



BIRD'S-EYE VIEW

Volume 19 Issue 1 | January/February 2012

ALL SEASONS
WILD BIRD
STORE



In this issue...

Feature Article.....	1
Chirps.....	2
Know Your Backyard Birds	2-3
Seasonal Checklist	3
Customer Contributed Article...	4
Trish's Favorites.....	4
Q&A	4

Who's who?

Identifying Similar Birds
Attracting Brown Creepers

inside >

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Bird's-Eye View is published to share the joy of backyard birds with All Seasons Wild Bird Store's customers and friends.

FEATURE ARTICLE

Early Signs of Spring!



Cardinals begin to sing



Great Horned Owls nest



Horned Larks return

By Minnetonka Manager CAROL CHENAULT

Winter's silence is over

By January, even though the landscape is snow-covered, many birds begin their spring calls.

The Northern Cardinals' "what cheer, cheer, cheer" resounds. Black-capped Chickadees call "fee bee" back and forth to one another. Woodpeckers drum on everything from trees to metal flashing as they define the acreage of their territory. The White-breasted Nuthatches' nasal "whi, whi, whi," the Blue Jays' loud "pump-handle" call and the House Finches' spring songs add to the orchestra.

The hooting and shrieking of several types of owls resound in the early months of the New Year, as **the Great Horned Owl, the earliest bird to nest in Minnesota, begins incubating eggs.**

In mid-February the "cooing" song of the Mourning Dove begins, as does as the "wicker" call of the Red-bellied Woodpecker. In late February, listen for the gobble of the Wild tom Turkeys and the loud double-squawk courting call of the Ring-necked Pheasant.

Bird sounds ring clearly on a calm winter day and are easy to pinpoint through the bare branches of trees. Enjoy a walk to listen to our winter residents as they sing spring's pending arrival.

Other signs of spring

Patches of bright yellow begin to show on male goldfinches as they molt into their mating plumage. **Migration begins in early February with the arrival of the Horned Lark;** they're followed by the Red-winged Blackbirds in the last days of the month. ■

Happy New Year!

Celebrating Generosity

We at All Seasons Wild Bird Store have much to be grateful for as we start this new year, and much of that credit belongs to you, our terrific customers, who continue to enjoy the generous act of feeding birds.

A quote I recently read from a 9-year-old girl when asked about feeding her birds, states it perfectly: "It makes me



feel happy and generous." Is there a better way to pass the colder and darker days of winter than engaging in something that makes you feel happy and generous?

We don't think so.

As we reflect on 2011, one of the highlights for us was celebrating our 20th anniversary. That's a lot of years of happiness and generosity and we continue to have faith that it's the little things we do every day that make the biggest differences. Thanks for choosing us, we truly appreciate you and strive to give you our best in return.

~ Al and Dave Netten



Worry-Free Guarantee!

We want our customers to have a worry-free experience with every purchase.

If you're not completely satisfied with *any item* purchased from our store, simply return it to us for an exchange or refund. **No worries . . . ever.**



Join the conversation online!

Visit our Facebook page to post photos, ask questions and be the first to know about upcoming sales and events.

Who's Who At Your Feeders This Winter

By Wayzata Manager Melissa Block

Part of the joy in backyard birding is identifying and keeping track of the birds that come to your yard over the years. Equipped with a field guide, it's relatively easy to identify birds like Northern Cardinals, Blue Jays and Black-capped Chickadees based on their colors, sizes or shapes. Other birds, like nuthatches and woodpeckers, display characteristic behaviors that divulge their identities.

Far more tricky can be identifying all of the little brown birds that gather on the ground or at feeders. With similar colors, sizes, shapes, and behaviors, their defining characteristics are less apparent. Further complicating things is that many of these brown birds may be disguised with winter coloring or belong to irruptive species—temporary visitors that are forced into an irregular migration due to habitat changes. **Here's a guide to help you master who's who at your feeders this winter:**

YEAR-ROUND SPECIES

American Goldfinch

While goldfinches are here year-round, they can become difficult to spot in the winter, since males lose their bright yellow feathers and look very similar to females. Goldfinches' habits change during the winter, too: they form larger flocks, travel over larger areas and expand their diet beyond their summer favorite of Nyjer® to include sunflower chips, canary seed, millet and flax seeds.

