



BACKYARD BIRD CENTER NEWS

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Fall Feeder Cleaning
Saturday, Oct. 1st
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 Parkville Nature Sanctuary. Wild Delight will help offset the cost of the cleaning with a \$3.00 OFF Coupon.



In Search of The Perfect Bird Feeder

by Mark McKellar

Is there such a thing as the “perfect” bird feeder? If you have asked me about this topic, I surely answered “no”. The different feeding styles and food preferences of birds make this an impossible task for one bird feeder. Birds and seeds haven't really changed over the past 25 years, but people's needs have.

I thought I would revisit this topic. What would a bird feeder have to do to earn this honor? Here is my list of requirements:

- 1) It must be able to feed many different seed types
- 2) It must accommodate different size birds
- 3) It must be versatile (decks, trees, poles)
- 4) It must be easy to clean and maintain
- 5) It should be water resistant
- 6) It should have a lifetime warranty (limited at the very least)
- 7) It must be squirrel –proof or highly squirrel resistant
- 8) It must be resistant to grackle, starlings and other pest birds
- 9) It must be easy to use for a wide variety of people
- 10) It should be reasonably priced

So, given my list above, can you guess the one that eliminated most of the feeders in the store? Number 7 is a killer. We sell a lot of great feeders from Aspects that hang in there for quite a while but 7 & 8 are tough. While a pole system with a baffle is an awesome set up, they just don't work in all yards.

The winner in my mind is . . . The Squirrel Buster Plus by Brome. Why? I will refer to my list.

- 1) You can feed many different seeds, though I would avoid anything with fruit
- 2) The Cardinal Ring makes it is easy to use for large birds as well as small ones
- 3) It is easily hung from trees, deck arms, poles & eaves
- 4) It can be easily disassembled and is dishwasher safe
- 5) The roof and sheath are flared to deflect rain
- 6) Parts are easily found and the warranty is very good
- 7) It is the best squirrel-proof feeder on the market. Period.
- 8) I have found it is great against grackles and starlings
- 9) When it is full of seed it can be a bit heavy, but it opens and closes easily
- 10) At \$85, it is expensive.. I would ask you to consider all

that it does and the warranty before you dismiss it. The money you save by not feeding the squirrels and blackbirds is substantial. You could also consider its smaller cousin the Squirrel Buster Classic.

While your backyard may not require one “perfect” bird feeder, there are many reasons to invest in the Squirrel Buster Family of feeders. Any one or two of the list above may be enough!





A Bird in the Hand . . .

by Mary Nemecek with information from Craig Hensley

“(What is the) extinction of a condor to a child who has never seen a wren?” -Naturalist Robert Michael Pyle

Have you ever wondered how we know that a Swainson’s hawk travels up to 7,500 miles during migration? Or a Northern cardinal can live 15 years? The answer comes from their bird bands.

Bird banding can be traced back over 200 years, when people began to place identifiers or marks on birds. In the 18th century, John James Audubon would mark phoebes in his yard and realized some birds born one year would return the next. Today, this has evolved into more than 50 million banding records currently maintained by the US Geological Survey.

Bird banding is done by placing a uniquely numbered plastic or metal band on a bird. This is usually placed on their foot, but can be also placed other places, such as around the neck of a Trumpeter swan. Birds are aged and sexed. The number is recorded and the birds released. Should the bird be recaptured or have their band read by an observer, the band tells where the bird has been and when.

-A Herring Gull banded in New Jersey in 1933 was recovered dead in South Africa in 1969.

-A female Jaeger was removed from her nest in England and taken to New York city and released. She was back on the nest in 52 hours.

-A female Pintail was banded near New Orleans and recovered six years later in China.

-A female Rose-breasted grosbeak was banded on June 6, 1981 and was recovered on October 22, 1982 in Guatemala.

Last fall, Craig Hensley, lead education specialist at Schlagle Environmental Library, Wyandotte County Lake Park, returned to the Kansas City area and brought with him an active bird banding program. While he enjoys the scientific/data gathering aspects of bird banding, Craig will tell you he does it to see the joy in the faces of children and adults as they assist in the release of the bird.



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Have Binoculars, Will Travel!

Once again, we were treated to a very nice spring migration season here in the Kansas City area. Our spring hike to Weston Bend S.P. and Martha Lafite gave us great looks at many great warblers and various spring migrants, while Squaw Creek's shorebird habitat was spectacular. Given the flood situation, we can only hope that it can recover up there in time for this fall's migration and eagle season. Our more distant trips are always fun. This past April, we ventured to the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas. We tallied 199 species, including most of the area specialties, like Great Kiskadee, Green Jay, Buff-bellied Hummingbird and Red-billed Pigeon.

