



BACKYARD BIRD CENTER News

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Ask Mark 5

www.backyardbirdcenter.com

March 5th, 2016 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 5th we celebrate our 14th 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. The extra special Wild Delight Deal of the Day will be \$10 OFF a 20lb bag of Fruit & Berry. 15 oz. Filled Finch Socks will be Buy One, Get One Free. All Specials are limited to quantities on hand so get here early.

This year we will have live animals in the store as the fine folks from the Martha Lafite Thompson Nature Sanctuary will be on hand with some of their education animals!

America's Yard Bird

by Mark McKellar

Few birds are as recognizable in our country as the American Robin. For many, it is the proverbial "yard bird". What image comes to your mind when you hear the term Robin Redbreast? Most will see a medium sized songbird scurrying across their front lawn in a quick burst then pausing, tilting its head and suddenly plunging its banana yellow bill into the dirt and bring out a squirming worm.

Robins are members of the thrush family and their "cheeri-lee, cheeri-lo" song is recognizable by almost anyone who has taken the time to enjoy the sounds of nature.

There are many misconceptions about our robin. Many still consider them to be the first sign of spring, while most dedicated to the hobby of bird watching know that we have at least some robins that over winter in our area every year. In years with lots of soft mass (berries) the number of robins that winter here can be truly impressive.

Perhaps the reason for their perceived absence each winter is their transition from our open yards to more wooded areas. The forest

floor can appear to be "boiling" with robins as a large flock rummages around under the leaf litter in search of wintering worms and insects.

Robins are bold nesters. Often choosing to build their famous mud and grass cup nest on shelves of all sorts. Window sills are a favorite choice as is about any flat surface under a porch or gazebo or swing set.

Don't be surprised if you find multiple, partially finished nests in the same area. It is one theory that they misplace their nest and start new ones from time to time.

As open and public as these birds are with their nests, they are also well known for finding their fledglings on the ground before they are able to fly. The young ones typically get too large for the nest to contain them and end up on the ground a day or two before they can fly. The adults continue to feed them and try to defend them against predators. If you find a young robin on the ground this spring, you should do what you can to protect it from dogs and cats. Picking up the fledgling and placing it on a low limb or bush can work. Don't worry, mom and dad will con-



American Robin Photo by Jeff Janney

...Continued on Page 2 Yard Bird

**LIVE TURTLES, SNAKES AND SALAMANDER
SATURDAY MARCH 7TH FROM 11AM TO 4PM**



... FROM PAGE 1, YARD BIRD

tinue to attend to it. If predators are not a threat, let the mom and dad do their job and finish raising their young one.

To attract or help robins during the fall and winter, your best bet is good landscaping with native shrubs that produce lots of berries. And for all year help, a source of clean unfrozen water is critical. American Robins love to bathe.

Heartwood Manufacturing

We are not shy about showing favorites around here. This is easy to do when the company is a small business that hand makes its products in a place like Star, Mississippi. Not only do their bird houses have the high quality you expect from products made in the the USA, they are constructed from cypress. I know that cypress is a wood that takes a very long time to grow but know that Heartwood does not have any trees cut for their products. They purchase all of their wood from the scraps produced from the furniture industry thus saving it from being wasted. When you add to the equation that the houses are unique in design, functional and look great (just look at the bluebird house to the right here) and you can see why we love Heartwood Mfg!!

A Nice Reward

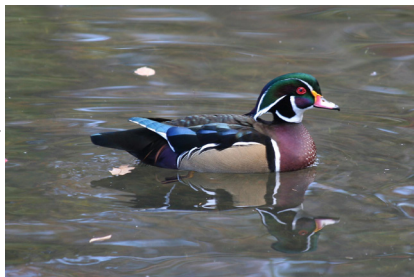
by Mark McKellar

Sometimes it pays to be someone who is obsessive about obeying the rules. Years ago I was headed to work really early to conduct a wild-life survey (I honestly cannot remember which one). It had to be 4:30 in the morning and an obscure stoplight in my hometown turned red just as I approached. Most people ran this light at this time of night as it really was only there for crossing school children.

