



BACKYARD BIRD CENTER NEWS

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

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Customer Appreciation Day *Sunday* *December 3rd* *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 3rd, everything in the store except 50lb bags of bird seed 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.



*Extended Holiday Hours
During December
Thursdays 9:30 - 7:00
Sundays 1:00 - 5:00
December 24th close at 5:00
Closed 25th & 31st*

The Comeback Kids

by Mark McKellar

Far too often we hear only of the negatives and perils that our natural world faces. This article is dedicated to some of the great success stories in conservation and will hopefully make you feel good about the support you have given to conservation groups.

The American Bald Eagle (see page 4) has to be the poster child for bird conservation success in our country but there are many others that may surprise you. For those who call about the massive amounts of goose droppings left by Canada Geese, it may be hard to imagine that these birds were once an endangered species. So were Wild Turkeys, Wood Ducks and Brown Pelicans. Eastern Bluebirds were never officially considered endangered species but their populations did dip precariously low.

How did these birds make such wonderful recoveries? It took the work of many concerned people and groups. The first step came in the form of legal protection. The Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 was the first comprehensive law designed to protect birds from large-scale illegal hunting and trade, but it wasn't until the Endangered Species Act of 1973 passed that conservation was given the legal tool they needed to protect threatened birds.

As you can imagine, the private sector has played a critical part in bird conservation. The Audubon Society, The Nature Conservancy, Birdlife International and many other groups of concerned citizens have poured billions of dollars into the conservation of our natural resources. Since habitat loss is the number one issue facing most threatened species, it isn't surprising that a large part of helping wildlife has come in the form of buying and/or restoring critical parcels of land.

In many cases, it isn't enough just to protect a species from illegal killing and setting aside enough land for them to recover over time. Other species require much greater effort. Birds like the Whooping Crane and California Condors are extreme examples of birds that have required captive breeding programs to save them. Eastern Bluebirds have greatly benefited from construction and monitoring of artificial nesting structures.

How can we continue the positives? One of the best places is in your own backyard. Birds such as the Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Northern Cardinal and Northern Mockingbird are more numerous today than they have ever been in this country. Much of their success is linked to bird feeding, urban landscaping and legal protection. A fun way to help even further is to participate in Project Feeder Watch. See the back page for details on this fun and educational program to help the birds.



FINE FEATHERED KNOWLEDGE

by Mark McKellar

Winter can be a time when we don't get out nearly as much as we would like. We can use this time to build our knowledge of birds and birding. As I always tell my kids, reading is knowledge. Here are a few of my favorite sources for increasing your bird knowledge.

1) *The Sibley Guide to Bird Life & Behavior* by David Allen Sibley. An absolutely fantastic source of detailed information about birds.

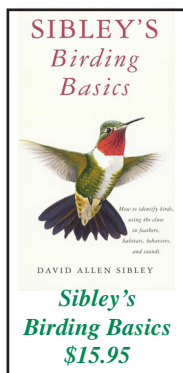
2) *The Birder's Handbook*. by Paul Ehrlich et. al. My favorite source for quick information about birds. It is filled with great essays as well.

3) *Birding Basics* by David Allen Sibley. Do you want to know what this birding hobby is all about? This is your book.

4) *Kingbird Highway* by Kenn Kaufman. A sixteen year old's quest to set a big year record. You'll gain a true appreciation for dedicated birders and the birding community.

5) *The Grail Bird* by Tim Gallagher. If the Ivory-billed Woodpecker interests you at all, this is a must read.

The number of books to choose from are really quite extensive, these just happen to be a few of my favorites. The next cold, icy day that keeps you from going out, grab a book and expand your bird knowledge.



Customer Photo Gallery

A new feature for the the newsletter and website is a customer photo gallery. Customers have been bringing photos for the past several years and many of them have been featured here in the newsletter. Finally, the suggestion was made to create a gallery for all of our customers to enjoy.

