



BIRD'S-EYE VIEW

Volume 21 Issue 5 | September/October 2014

**ALL SEASONS
WILD BIRD
STORE**

The Nuthatch:

Bird, Inverted!

+ What Makes Us Experts?
Early Autumn Seasonal Checklist



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Bloomington, MN 55420
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(Cedar Cliff Shopping Center)
Eagan, MN 55122
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Minnetonka, MN 55345
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WHITE BEAR LAKE
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(Cty. Rd. E. and Hwy. 120)
White Bear Lake, MN 55110
651.653.8705

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WILDBIRDSTORE.COM

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

SEASONAL TIPS

Prep for Fall Visitors

By Wayzata Manager MELISSA BLOCK

Are you prepared for influx of feathered guests to your backyard in the coming months? Now is the perfect time to clean your birdhouses and feeders in anticipation of the great Minnesota birding get-together known as Fall Migration.

A clean feeder not only looks good, it prevents the spread of disease among backyard visitors—and entire bird populations, for that matter. A dirty bird feeder can harbor bacteria and mold. Given the choice, wild birds much prefer clean, fresh seed to moldy seed.

Hosting the Perfect Dinner Party

Soon you'll be the host of a great feast because migration season is well-nigh. Before dinner guests arrive you want to have clean dishes, right? Of course! Clean all feeders inside and out, including the trays, perches, feeding ports and lids. There are several cleaning solutions suitable for feeders. For heavy-duty sanitization, use 1 part bleach to 9 parts hot water. Commercial bird feeder cleaning solutions are also available. I prefer to use unscented dish detergent to clean my feeders, as it gets the job done just fine. Using white vinegar is also a good alternative to harsh products like

bleach. No matter what you use, make sure to rinse thoroughly for at least 10 seconds. There should be no lingering slime, grime or bad smells.

Now, to reach all the tight corners and small ports, use a good scrubbing tool. For tube feeders it helps to have a long-handled brush with stiff bristles. An old toothbrush is good for cleaning small parts and tight corners. A good scrub brush with stiff bristles helps in cleaning hopper feeders. Most hopper feeders have one removable Plexiglas side for easier cleaning. Be sure to clean out the feeding tray.

Allow the feeder to completely dry. Any lingering moisture can lead to mold and mildew. Once dry, refill the feeder with quality, fresh seed.



▲ Fall is a good time to wash feeders!

(continued on page 4)

Your Local Backyard Birding Experts.

In a recent All Seasons Wild Bird Store meeting we were discussing our tagline—“Your Local Backyard Birding Experts”—as part of a quick review of our brand. We wanted to make sure we weren't going astray from our identity and to see if there was anything that needed updating. We examined our tagline: are we really experts? After some discussion, it became clear to me there's no question that we are experts when it comes to backyard birding. Our staff has more credentials and education than I'm sure any other bird store in the country, including:

- Completed courses from: **Cornell Lab of Ornithology** (Bird Biology and Courtship and Rivalry in Birds), **University of Minnesota** (Biology, Raptors, Trees, Bogs & Marshes, Deer, Moose & Bear, Wildflowers, MN Dogs), **University of Wisconsin** (Environmental Studies degree program), **U of MN Extension Service** (Master Gardener).
- Volunteer experience with: Wildlife Rehabilitation Center, Raptor Center, Como Zoo, Eastman Nature Center
- Average of 20 years backyard bird-feeding experience
- Yards designated as Certified Wildlife Habitats

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.



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

SEPT.
&
OCT.

Early Autumn

By Minnetonka Manager CAROL CHENAULT

- Keep hummingbird feeders up until you don't see any hummers for a week, or until the nectar freezes. Migrating hummingbirds will continue to visit your feeders into October.

Fill Nyjer™ feeders. Goldfinches are here all year, though you may not recognize them now that nesting season is over. They don't need their bright yellow plumage to attract a mate, and would now only attract a predator, so the males' winter plumage is ▲ a dull olive green, similar to the females' plumage.