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

Thursday Morning Bird Hikes

While Fall migration is less dependable than Spring, it is still a great time to get and see birds. (Most) Thursday mornings during September and October, Ruth, John or I 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.

Sept 8 th	Parkville Nature Sanc.	8:00 - 9:30
Sept 15 th	Smithville Lake	8:00 - 10:30
Sept 22 th	Weston Bend S. P.	8:00 - 10:30
Sept 29 th	Amity Woods N.P.	8:00 - 10:30
Oct 6 th	No Hike This Date - Sorry	
Oct 13 th	Martha Lafite N.S.	8:00 - 9:30
Oct 20 st	Green Hills of Platte	8:00 - 9:30
Oct 27 th	Wyandotte Co. Lake	8:00 - 9:30

In Store Classes

Attracting the Greatest Variety of Birds

Wednesday, Sept. 29th 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.
Nothing gets backyard bird feeding people more excited than being able to add a new species to their yard list. We will try to help you do just that. While we will cover the basics of bird feeding, we will also cover some of the less known tricks that may help as well.

SE Texas Revisited Wednesday, Oct. 19th 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

If you have been to the Lower Rio Grande River Valley in Texas, you probably know that it is one of the premier birding spots in North America. Join us as we revisit the valley with photos and stories from this April's McBirder Adventure.



Buff-bellied Hummingbirds are a south Texas specialty. Photo by Mary Nemecek



Not your city variety of pigeon! This is a Red-billed Pigeon, which is native to Mexico. While you can find them along the Rio Grande River, you generally only get glimpses of flying birds. We really got lucky this April! photo courtesy of Mary Nemecek

Fall Feeder Cleaning

Saturday, Oct. 1st 9:00a.m. to 4:00p.m.

Squaw Creek National Wildlife Refuge

Sunday, Sept. 11th 8:00 a.m. to 2 p.m.

This trip completely depends on the recovery of the refuge after the water's retreat. It could leave great shorebird and waterfowl habitat or it may take a couple of years to recover. Make sure you register so we can call the week or so before to let you know if this trip will still go. **Meet at the store at 7:00 or the refuge at 9:00. Cost \$5 per person.**



Sandhill Crane photo courtesy of Paul Ruehle

KCP&L Prairie Wetland

**Sunday, September 18th
8:00 a.m. to noon**

Fall migration will be well underway and we should see plenty. We will bird the wetland site first and possibly make a stop at Shawnee Mission Lake on our way back north. **Meet at the store at 7:15 or the main parking lot at 8. Cost \$3 per person.**

Smithville Lake

Sunday, October 23rd 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. This time of year has yielded Jaegers, Kittiwakes, Snow Buntings and other great birds.

Meet at the Litton Center at 1:00. Cost \$3 per person.



Species Profile: Mourning Dove (*Zenaida macroura*)

Article and photo by Mary Nemecek

If you think about the sounds of summer- lawn mowers, children playing in the street, Cicadas- you have to include the gentle, haunting coo-OO-oo of the Mourning Dove. Whether outside your window in the early dawn or from the overhead lines as you sit at a stoplight, it's a common song wafting through the summer air.

What you may not know is that the Mourning Dove is the most abundant and widespread native land bird in the United States. Estimates put the species at 350 million or greater. It ranks just behind Red-winged Blackbirds on breeding surveys.

Their prolific numbers can be attributed to their adaptability. Mourning Doves only shun deep forests for habitat and can nest on the ground, in trees or on

ledges. We often get calls about them nesting in gutters or on roofs of homes. Typical clutch size is 2 and they can nest every 30 days. Both parents participate in feeding the young and are one of the few species that do not feed their young insects. As members of the pigeon family, the adults regurgitate a "milk" from partially digested seed.



Chances are, if you have bird feeders, you have Mourning Doves visiting your yard. They love millet and safflower and may sit on a tray feeder or eat off the ground under your feeders. Another interesting fact is they can store seeds in their crop, an enlarged area of the esophagus. They can then fly to a safe place to digest the meal. Mourning Doves will consume 12-20% of their body weight daily. This equals about 71 calories. In addition to the mournful song they bring to summer, it's such a joy to see the fledglings, with their fluffy feathers, coming to the feeders.

CONSERVATION CORNER: American Bird Conservancy



If you have ever asked me about bird conservation groups, you will have certainly heard me sing the praises of the American Bird Conservancy (www.abc.org). It has been several years since I featured them in this corner, so I thought I would catch you up on what they have been up to.