We welcome all photos. Here a few "categories" that have been suggested:

- 1) Favorite Birds
- 2) Favorite Bird Feeder in action
- 3) Backyard Feeder Station
- 4) Comic Shots (birds doing funny things)
- 5) Other Animals at you feeders
- 6) Uncommon Birds
- 7) Yes, even squirrels and other visitors

Feel free to submit any shots. We can scan a photo into our computers but if you can e-mail them in jpeg form that is by far the quickest and easiest way for us to deal with them. Please include your name and contact information as well as the time, date and place the photo was taken. If you want to include the type of camera and lens that is welcome as well.



This young Barred Owl was photographed by Liberty resident Linda Williams while on a BYBC field trip to the Martha Lafite Thompson Nature Sanctuary in Liberty on April 22, 2006.

IT'S TIME TO START THINKING ABOUT UNFROZEN WATER



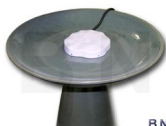
The Heated BAIH from Erva attaches easily to your deck railing. Clamp On Mount \$56.99 Screw On Mount \$54.99 Ground Level \$54.99

**Mention this ad for 10% off any
❖ Heated Birdbath or ❖
Birdbath De-Icer in Stock.**

(Expires December 15, 2006)



The Farm Innovator P-418 Floating Pond De-Icer works for larger water features. \$48.99



The HR-75 from Farm Innovators looks like a rock and fits in almost any birdbath. \$49.99



The Heated Kozy Bird Spa is made of tough impact plastic. It cleans up easily and has a 3 year warranty. Deck Mount \$89.99 With Pedestal \$124.99 Pedestal only \$39.99





Have Binos, Will Travel!

After the scorching hot dog days of summer, September and early October provided some surprisingly good bird outings. Both Smithville Lake and Weston Bend State Park shared nice early winter foraging flocks with both kinglets, Blue-headed Vireos, lots of woodpeckers and nuthatches. Perhaps most entertaining was a young male Sharp-shinned Hawk at Weston Bend that chased birds all morning, quite often in plain site. The Blue Jays were not amused. An Osprey and several Cedar Waxwings added to everyone's enjoyment at Smithville Lake.



*Classic Smithville Lake Birding
Photo by Ruth Simmons*

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

Smithville Lake Waterbird Watching

Sunday, November 12th 8:00a.m. – noon

Truly one of my must do trips each year. Though dependent on weather patterns, the lake can be loaded with birds this time of year. We will search out the many ducks and geese for loons, grebes and other waterfowl. Don't worry about the long distance viewing, we will have plenty of spotting scopes for everyone to get "close up" views of distant birds.

Meet us at the store at 7:30 or at the Litton Center at 8:00.

Identifying Birds In Your Backyard (in store class)

Tuesday, November 14th 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.

Parkville Nature Sanctuary's Autumn Birds

Thursday, November 16th 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

Join us for a beautiful autumn hike. We will search for winter arrivals and resident birds that should be forming their winter forage flocks. This will be a great hike for beginning bird watchers. Meet us at the store for a 9:00 a.m. departure or at the Sanctuary parking lot at 9:15.

Eagles of Squaw Creek NWR

Sunday, November 26th 7:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

I always say, "why sit around eating leftover turkey when you can soar with the eagles." This day is sure to be filled with beautiful sights. Some years we see hundreds of eagles and thousands of ducks and geese. Dress warmly and bring a snack.

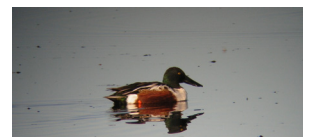
Meet at the store at 7:30 or the Visitor Center at 9.

Wyandotte County Lake

Sunday, December 10th 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

We will search the lake for arriving winter ducks and other waterfowl as well as the brushy areas for sparrows and their friends. This could be a cold day, dress for conditions.

Meet at the store at 8:30 a.m.