Not me. I "obeyed the law" and stopped at the light. As I sat there something caught my eye in the front lawn of a house just across from the stop light. I assumed it was a cat or even an opossum but to my surprise I noticed it was a duck. It was a beautiful male Wood Duck walking around picking up acorns. As my eyes focused, I noticed another and another. There had to be at least a half dozen of these beautiful birds right there in the middle of town.

After the light turned green, I slowly rolled past the yard giving the birds one last look before heading on to work. I had to wonder how often this scenario plays out and how many people even are aware of this rainbow of color that may be gracing their yards.

So. If you are like me and you just can't run that obscure stoplight in the middle of nowhere, take a few seconds and give a quick look around you. You might be rewarded for being a law abiding citizen.



Male Wood Duck by Paul Ruehle

NESTING SEASON HAS ARRIVED

House Wren

1 inch hole
Males prefer to have multiple nesting options to show female



Eastern Bluebird

1 & 1/2 inch hole
Depending on placement, other species that may use them:

Tree Swallow
Black-capped Chickadee
Tufted Titmouse
White-breasted Nuthatch
Carolina Wren



American Robin

nesting shelf
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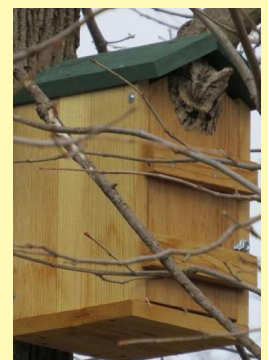
Eastern Phoebe
Barn Swallow



Eastern Screech-Owl

3 inch hole
best if placed in a wooded environment as high as you can safely mount it.

American Kestrel
3 inch hole
best place in a wide open environment



Wood Duck

3 X 4 inch hole
best if placed on a post in the flooded timber, but can also be attached to a tree or post up to a mile from water.



NEW BARRED OWL NEST BOX
SEE PAGE 6



Have Binos, Will Travel!

Coming into this winter there was a lot of talk about it being the strongest El Niño event on record. With that news, active birders got really excited. Strong and aberrant wind patterns come with the hope of strange and lost birds showing up in all parts of the country (including the Midwest). So far this winter has not been the rarity-fest we had hoped. There have been a few really good birds reported but the number overall has been disappointing. Feeder reports have been particularly disappointing. We will keep our eyes and ears open and hopefully the later part of winter will be better. If you are a fan of our store facebook page, we try to post nearby rare bird sightings as we get them.



*Ross's Goose Photo by
Mary Nemecek*

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.

March 31 st	Wyandotte Co. Park	8:00 - 9:30
April 7 th	Parkville Nature Sanc.	8:00 - 9:30
April 14 th	Burr Oak Woods	8:00 - 10:30
April 21 th	Smithville Lake	8:00 - 10:30
April 28 th	Cooley Lake C.A.	8:00 - 10:30
May 5 th	Martha Lafite N.S.	8:00 - 10:30
May 12 th	Weston Bend S. P.	8:00 - 11:30
May 19 st	Amity Woods N.P.	8:00 - 9:30
May 26 th	Parkville Nature Sanc.	8:00 - 9:30

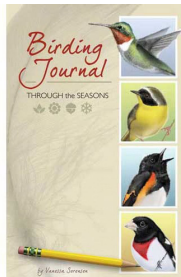
In Store Classes

Nature Journaling

Wednesday, March 23th

7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

I don't know anyone who has started keeping a nature journal who doesn't value it in the highest sense. We want to offer up some advice on how to get started keeping a nature journal. Being able to go back and track sightings from years past is very rewarding.



Secrets of Nesting Success

Wednesday, April 6th 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Nesting questions always abound this time of year. Come to this class with questions in hand and be ready to learn about some species you may not know you can attract!

Weekend Bird Hikes

Woodcock Walk at Martha Lafite Nature Sanc.

March ? You have to be flexible with Woodcocks.

Call MLTNS in Liberty for Date and Time

(816)781-8598

Spring on Smithville

Sunday, March 20th 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Lets hope Spring comes in like a lamb as we spend the afternoon searching for spring migrants on and around Smithville Lake. Depending on the advanced scouting results, we may check on an eagle's nest at the north end of the lake then swing by a spot that has held Short-eared Owls in the past.