House Finch

The House Finch lives here year-round, but like goldfinches they travel in nomadic flocks. One of several types of reddish-colored finches, adult males have a rosy red blush around the face and upper breast. Females do not have the rosy blush; they're a grayish brown with blurry streaks on their breasts. House finches will eat almost any birdseed.

IRRUPTIVE SPECIES

Some of our common visiting winter finches, such as Dark-Eyed Juncos, Common Redpolls, Pine Siskins and Crossbills migrate to our area depending on the success of crops they depend on for their food sources.

The 2011-12 Finch Forecast predicts fewer migrants this year, since most of the seed crops in outstate areas are excellent.

Dark-eyed Junco

Juncos are the "snowbirds" of the Upper Midwest. They migrate from northern to southern Minnesota in the winter. They prefer to feed on the ground in flocks.

Common Redpoll

Common Redpolls are small finches that typically travel in flocks. Redpolls have internal throat pouches that they fill with seeds, and then they fly to a more protected spot to swallow.

White-winged Crossbill

These rather uncommon finches are either reddish (males) or greenish-yellow (females) in color. They prefer the shelter of spruce and fir forests, but will also come to feeders.

Pine Siskin

Pine Siskins share many characteristics with other finches, making them especially difficult to identify! Tell them apart from the American Goldfinch by their streaked bodies. Distinguish them from House Finches by a smaller size, wingbars and pointier bill; and from Common Redpolls by a lack of red on the forehead.

YEAR-ROUND SPECIES



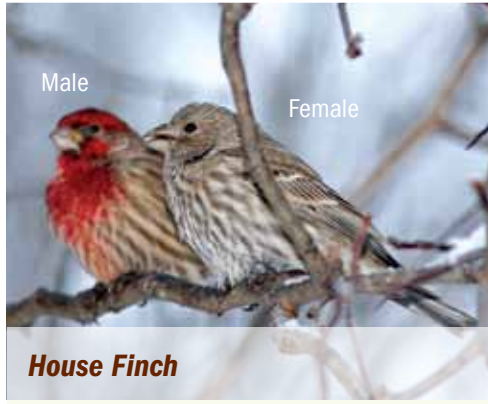
American Goldfinch

LOOK FOR:

- Small: 5"
- Dark, cone-shaped bill
- Wingbars

ATTRACT:

- Nyjer®, Fine Chips, and Finches' Choice mix
- Tube or tray feeder



House Finch

LOOK FOR:

- Small to medium: 5.75 to 6"
- Longer, square-tipped tail
- Dark streaks on sides and belly
- Red head and chest

ATTRACT:

- Finches' Choice and White Millet
- Ground feeder

IRRUPITIVE SPECIES



Dark-eyed Junco

LOOK FOR:

- Medium: 6 to 6.5"
- Pinkish bill
- Bright white belly with gray head, back and wings

ATTRACT:

- Finches' Choice and White Millet
- Ground feeder

IRRUPITIVE SPECIES



Common Redpoll

LOOK FOR:

- Small: 5.25"
- Bright red forehead and black chin; male has pinkish breast
- Smaller than a House Finch

ATTRACT:

- Nyjer®, Fine Chips, and Finches' Choice
- Finch feeders



White-winged Crossbill

LOOK FOR:

- Medium: 6.5"
- Thick, curved bill with crossed tips
- Two large white wingbars
- Short tail

ATTRACT:

- Most likely to come to finch or seed feeders—tube or hopper



Pine Siskin

LOOK FOR:

- Small: 5"
- Buff-colored wingbars
- Touch of yellow on the sides of their tails
- Heavily streaked bodies
- Noticeably small and pointy beak

ATTRACT:

- Nyjer®, Fine Chips, and Finches' Choice
- Tube or hopper feeders

JAN.
&
FEB.

