



# BACKYARD BIRD CENTER NEWS

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

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[www.backyardbirdcenterkc.com](http://www.backyardbirdcenterkc.com)

## March 8th, 2014 Anniversary Sale

On the morning of March 1st 2002, I turned the key on the front door as the owner of the Backyard Bird Center for the first time. On Saturday March 8th we celebrate our 12th Anniversary with savings throughout the store.

Like past celebrations, you can expect there to be cool door prizes, snacks and some great deals. Everything in the store (except bird seed bags 40lbs and larger) will be 15% OFF. My friend from Wild Delight will be here with extra special coupon for bags of his choice and we will have a pallet of Nut & Berry Pails at a super good deal.



## What's Your Style?

by Mark McKellar

One of the things I love about watching birds is the different flight styles of the many different species of birds. If you watch, study and learn, flight styles can assist you greatly in identifying birds. Even those that are a great distance away.

Let's travel out to the dam at Smithville Lake in our minds. There are loads of birds out there in late winter and it is often the slow, lazy soaring gulls that grab your attention. Note how they only flap their wings occasionally but often "teeter" side to side. Compare their flight to that of the ducks that are coming in and leaving constantly. Most ducks' wing beats are very stiff and very fast and they primarily fly in straight lines.

Now a very large dark bird catches your eye as it slowly glides high over the water. Is it a hawk or an eagle? Birds of prey are masters of using updrafts of wind to carry them along at a pace that requires very infrequent wing beats. Their large broad wings have large surface area to maximize lift. Note how it circles when it is gaining altitude and looses it when it flies in a straight.

Scattered out on the lake are

larger geese and various smaller waterfowl. One larger dark bird tries to take off but has to virtually run along the water flapping its wings for several yards before it can start to gain altitude. This is a classic take off pattern for loons and cormorants. In fact, loons have been known to get trapped on small bodies of water that don't provide a long enough "runway" for them to take off.

Just off the lake you notice a smaller bird hovering over some grass on one of the peninsulas. Hovering is a very "energy expensive" flight style and only a few of our birds do it well. Since this bird is over land, you can assume it is an American Kestrel. The same hovering done over the water by a similar sized bird is almost certainly a Belted Kingfisher.

Suddenly you notice the slowest moving bird you have ever seen crossing the lake. As it gets closer, you notice the crooked neck and long legs trailing behind. It can only be a Great Blue Heron.

Flight styles are all about the life and body shape of the bird and especially its wings. Birds with large heavy bodies generally need large surfaced wings to carry them any reasonable distance. Quail



*Ring-billed Gull in Flight*



... Style (continued from cover)

don't need large wings because they only fly short distances; swans on the other hand migrate hundreds of miles. Birds with smaller surfaced wings like a Barn Swallow rely on speed moving across their wing surface to keep them up in the air.

You can also study the birds of your back yard and pick out flight patterns. Woodpeckers can be spotted a long way off with their undulating flight. Chickadees look like they are swimming along dragging their tails from one perch to another. It is really a fun study to undertake. Give it a try and come by and let's talk birds.



Chickadee Box by  
Homestead Products



Easeter Bluebird Box  
by Mor-Bilt

### ***Nest Box Season is Here***

***We have the right box  
for the birds you are  
trying to attract.***

***Eastern Bluebird  
House Wren  
Carolina Wren  
Black-capped Chickadee  
Tufted Titmouse  
American Robin  
Eastern Screech Owl  
American Kestrel  
Wood Duck***



House Wrens in a Meadowbrooke  
Gourd by Mary Nemecek



Robin Nesting shelf  
photo by Theresa Havens



Eastern Screech Owl in  
Woodlink Box by Lisa Owens

**ITS TIME FOR A CHANGE.  
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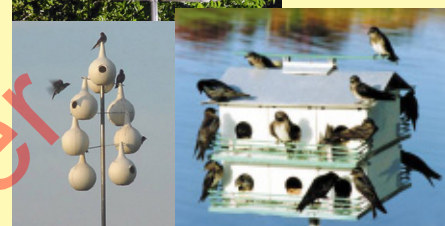
***Keep an eye for a relaunch of our  
website site.  
www.backyardbirdcenter.com has been  
in need of an overhaul for quite some  
time and it currently underway. We are  
having the site done in a system that  
is much easier for "us" noncomputer***

## **PURPLE MARTIN HEADQUARTERS**

I have always said I am my worst enemy when it comes to selling Purple Martin houses. At this store you are only going to get the truth about martins and what it takes to attract them and maintain a good healthy colony.