Meet at the Jerry Litton Center at 1 p.m.

Wyandotte County Lake

Sunday, April 17th 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

Meet at the small dock below the Library

Mother's Day at Weston Bend

Sunday, May 8th 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

Meet at the front gate at 8.

Always check for more programs on our website:
www.backyardbirdcenter.com/calendar

Mark Your Calendars

3rd Annual Native Plant Sale Store Parking Lot

Saturday April 16th 9am - 5pm

Hoping to build on last year's success!!

Wings Over Weston Weston Bend State Park

Saturday May 14th 9am - 4pm

We will have a booth at this great event that is dedicated entirely to migrating birds and monarchs.



SPECIES PROFILE: Tufted Titmouse (Baeolophus bicolor)

Story by Ruth Simmons

Peter, Peter, Peter! ... Peter, Peter, Peter! When I hear this emphatic call I know that the Tufted Titmouse will soon be on the safflower, sunflower, or peanut feeder. Titmice are about the size of a House Sparrow, and are often thought to be baby cardinals, because of their crest. Primarily grey with a white belly and rusty flanks. A black eye ring makes their eyes look larger than most birds' eyes.

In Missouri, titmice are year round residents that favor oak dominant woodlands. They eat seeds and insects; they have been seen at jelly feeders as well. At feeder stations, they have a fondness for peanuts.

They nest across the state, but are more abundant in the southern half of the state as the northern border of Missouri is close to the limit of their breeding range. Cavities are lined with moss, bark, fur, leaves, and grass to form a nice, cozy nest. They will use a nest box with a 1 & 1/4 inch opening. Customers have shared pictures of titmice plucking fur from their sleeping dogs! Once the nest is finished, mom will sit on 5-7 eggs which are white to creamy white, with brown spots. Incubation is usually 13-14 days with the young fledging after 15-18 days.

This spring, brush your favorite pet and share the fur with your feathered friends. You may just get a Tufted Titmouse for a neighbor!



*Tufted Titmouse pulling fur from a Chow.
Photo by Mark Malone*



**MARCH/APRIL SPECIAL:
\$1 OFF PINK FINCH SOCKS!**



CONSERVATION CORNER: Kansas City Native Plant Initiative

by Mary Nemecek

A little over a year ago, The Westport Garden Club had a vision to pull together a group of Kansas City organizations to begin a conversation about increasing native plantings in our community. With the guidance of BNIM, one of Kansas City's premier companies, the group of organizations came together as the Kansas City Native Plant Initiative. Their goal was to grow access to native plantings and improve opportunities for citizens to interact with nature across the Greater Kansas City Metropolitan Area.

The need to increase native plantings and biodiversity is great. In the United States, we have planted roughly 62,500 square miles, approximately 40 million acres, in turf grass. What we have lost in that process are the native plants that bring wildlife, beauty and function to our yards and green spaces.

These native wildflowers not only attract butterflies like the monarch, but also store carbon, filter water keeping streams and lakes free of pollutants, absorb run off and decrease flooding, control erosion, purify air and bring beauty and a sense of place to our day. While the cost of maintaining a turf can run from \$60 per acre into the hundreds of dollars/acre, natives require less maintenance, less water and sustain more life.

In the year that has followed, members of the Kansas City Native Plant initiative have continued to meet, foster ideas and support each other in the increase of native plant habitat across KC. An early win came when members joined efforts and applied for a Monarch Habitat Grant. The grant was submitted by Burroughs Audubon and in September of 2015 the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation awarded the grant partners \$229,868.

The Kansas City Native Plant Initiative and its members are continuing to work on awareness, increasing habitat and influencing policy across the metro. While only a year old, this exciting and innovative organization is already impacting the landscape in the Greater Kansas City Area.





Time To Ask Mark...