*Northern Shovelers are commonly seen on area lakes during the fall.
Photo by Ron Berry*

Managing Your Lifelist

(in store class)

Tuesday, January 23th 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Now that you've been bitten by the the birding bug and you list of birds is growing, you really should think about getting a little better organized. We will cover the basics of keeping a life list, the dos and don'ts, and even a few advanced techniques. Feel free to bring in your list and questions and we'll get you on your way.

MORE CHOICES IN SPOTTING SCOPES THAN EVER

Spotting Scopes are essential for viewing birds at a distance. Hawks, eagles, waterfowl and shorebirds are much more enjoyable when you can zoom up the magnification. Not to mention you can do fun things like see the rings of Saturn this winter.



*Nikon Waterproof
Prostaff 16-48X65mm
\$499.99*

*Pentax PF-65ED-A
20-60X65mm
\$799.99*



*Nikon Fieldscope
25-75X82mm
\$1,399.99*





SPECIES PROFILE: Bald Eagle

by Ruth Simmons

On March 11, 1967, the Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) was placed on the endangered species list in the lower 48 states. Their habitat was being destroyed and they were also shot, trapped, or poisoned. Perhaps most damaging was the effects of the widespread use of the pesticide DDT. Many birds, including eagles could not produce eggs, or if there were eggs, the shells were very thin and the weight of the parent would cause the shell to break. Today the future is much brighter for the Bald Eagle. It has been taken off the endangered list for all but three of the lower 48 states.

Adult Bald eagles are easy to recognize with their pure white head, neck, and tail and big yellow hooked bill. Did you know that the word bald comes from an old English word for white? Males and females look alike, but the females are larger! Males are about 8-9 lbs and the females are 10-14lbs. Both are about three foot tall with a seven foot wingspan. Pairs use the same nest year after



Adult American Bald Eagle

year, adding to the nest annually. After 34 years of use, one nest weighed in at two tons! Bald eagles most commonly lay two eggs which hatch at 30 – 45 days. The young fledge between 70 – 98 days, and the parents continue to feed them for several months. An immature Bald Eagle is very different from its parents in appearance. It is dark brown with varying patches of white on its back, wings and belly. Its bill is also dark brown. The familiar white head and tail and bright yellow bill show up with sexual maturity at age 4 or 5.

Bald Eagles have become a fairly common site in winter along the Missouri River and area lakes. You're welcome to join us on our annual trip to see eagles (page 3) or both Squaw Creek NWR and Smithville Lake have Eagle Days celebrations each year. Squaw Creek's is the first weekend in December and Smithville Lake's is January 13 – 14, 2007. This is the season to get up close and personal views of our national symbol.

CONSERVATION CORNER:

Missouri Bluebird Society

The Missouri Bluebird Society (MOBS) was founded March 12, 2006, in an effort to enhance the various endeavors, made by groups and individuals across the state, to increase the population of our Eastern bluebird and other native cavity-nesting songbirds.

The purpose of the organization is to attain pertinent information concerning bluebirds and native cavity-nesters, and provide this information to all interested parties across Missouri, encouraging them to provide proper housing and care for our bluebirds/songbirds. MOBS works in association with the North American Bluebird Society, publishes a statewide newsletter and has routine presentations on native songbirds. Their website is www.missouribluebird.org.

Some of our customers have become members, so you may see some familiar faces at the meetings.



Eastern Bluebird photo by customer Teresa Havens

SUET SEASON IS BACK

Suet is a great way to provide birds with a quick source of energy. Birds that favor suet are the woodpeckers, chickadees, titmice, nuthatches with many other species feeding on it from time to time as well. There are many formulas for suet cakes. Some contain seed, others fruit, while others have nuts. Premium suet cakes aren't filled with cheap filler seed. Instead they only use quality ingredients like beef fat, nuts and pieces of fruit.



C&S Seed Treat
\$0.79

Expires 2/1/07

Don't let Starlings spoil your suet feeding fun. Upside down suet feeders greatly reduce your loss to these pests.