- Watch the skies for migrating birds and butterflies; rivers of robins, Red-winged Blackbirds and grackles. Night Hawks, Blue Jays and Turkey Vultures are also seen in migrating flocks.

Visit Hawk Ridge in Duluth, where major migrations of Sharp-shinned Hawks, ► Broad-winged Hawks and others may be witnessed.



- Visit Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge for a mass gathering of Sandhill Cranes.

Update or add to your pole system before the ground freezes.

- Plant trees or woody shrubs. Robins and Cedar Waxwings feed on the fruits of mountain ash, viburnums, dogwoods and crab apple trees.

- Consider a heated birdbath for the upcoming winter. Birds that don't ordinarily go to bird feeders, like overwintering robins, always enjoy a water source.

- Clean your heated birdbath with white vinegar to remove any lime scale. Thoroughly rinse before adding bath water.

Add **peanut pickouts, medium sunflower chips** and/or suet to feeders for migratory Red-breasted Nuthatches arriving in the fall.

- Scatter **Finches' Choice** or **Spectrum Mix** on the ground or in a ground feeder for visiting Juncos.

Don't cut the seed heads from your perennials. Birds will eat these seed heads into the winter. Particularly ▲ valuable are purple coneflower, black-eyed Susan, sunflower and hollyhock.



- Clean feeders before winter. Use a solution of 1 part bleach to 10 parts hot water or a mild solution of unscented dish detergent. Clean feeders inside and out, including all trays, feeding ports, perches and lids. Rinse the feeders with clear water for at least 10 seconds and make sure that they're completely dry before refilling. We offer a **feeder cleaning service**. Visit one of our stores or call us for more information!
- Store away seeds. Indian meal moths are very active in September. To prevent unwanted guests, store your seed in tins on the deck, in the garage or in the shed. For easy access, store smaller quantities in the freezer. To remove moths, install a moth trap (sold at all of our neighborhood stores).

Topsy-Turvy Nuthatches

By Minnetonka Manager CAROL CHENAULT

Pioneers referred to nuthatches as “the topsy-turvy birds” due to their acrobatic feats. In particular, the White-breasted Nuthatch, sometimes called “the upside-down bird,” is often seen traveling head-first down tree trunks searching for tasty insect morsels.



The “Minnesota” Nuthatch

We have two species of nuthatch in Minnesota, the White-breasted Nuthatch and the Red-breasted Nuthatch. They are both most likely to use a natural tree cavity, old woodpecker hole or a rotted knot hole in a tree for nesting. Nuthatches that don't migrate regionally begin pairing as early as December. Those that migrate back to their breeding grounds form pairs in March or April and maintain their pair bonds even after mating season.

All nuthatches store food in caches, spending much of the autumn finding and hiding seeds. The name “nuthatch,” from the Old English “nut hack,” is a result of the birds' feeding behavior. They wedge a large seed into crevices and “hack” or hammer the seeds open with their chisel-like bills.



▲ White-breasted Nuthatches

So . . . Is That the Red or the White?

The White-breasted Nuthatches prefer mature deciduous forests, especially woodland edges. They are mostly residential, non-migratory and

maintain their pair bond year-round, not just during mating season. For nesting they favor silver maple, American elm, hackberry or black walnut trees. These nuthatches are absolutely endearing as they hitch their way about the trunk of trees in a zigzag motion. They move up and down the trunk and main branches of trees. Their incredible agility is a result of extra-long hind toe-claws (which are nearly twice the size of the front toe-claws), allowing them to hang upside-down with ease. They have a slight upward curve to the bill. White-breasted Nuthatches eat a variety of seeds, insect and plant material, including weevils, wood borers, leaf beetles, ants, gypsy moth larvae and tent caterpillars.