Q. I had bluebirds at my birdbath this winter. Will they stay and nest?

A. We know from banding data that many of the bluebirds we have here in winter are actually northern birds who have moved down to more inhabitable areas. So the answer is not necessarily. The key to attracting nesting bluebirds is habitat and a well placed box. While bluebirds may seek food in wooded areas in winter, they prefer open areas with scattered trees for nesting. You may see them visit a nest box as early as mid February but they will not get serious about nesting in our area until the first week or so of April.

Q. We just moved to the area. We put up our old martin house and want to know when they return?

A. For folks who have established colonies, the adult males (scouts) start to arrive around the 10th of March. Now, since your box is new to this location, you will likely not have birds at your box that early so do not panic. Younger males and sub-adults will continue to arrive for several weeks. We installed a box on June 1st one year and had a martin nesting in is two days later.



Female Eastern Bluebird
photo courtesy of Pat White

Q. Is it possible to get Wood Ducks to nest in my yard?

A. It is possible but not very likely. Wood Ducks (see page 2) are beautiful birds that are tree cavity nesters. You would think you would have to have a body of water on your property to get them to nest. While a lake, stream or pond will increase your chances of getting them to nest, woodies are known to nest up to a mile from water. We carry Wood Duck boxes and can help you in choosing a spot to place it.

Q. Last spring I had a cardinal banging repeatedly into a window on my house. What can I do to discourage this behavior?

A. There really isn't anyway to predict if a bird (generally robins and cardinals) will do this. It is a matter of their being able to see their own reflection during the spring and summer (primarily). They are simply trying to run off a would be intruder in their nesting territory. The only way we have found to truly stop the behavior is by taking away the view of this perceived would be rival. Some people cover their windows temporarily with paper or spray snow, while others simply put up with the banging for a few weeks. If you are lucky, the sun angle changes enough to take away the "mirror" effect your window is providing for the bird.

RECYCLED FEEDERS LAST AND LAST

10% OFF ALL RECYCLED MATERIAL FEEDERS

I hate hearing doubters say that recycling is a waste of time and effort. That nothing really comes from it. These bird houses and feeders are the real proof that recycling does produce products we can use everyday. Keep recycling your milk jugs and pop bottles and save on these houses and feeders through the end of March.



"He knows he'd be a poorer man if he'd never seen an eagle fly"
- John Denver, Rocky Mountain High

Introducing - Sizzle N' Heat Blend
from Wild Delight

By the End of March, we should have an exciting new blend on our shelves. This premium blend of seed is treated with a potent oil from hot peppers. Birds can eat it with no ill effects but mammals absolutely hate it!

During the month of April, Sizzle N' Heat will be:
\$3 OFF a 14lb Bag or
\$1 OFF a 5lb Bag.



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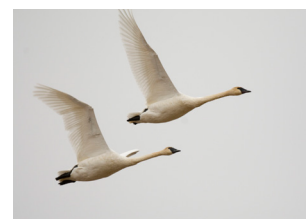
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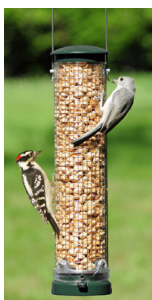
DID YOU KNOW? by Rick Jordahl

The largest wingspan of a regularly-occurring bird in North America is the Trumpeter Swan. California Condors have a similar wingspan but, unfortunately, we cannot count them as regularly-occurring anymore. The American White Pelican's wingspan comes in at 9 ft. Both of these large birds can be seen this time of years passing through. Squaw Creek National Wildlife Refuge just an hour or so to our north had over 500 Trumpeter Swans back in the fall.



*Trumpeter Swans in flight
by Mary Nemecek*

PEANUT FEEDER SEASON



My wife's favorite bird feeders have always been the peanut feeders. Not only are peanuts super high in oil and fat for birds, they are also easy to present in a way that makes the birds stay a little longer thus making them easier to see. Mesh peanut feeders keep the birds from grabbing a peanut and flying away quickly. They have to work to get the peanut out thus making the food and the viewing times last longer.

All Peanut Feeders are 15% OFF through April 1st - No Foolin!



*We now carry the Barred Owl
nest boxes made by Stovall Mfg.*

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 wren, chickadee, 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.