike at one of our favorite spots. Hopefully, one or all will fit in with your busy schedule. Call for meeting spot.

<i>Sept 3rd</i>	<i>Parkville Nature Sanc</i>	<i>8:00 - 9:30</i>
<i>Sept 10th</i>	<i>Amity Nature Park</i>	<i>8:00 - 9:30</i>
<i>Sept 17th</i>	<i>Little Bean Marsh</i>	<i>8:00 - 10:30</i>
<i>Sept 24th</i>	<i>Weston Bend S. P.</i>	<i>8:00 - 10:30</i>
<i>Oct 1st</i>	<i>English Landing Park</i>	<i>8:00 - 9:30</i>
<i>Oct 8th</i>	<i>Smithville Lake</i>	<i>8:00 - 10:30</i>
<i>Oct 15th</i>	<i>Martha Lafite N.S.</i>	<i>8:00 - 10:30</i>
<i>Oct 22nd</i>	<i>Parkville Nature Sanc.</i>	<i>8:00 - 9:30</i>
<i>Oct 29th</i>	<i>Amity Nature Park</i>	<i>8:00 - 9:30</i>

In Store Classes

Gearing Up For Winter Bird Feeding

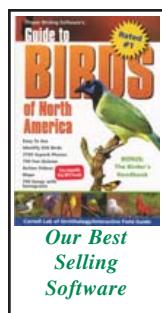
Wednesday, Sept. 30th 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Whether you're new to bird feeding or just want to brush up on the birds of our backyards, this class is for you. We will discuss the birds we hope to attract to our yards by providing the right food, water and shelter for them.

So You Want To Be A Birder

Wednesday, Oct. 21st 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

You've been watching birds at your feeders for a while now and even make a special trip now and then to see a Bald Eagle, but now you want to get more serious about this hobby. We will cover the ways to take the next step to becoming a more serious birder. We will cover equipment, places to go (near and far), when to go and of course what to look for.



Fall Feeder Cleaning

Saturday, Oct. 17th 9:00a.m. to 4:00p.m.

Weston Bend/Little Bean/Lewis & Clark

Sunday, Sept. 20th 8:00 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Best known for its annual spring migration. We will visit this great location during the peak of fall migration and gear our time for where the best birding is at the time. If water levels are good we will search for shorebirds and waterfowl as well. Bring a sack lunch and snacks.

Meet at the Park Gate.

Cost \$3 per person.

Squaw Creek National Wildlife Refuge

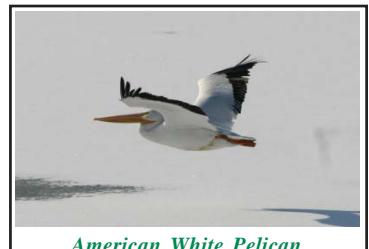
**Sunday, October 11th
9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.**

Fall waterfowl migration should be in full swing and we will search the loop for ducks & geese.

This is also a great time to look for migrating hawks and sparrows. Bring a sack lunch and snacks.

Meet at the store at 7:30 or the refuge at 9:00.

Cost \$5 per person.



*American White Pelican
photo courtesy of Laura Robinson*

Smithville Lake

Sunday, October 25th 1:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Weather depending, this can be a great time at the lake. We will search the lake for loons, grebes and other waterfowl. The surrounding woods and fields can be great for early winter arrivals. Last year we had a Northern Shrike hanging around.

Meet at the Litton Center at 2:00.

Cost \$3 per person.



Species Profile: Northern Flicker

by Mark McKellar

One of the birds that truly confuses people is the flicker. Formerly known as the Northern Flicker (*Colaptes auratus*), this rather large member of the woodpecker family suffers from somewhat of an identity crisis. Well, maybe not to them but for beginning birdwatchers they do.