Since it all starts with a good quality box that is easy



to clean out, I am selective about the ones that I carry. The Nature House MSS-12 has been a standard in the industry for 50 years. They feature the **Lanyard Safety System** for raising and lowering the boxes with a rope and can be converted to nesting suites.

We now have **Add-A-Floors** for our best selling Coates boxes. Not only can you expand your boxes side to side, now you can go up, too.



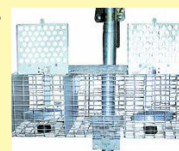
Snakes and raccoons are always a challenge. The **SB9 baffle** has light holes at the top of the baffle which fool the snakes into trying to climb the pole from inside the baffle.

Attracting martins for the first time can be frustrating. We have found that a couple of **decoys** can help. Dawn Song and Day-time Chatter CDs have been very helpful to many of our customers.



Don't let sparrows take over. We carry **sparrow traps** as well.

Martins are on the way. Are you ready?







## Have Binos, Will Travel!

You have probably heard me say “if conditions are good for the birds, they are usually bad for the bird watcher”. I feel that summed up this past fall and early winter birding season. The wet summer led to lots of natural food and for many of us, that meant a slow return to our bird feeder stations. In fact, many people reported really slow feeder activity until the extremely cold weather set in around Christmas. I have been using the word “boring” to describe my feeder station all winter. I think it is a pretty good reflection of the birding as a whole these past couple of months. I only hope we are repaid with a spectacular migration season this spring.



*As exciting as it has gotten at the McKellar feeders this winter photo by Morgan McKellar*

**The hikes and programs listed below are available to our store customers**

*(organized groups, can be arranged separately)*

**and fill on a first come first served basis.**

**PLEASE call the store for more information and to register (816) 746-1113**

### Thursday Morning Bird Hikes

Every spring we suggest that you to get out as much as possible during the migration period. This spring we are going to try to help you out with that charge. Every Thursday morning during April and May, 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.

|                        |                        |              |
|------------------------|------------------------|--------------|
| April 3 <sup>rd</sup>  | Wyandotte Co. Park     | 8:00 - 9:30  |
| April 10 <sup>th</sup> | Smithville Lake        | 8:00 - 10:30 |
| April 17 <sup>th</sup> | Parkville Nature Sanc. | 8:00 - 9:30  |
| April 24 <sup>th</sup> | No Hike this week      |              |
| May 1 <sup>st</sup>    | English Landing Park   | 8:00 - 9:30  |
| May 8 <sup>th</sup>    | Martha Lafite N.S.     | 8:00 - 10:30 |
| May 15 <sup>th</sup>   | Weston Bend S. P.      | 8:00 - 11:30 |
| May 22 <sup>nd</sup>   | Amity Woods N.P.       | 8:00 - 9:30  |
| May 29 <sup>th</sup>   | Parkville Nature Sanc. | 8:00 - 9:30  |

### In Store Classes

#### How Can We Help Save the Monarch?

**Wednesday, March 26th 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.**

Our friend Mary Nemecek has been actively tracking the decline of the Monarch butterfly population and working out ways we can help. Join us for this very enlightening program and learn how you can help in simple ways or get more involved in the effort to reverse this tragic decline.

#### Mark's Spring Migration Primer

**Wednesday, April 9th 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.**

One of our more popular classes each year is this chance to brush up on the upcoming migration season. Mark will take us through the who, what and wheres of our most exciting birding season. Warblers, vireos, tanagers and thrushes Oh My!!