SEASONAL CHECKLIST

Mid-Winter

By Minnetonka Manager CAROL CHENAULT

- Fill a window feeder with no-shell **Kracker Jax** or shelled sunflower (#1 **Select Chips**, **Medium Chips** or **Fine Chips**) for faster foraging, using less of the bird's energy.
- Scatter **Critter Crunch** for over-wintering Mourning Doves, Blue Jays, cardinals, pheasants and Wild Turkeys.
- Stock **Nyjer™** feeders for year-round and irruptive finches.
- Celebrate January 25th, statistically the coldest day of the year, by making sure your feeders are full, don't forget the suet!
- Try the new and improved **Berry Nutty** in a hopper feeder, tray feeder or **Vista Dome** style feeder.
- Buy Backyard Birds CD.**
- Identify winter birds with **Peterson's Field Guide to Birds of Eastern and Central North America.**

How to Attract Brown Creepers

Contributed by Minnetonka Customer Don Grussing, Author of *The Seasons of the Robin* and *How to Control House Sparrows*

Just like the migrating raptors that prefer to fly down the Minnesota shore of Lake Superior rather than venture above Lake Superior's water, the little Brown Creeper is very uncomfortable away from the trunks of trees.

In fact, I have never seen a Brown Creeper at a bird feeder mounted on a pole or hanging from a branch. That doesn't mean it can't happen. But I think it is rare.

Nevertheless, I like to see the little birds around—and you can, too. Simply feed suet

from a feeder mounted on the trunk of a tree where visiting Brown Creepers are most likely to approach it (other suet eaters can access it here, too).

Creepers live on tiny insects and insect eggs, and generally consume similar-sized morsels of suet. Sometimes they will climb from the foot of the tree up to the suet feeder to eat from the base or sides of the suet. (My feeder is about 5½ feet high and fastened to the trunk by fencing staples.) More often, though, they will just pick up the tiniest of scraps that have fallen to the ground or lodged in cracks and crevices in the bark as a result of the pecking on the suet by woodpeckers and other birds.

Brown Creepers are hard to see, and hard to hear (when you get older), but it is quite

satisfying to know that you can help these tiny birds survive Minnesota's extremes just by offering suet where they are comfortable consuming it.



Effective camouflage coloring can make Brown Creepers difficult to see.

TRISH'S FAVORITES

By Bloomington Assistant Manager TRISH WAGLE

Field Guide to Birds

Customers in Bloomington who need help identifying a bird will always see me turn to Roger Tory Peterson's *Peterson Field Guide to Birds of Eastern and Central North America*.

This guide has illustrations in which the field markings of the species are clearly marked with arrows. There is a "one page index" right inside the front cover that tells me where to look for a certain kind of bird, like a woodpecker or a finch. Then I can flip through that section to look for the species



that most resembles the mystery bird. Each bird family is color-coded and the introductory information provides the beginner with an easy-to-understand illustrated guide to identifying birds.

Berry Nutty

Our **Berry Nutty** seed blend is *new and improved!* During the cold winter months the birds will appreciate our blend of black-oil sunflower seeds, sunflower chips, peanuts, mixed nuts, pumpkin seeds and a medley of dried fruit. The dried fruit and nuts provide extra energy to keep warm. You'll also enjoy the lovely sweet aroma of this colorful mix when you fill your feeder.



Q) HOW DO BIRDS STAY WARM?

A) THROUGH A TRIO OF ADAPTATIONS:

Anatomical adaptations. Birds' legs and feet are covered with special scales that minimize heat loss. Also, in the fall, birds grow extra feathers for insulation and their bodies build up fat reserves for extra energy.

Physiological adaptations. Birds can control the temperature of their legs and feet separately from their bodies by constricting blood flow to their extremities. They can also lower their metabolic rate—a condition called "torpor"—to shift energy to maintaining body temperature.

Behavioral adaptations. Birds fluff out their feathers to create air pockets for additional insulation and shiver to raise their metabolic rate and generate more body heat. Some of the small birds gather in large flocks at night and crowd together in a small tight space to share body heat.

Have an idea for a future issue of *Birds-Eye View*? Photos and articles may be submitted by email to info@wildbirdstore.net. Sign up for our weekly e-newsletter at WildBirdStore.com to receive information about backyard birding, store events and exclusive discounts.