One of the best cakes on the market, Woodpecker Treat from C&S only includes choice ingredients - \$2.29





Time To Ask Mark...

Q. Do we have any of those huge Pileated Woodpeckers in our area?

A. Yes. It is surprising to many to find out that we do have Pileated Woodpeckers in our area. The photo to the right was taken by one of our customers who lives in Parkville near Park University. Pileateds are in and around anywhere there are large enough tracks of timber. I have most often seen them in Swope Park, Burr Oak Wood in Blue Springs, Weston Bend State Park and scattered other site around town. Learn their song, it will help you find them.



Pileated Woodpeckers are uncommon residents of Kansas City's heavier wooded area.

Photo by Jeff Janney

Q. When will my birds be back?

A. This is a question I feel I need to answer annually. Each fall as nature's bounty ripens (berries, grass seeds, acorns, rag weed, etc.), birds and all wildlife are blessed with more food than they know what to do with. Bird feeders on the other hand, slow down to a crawl. There is nothing wrong, the birds haven't abandoned us, it only seems that way. When temperatures drop and we get a good frost, they will be back. Is your feeder station ready?

Q. I have the smallest bird I have ever seen eating on my suet. It seems to move around a lot, any idea what it is?

A. I think the bird in question is a Ruby-crowned Kinglet. They are tiny birds and I like to call them pinballs as they seem to be in constant motion. Kinglets are rather round in shape and khaki colored. Their bold eye ring and wing bars are obvious but their ruby-crown spot is only visible when they are agitated or "flirting."



Red-bellied Woodpecker on an Aspects' Peanut Silo (\$24.99) with a Tube Top (\$14.99)

Q. What is the best way to keep the seed in my feeders dry?

A. Some feeders are better at keeping seed dry but my favorite add on is a Tube Top from Aspects'. Now available in three sizes, the tube tops fit perfectly on any of Aspects' tube style feeders and will work on many other brands as well.

Q. Why do the starlings have white spots on them now?

A. Just as goldfinches aren't very "gold" right now, certain birds molt into a more winter friendly plumage to help ensure survival. Starlings have just molted into their "basic" plumage which features whitish feather tips that give the appearance of spots. When spring comes around the spots will be gone leaving the sleek, iridescent look that we are all familiar with. What you may find surprising is that starlings do not go through a molt in the spring, the whitish feather tips wear down over winter and eventually are worn away.

IDEAL HOLIDAY GIFTS FOR THE NATURE LOVER



3 Ft Snowman Statue, Feeder \$139.99



Incredibly accurate, hand-carved wooden statues from Humminbird Studios Cardinal - \$124.99



Give the gift of sun protection. Tilley hats are the only hats endorsed by the Mayo Clinic for skin cancer protection. Various styles ranging from \$55 - \$72 They are guaranteed for life not to wear out.

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Mention this add for **1/2 off any Copper Color Tube Feeder** from Aspects'.
This includes Finch and Multi-seed Feeders **while supplies last.**



THE ULTIMATE FIELD GUIDE IS NOW IN STOCK!

National Geographic's Handheld Birds is the first truly **Mobile Interactive Field Guide**. This software package for your PDA is based on the most current issue of the National Geographic Field Guide to Birds of North America with **867 birds**. Also included are over **4 hours** of premium-quality bird songs from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, a **sophisticated search criteria** (region, habitat, month, size, color) and the ability to **record and retrieve your sighting**. Come in and try it out, it really is impressive.



PROJECT FEEDER WATCH

Join us for the 20th season of Project FeederWatch. Thousands of Citizen Scientists across the U.S. and Canada put out their feeders, count the birds in their yards, and then turn over the data to Cornell scientists each year. You need to be able to count for at least 15 minutes, two consecutive days, and twice a month. 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.



*A Brown Creeper and Downy
Woodpecker eating peanut butter
and cornmeal.*

Photo by Steve Dillinger