### Weekend Bird Hikes

#### Wookcock Walk at Martha Lafite Nature Sanc.

**Saturday, March 15th 5:00 p.m. to 7:30**

One of the great mating rituals that occurs in our area each year belongs to the American Woodcock. These funny looking shorebirds that live in wet woodlands put on quite an areal display. Join us as we venture over to the Martha Lafite Thompson Nature Sanctuary to view this dance of the Timberdoodles. Cost is \$3 per person with all money going to Martha Lafite.

Meet at the store 3:00 or MLTNS @ 4:00 pm

#### Smithville Lake Spring Migration

**Sunday, March 30th 8:00 a.m. to noon**

Most of the time we talk about the fall and winter bird populations at Smithville Lake. What comes down from the north, must go back in the spring. March can be a terrific month for birding Smithville.

We will check out our favorite spots and build a good list for the day.

Meet at the Jerry Litton Center at 8 a.m.



*Birding is an excellent reason to get outside. Photo by Annette Talbot*

#### Wyandotte County Lake

**Sunday, April 13th 8:00 a.m. to noon**

If you read the article about this wonderful spot on page 4, you know many of the delights that can be found here. We will be at the lake at a great time of migration. We should see waterfowl, ospreys, eagles as well as early migrating warblers, thrushes and orioles.

Meet at the small dock below the Library



## SPECIES PROFILE: Brown Creeper

Story by Mark McKellar

One of the trickiest little birds to find in our woodlands each fall and winter has to be the Brown Creeper. Their small size, cryptic brown color and slow moving, tree-hugging lifestyle provide them with excellent concealment.

While they are hard to spot and even harder for most of us to hear (high-pitched and squeekie), once you do spot them, they are quite entertaining to watch. Their long, slender, down-curved bills are used to probe the nooks and crannies of many kinds of tree bark. What's so entertaining about that?

It isn't so much the what as it is the how. When you spot one of these guys "hitching" up the side of a tree, you first notice that he is going up the tree in corkscrew pattern. Around and around he goes. When he gets high up in the tree he quickly flies back toward the ground landing near the base

of a nearby tree and process starts all over again. During his climb he is constantly sticking his bill and tongue into crevices of the bark in hopes of finding an insect or larvae.

Brown creepers are North America's only representative from a group of 7 species worldwide known as Creepers. Though their habits and body structure are similar to woodpeckers they are not closely related to them.

Their legs are quite short but their nails are long, especially the back facing one. This helps the birds cling to trees as does their rigid tail feathers.

Their nest is larger stands of conifers or mixed conifer/hardwoods to our north and west and are pretty widespread in their distribution.

While they are primarily insectivores, I have seen them visit suet, especially when it is smeared directly to the bark of a tree.



Brown Creeper  
Photo by Paul Reuhle



**MARCH SPECIAL: \$1 OFF FILLED FINCH SOCKS !**



## CONSERVATION CORNER: Wyandotte Co. Lake

Wyandotte County Lake Park and Schlagle Environmental Library can be a nearby hotspot for wildlife and bird viewing. Nestled in the hills of Northern Wyandotte County, the park is 1,500 acres of Hickory, Oak and Sycamore timber. It also boasts a very deep 456 acre lake that was built in the 1930s by the Works Progress Administration.

The Mr. & Mrs. F. L. Schlagle Library is an environmental learning center operated by Kansas City Public Library. It is open year round and includes nature programs and other interactive learning events. You can always find a good sampling of what is prominent at their very active feeder station.

Wyandotte County Lake often has open water in the winter at times when other nearby lakes are frozen over and can host great numbers of diving ducks like goldeneye and mergansers. The trees that surround the lake are great for spotting Red-headed woodpeckers year round and during the spring, Eastern Bluebirds are prominently flying in and out of nest boxes just down the hill from the library. The Purple Martin boxes at the boat ramp host a nice colony. Prothonotary and Yellow Warblers nest around the lake during the summer. The Bald Eagle show is always fantastic during winter months.

Wildlife viewing includes deer, opossums, raccoons, and if you are lucky, foxes. Boating traffic can be busy on the weekends in the summer so plan your trip for during the week or to get out early.