The confusion for most is that these birds don't often act like woodpeckers and don't look much like one either. One of their more common nicknames is "Ant Bird" which comes from their love of probing ant hill with their long barbed tongues. This extended time on the ground just doesn't seem right for a woodpecker. Their habit of stealing dog food or cat food from an open dish may add to the confusion as well.

As most of our woodpeckers are black and white, flickers are not. People immediately zero in on the long stout bill, large red "V" on the nape of the neck and the

spotted breast. It is when they fly that they are really flashy. The large white rump patch and bright yellow color of the underwing and tail feathers are hard to miss. The black "moustache" line is only present on males.



Northern "Yellow-shafted" Flicker
Photo by Lisa Owen

To add to the confusion, we occasionally see the western "red-shafted" form of this species here in the fall and winter. Up until 1973, they were considered a separate species. Due to extensive interbreeding in areas where their ranges overlap, they were lumped together at that time.

To the disappointment of many, flickers are quite nomadic in nature. When they are visiting your feeders they tend to like peanuts and sunflower chips the best.

They are a unique bird and truly one of America's favorite backyard birds. Unfortunately, like so many other birds, their numbers are in decline. Loss of habitat and nest competition from European Starling are major factors.

CONSERVATION CORNER: The Nature Conservancy

I was looking back through some old newsletters recently and realized it has been almost seven years since I wrote about The Nature Conservancy. Because they are one of my favorite conservation organizations, I thought it was time to revisit their good work. Founded in 1951, TNC has protected more than 119 million acres of land and over 5,000 miles of rivers.

A major concern of many folks who are willing to give their hard earned money to a nonprofit organization is the issue of accountability. TNC continually scores at the highest levels given by watchdog groups. In other words, the money you give doesn't go to overpaid CEOs, it makes it to the land where it belongs. Another great thing that you can do is to specify where you want your money to go. I can choose my annual gift to be split between North Carolina (where I grew up) and Missouri.

While TNC operates in all 50 states and around the world, I am most familiar with their work here in Missouri. Their Dunn Ranch (Grand River Grasslands) area near Eagleville has grown to more than 5,000 acres of protected native grassland and their extensive work in the Ozarks is protecting streams and woodlands that are critical for many of our woodland birds.

As you can imagine, their work does not come cheap and they totally depend on donations to keep going. Please visit www.nature.org for more information and consider joining today.

Don't Forget Your Conservation Discount

We give 10% discounts to those who show proof of current membership in the following conservation groups:

*The Nature Conservancy (www.nature.org)
National Audubon Society (www.audubon.org)
(including state and/or local chapters)
American Bird Conservancy (www.abcbirds.org)
Martha Lafite Thompson Nature Sanctuary
(www.naturesanctuary.com)*

Discount applies all merchandise except bird seed but can not be combined with other specials or coupons.

The Nature Conservancy
Protecting nature. Preserving life.™



Time To Ask Mark...

Q. How do I keep the deer out of my feeders?

A. In a word, height. Because deer can reach about six feet up when they want to, you need to get the bottom of your feeders at least six feet up in the air. If you are feeding from a deck arm that usually isn't a problem, but from a pole system or tree limb it can be hard to reach your feeders. As usual, we have items that can help. Erva Pole extensions of up to 28" can get your feeders high enough in the air and their SkyHook fit into a piece of PVC or hollow pipe to help you lift your feeder on and off the higher hooks.

Q. I have been seeing a cardinal with no feathers on his head. Is he going to be OK?

A. The short answer is yes. While experts aren't exactly sure why this happens, they do believe it is rarely harmful. Most believe that it is a part of the natural molting process that for some reason in a few individuals goes a little wrong and they lose all of their head feathers at once instead of the typical "few at a time" pattern. Because it occurs in late summer and early fall weather is not a factor. In some cases, the feather loss can be caused by a lice or mite infestation. In both cases, feather growth is seen rather quickly and the birds seem to do just fine.