Founded in 1994, George Fenwick has been ABC's President and CEO from day 1. George had spent 15 years with The Nature Conservancy in various capacities, including their Director of Science. George told me, at our first meeting in 1998, that his goal with this small upstart conservation group was to make the greatest impact with the smallest staff (least bureaucracy) as possible.

Their successes have been numerous. For a lot more information than I can write here, visit their website, www.abc.org. From their earliest programs, like Cats Indoors (a pro-cat educational program that helps birds and cats) to some of their more recent land acquisitions, protecting habitat here and around the world, I think you will be impressed.

One of their lists that they place a great deal of their energy and dollars into is the U. S. Watchlist of Birds of Conservation Concern. Take a few minutes to glance through this list. You may be surprised by some of the birds on the list.

Like everyone featured in this column, ABC is a private, nonprofit that counts on donations to support all that they do. Please consider sending something to help them out.



Beautiful songbirds such as this Golden-winged Warbler are on the RED list of Birds of Conservation Concern. They are targets for protection by ABC. photo by Steve Dillinger



Time To Ask Mark...

Q. Does a hummingbird feeder have to be red to attract them?

A. Definitely not. While red is the classic color for attracting them, I have seen hummers feeding on practically every color there is. In early spring, they love buckeyes, which are yellow. I recently planted some May Night Salvia (purple) and had a male feeding on them within 10 minutes of getting them in the ground. All color hummingbird feeders are great.



Colorful feeders, like this one from Par-a-sol, attract hummers as well as other all red feeders.

Q. Does hummingbird nectar need to be red?

A. Some are convinced that if they do not put the red food coloring in their feeders, they will lose their hummingbirds. The truth is, hummers don't know the color of the nectar. They key in on the feeder. More specifically, they key in on the "flower" openings, stick the tip of their bill in and lap the nectar like a dog. They don't look into the holes to check the color. Clear nectar is fine.

Q. When will the grackle be leaving?

A. People who are overrun by grackle can't wait till they leave. Typically, they leave the feeders in August and move out into the farm country. They will head to the southern states in September/October. Until then, use Safflower, Nyjer and cage feeders to keep them in check.

Q. How do I keep the mosquitos from laying eggs in my water feature?

A. The keys to keeping mosquitos from using your water features as a breeding ground is moving water. Our best selling device is the Water Wiggler. It is very simple and works great in most bird baths. Two D cell batteries make two "aggitators" run for weeks. The water surface constantly ripples so mosquito eggs will fall to the bottom of the bird bath

Q. Is it true that feeding the raccoon and deer is a bad idea?

A. It is definitely true. The Missouri Department of Conservation recommends that you do not intentionally feed critters such as raccoon and deer. There are many reasons but the picture here should illustrate the point well. One little masked bandit is cute but 17 are nothing but trouble. What do they do when the free food runs out? Trash cans, dog bowls, grill covers, anything that smell remotely like food is fair game. On top of all that, don't forget that raccoons can carry rabies and distemper. Raccoon baffles from ERVA are super effective at keeping these rascals from climbing your feeder poles.



How many can you count? Feed one, feed them all. Don't let this become your backyard. Photo by Linda Mydock.

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August is a great time to see adult goldfinches bringing in their young ones for a free meal. Photo by Mary Nemecek

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Barred Owls will maintain a year
round territory of up to 75 acres?
Photo courtesy of Rick Jordahl*



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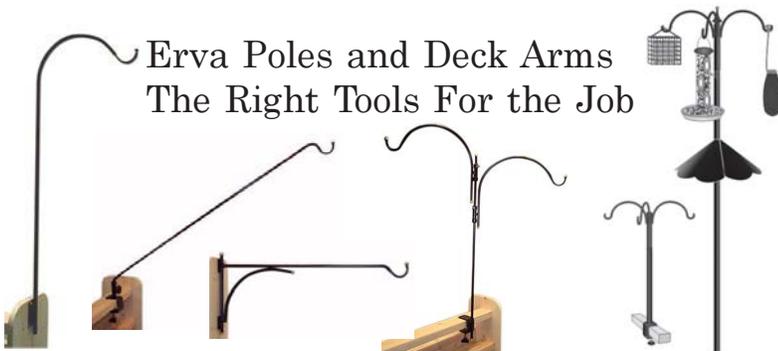
Want to add some motion to your backyard? Liven up the garden? The whimsy spinners and balancers from Blue Handworks are really cool. The balancers come with a ground stake and a hanging kit so they are versatile as well.



Mention this ad and take 20% any Blue Handworks Spinner or Balancer through September or while supplies last.



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Important Dates

Late July - Orioles begin to leave
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.