Deep diving Common Golden-eye  
love Wyandotte County Lake



## Time To Ask Mark...

### Q. How do birds stand in freezing water and not get hurt?

A. It really is pretty simple. Adaptation. The veins and arteries in birds legs have evolved so that they are very close to each other. Since birds are warm-blooded like us, the warm blood being pumped from the heart is “warming” the cold blood coming up from the feet so the shock doesn’t kill the bird. Pretty amazing.

### Q. When do the blackbirds return to the area?

A. This is one of our signs of spring that we do not look forward to each year. In most years we start to see Brown-headed Cowbirds, Common Grackle and Red-winged Blackbirds showing up at feeders as early as late February. Last winter it was so cold and snowy during that time so they didn’t return in good numbers until late March. Many switch to Safflower in their open trays as the blackbird group really don’t like it. Caged feeders work extremely well against grackle for sunflower or peanuts.



Red-winged Blackbird photo  
courtesy of Paul Ruehle

### Q. Birds are singing like crazy already, when will they nest?

A. Some have started already. One of the benefits of “riding out” our tough winters is that you are in prime position to get the best nesting locations early. Resident birds will often have already raised their first brood by the time neotropical migrant make it back from their wintering grounds. Attempting to nest early doesn’t come without risk. Late winter or early spring cold fronts can really impact the much needed insects available to feed their young.

### Q. Spring rains can cause my seed to get “mushy”. Should I throw it out when this happens.

A. The short answer is Yes. Wet seed leads to mold and promotes bacteria growth. The exception to the rule is if the seed is in a feeder that provides good protection and rain is followed by good sunlight and wind, the seed can dry quickly and your fine. If it is an extended period of rain and grey, overcast conditions, the seed will need to be thrown out. Adding a good hood to feeders that have hullless seed is especially helpful.



The new weather guard from  
Brome fits the best selling  
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## ALWAYS LOOKING FOR A GOOD DEAL?

### FEEDERS FOR UNDER \$12

*What a great way to get started  
bird feeding. These feeders  
are surprisingly well built and  
have easy clean bases for an  
amazingly low price.*

#### **BirdsChoice**

4 Port Multiseed Feeder \$11.99  
8" Finch Feeder \$8.99  
8" Peanut Feeder \$8.99



“Keep close to Nature’s heart. . . and break clear away, once in awhile, and climb  
a mountain or spend a week in the woods. Wash your spirit clean.”  
John Muir

### New ZERO-WASTE FRUIT BLEND from Wild Delight

Formerly known as Total Cuisine, this new formula contains more fruit, but like its predecessor, absolutely no hulls. Just in time for the germination season,

During the month of March,  
20lb Bags of the new Zero-Waste will be  
\$7 OFF a 20lb Bag or  
\$2 OFF a 5lb Bag.





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## DID YOU KNOW?

The average return date for adult male Purple Martins to our area is March 10th? These birds are popularly known as the "Scouts". They are the older males who want to lay claim to the best nesting sites. They often pay the price by returning too early and risk starvation due to the lack of flying insects available to them due to late cold fronts.

*Purple Martin Photo by Mary Nemecek*



## A SPECIAL DEAL ON A SPECIAL FEEDER



I got a really good deal on a shipment of these Super Size 3 Tier NoNo Feeders. These feeders hold a huge amount of seed and are recommended for Black-oil Sunflower or a Sunflower/Safflower mix. There are unlimited feeding opportunities for birds as they can cling to the wire or use the tray or center perch. Great to combine with an Aspects Super Dome Hood.

While Supplies Last: Normally ~~\$45.99~~ Sale Price \$29.99



*Heartwood Bluebird Manor  
photo by Jim Braddock*

## UPCOMING IMPORTANT BIRD DATES

- Late February - Place and clean out bluebird boxes
- March 10th - Average Arrival Date For Adult Male Martins (females and young males will filter in through April)
- April 1st - Clean out wrens, chickadees, titmouse nest boxes
- April 5th - Hang Hummingbird Feeders (with small amount of nectar)
- April 15th - Place Oriole Feeders
- Late April - Male House Wrens arrive and set up territories
- 2nd Week of May - Peek Migration for Warblers, etc.