Moulted Male Cardinal photo
courtesy of Judy Farris

Q. Could I have seen an albino sparrow at my feeder?

A. As the photo here shows, we do see albino birds of various species from time to time in our area. Because albinism is a rare genetic trick that happens in wildlife (and humans) we tend to see it in the more common species. The greater the number of birds, the greater the chance for rarities to show up. I have seen albino robins, grackles, House Sparrows and, much to my surprise one day, a Ruby-throated Hummingbird. Even more frequently than pure albinos, we often see partial albinos. Albinism can be limited to just a couple of feathers or large patches like the entire head or wing. The first time I saw this was in college when our class saw a Boat-tailed Grackle with one white wing. Unfortunately, albinism isn't a successful path to a long life for birds. Predators often find these individuals more easily as they do tend to stick out in crowd.



Albino House Sparrow. photo
courtesy obuf Gayle Laney

Q. I love the little Red-breasted Nuthatches. Will we be seeing them this year?

A. I sure hope so. As a "trend", we usually see good numbers of these little guys every other year. Last year was very few in the area so this year should be good. We have already had a report of one in Kansas so make sure you have peanuts in your peanut feeders!

LATE SEASON WILD DELIGHT SPECIALS

Red-breasted Nuthatches are one of the "cutest" birds you will attract to your feeders. They love peanuts, sunflower hearts and chips Photo courtesy of Rick Jordahl

Take 20% OFF a 20lb Bag of Wild Delight Deck, Porch & Patio®



Offer Expire September 30th 2009

We need your input. One of our very best selling bags of birdseed is Wild Delight's Total Cuisine. Most people love it because it is 100% food, thus making it an ultra clean way to feed birds. A couple of seasons ago, Wild Delight released a "new" waste-free blend called Deck, Porch & Patio. It is basically Total Cuisine without the raisins. Take advantage of this special price and please tell us what you think.

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FIRST REBATE EVER ON MONARCHS

You may remember a couple of years ago I wrote about the Monarch 8X42 had been tested by the American Birding Association in a group that consisted of several binoculars from other companies that sold for nearly twice as much. They were voted the best mid range binocular (\$250 to \$500 price range) on the market. They are waterproof, very light and have outstanding optics. For the past 6 years, they have been my #1 recommended binoculars for those who are interested in getting into birding a hobby.

**\$50
Mail In
REBATE**

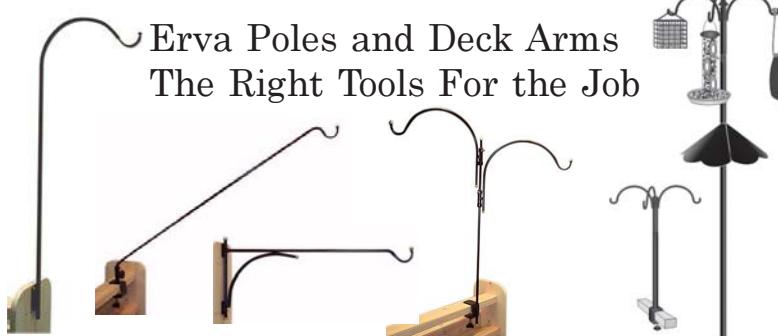
(Nikon Monarch 8X42 and 10X42 models purchased between 8/1/09 and 10/31/09)



DON'T FORGET TO GIVE THEM WATER

Late summer is generally very hot and dry. A dependable source of clean water is critical for birds and wildlife. Please keep your birdbaths filled and clean this season. Misters, bubblers and drippers help keep water fresh.

While supplies last, Erva's Universal Dripper is \$29.99, normally \$39.99



Erva Poles and Deck Arms
The Right Tools For the Job

Important Dates

Late August - Hummingbird Numbers Peak
Late August/Early September - watch for large flocks of migrating martins and swallows.
Early October - last of migrating hummingbirds generally have passed through.
Early to Mid-October - Watch for early winter arrivals such as juncos and kinglets.