The Red-breasted Nuthatch prefers boreal forests, with the abundance of spruce and fir trees. However, they're “irruptive,” meaning they move about the state to find food sources. It is the smaller of the two nuthatch species common in Minnesota. Both have blue-gray backs, but a rufous/rusty chest and underparts as well as black “racing stripe” through the



▲ Red-breasted Nuthatch
(Customer photo by
Kathy Lee Harwell)

eye distinguish the Red-breasted. These petite nuthatches forage on smaller branches, prying up flakes of bark in search of insects and larvae and extracting seeds from cones and the bases of needle clusters.

Satisfying the Picky Eater

Nuthatches are experts at determining the quality of seeds. They're constantly picking up and weighing seeds because the heavier seeds are the freshest, with more oil content and bigger nut meats. Those seeds are chosen and others are discarded. Buying high-quality seed and rotating the supply (first in, first out) to ensure freshness will keep nuthatches returning to your feeders.

Nuthatches benefit from the quick energy and easy access of peanuts, suet, mealworms and seeds from backyard bird feeders. Add dried mealworms or medium sunflower chips to feeders for extra protein and fat.

Staying Warm Through the Winter

Birds need to eat enough during the daylight hours to increase their fat stores by as much as 15% daily during colder months. Those stores are used up during the night by their rapid metabolisms or by shivering in an effort to stay warm. That explains why there is so much activity at the feeders first thing in the morning. Birds have to quickly begin the process of replenishing those fat stores lost during the night in order to combat the cold. ■

SEASONAL FEEDING TIPS

(Prep for Fall Visitors, from page 1)

Birdhouses Need Cleaning Too

The fall is also a great time to clean and repair your birdhouses to protect them over the long winter and prepare them for spring. Dirty birdhouses can lead to rodents, insects, feather mites or fungus.

STEP 1: REMOVE NESTING MATERIAL

First, put on a good pair of work gloves and face/dust mask; then open the birdhouse. Birdhouses with swinging sides, hinged roofs or removable fronts are the easiest to clean, but you may have to partially disassemble your house(s) for best cleaning. Remove old nesting material and scrape out any clumped matter. This material should be disposed of in a plastic bag to prevent the spread of parasites.

STEP 2: WASH AND DRY THE HOUSE

Scrub the house thoroughly with a weak bleach solution (1 part bleach to 9 parts water) or a half-and-half solution of white vinegar and water. Be sure to get all the corners, drainage and ventilation holes and the entrance hole. Rinse the house thoroughly with clean water to remove all traces of cleaning solution. Dry the house for several hours in full sun. This will break down any remaining bleach residue and ensure that no mold or mildew will grow.

STEP 3: INSPECT AND MAINTAIN

Check the house for loose hinges or protruding nails, screws or splinters—anything that might injure the birds. Make repairs as necessary. Oftentimes a squirrel or woodpecker may enlarge the entrance

hole on wood birdhouses. This makes the house unsafe for nesting chickadees, wrens and bluebirds. Attach metal portals with the correct-sized hole to repair this problem.

STEP 4: STORE OR RE-HANG

Some people like to leave their cleaned birdhouses out for winter roosting, but beware of mice and squirrels using them. If you leave your birdhouses out over winter, be sure to clean them again in the spring.

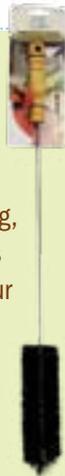
With the feeders sparkling and birdhouses cozy and clean, you're in position to host a grand fall get-together. Cheers! ■

FEATURED PRODUCTS

Best Long Brush

Great for Cleaning Tube Feeders

Stop struggling to reach deep inside your tube feeder! This brush is 24" long, with a wooden handle. The stiff bristles make it easy and effective to clean your tube feeders ■ [Best Long Brush](#) ▶



Quick-Clean Mesh Peanut Feeder

Great for Nuthatches!

The Aspects® Quick-Clean Peanut Mesh Feeder is made of stainless steel mesh and has an easy-to-remove base for cleaning. The seed diverter at the bottom of the feeder moves the seed toward the mesh, enabling the birds to reach every seed or nut. When filled with shelled peanuts, sunflower kernels or black oil sunflower in the shell, this feeder is irresistible

▶ [Quick-clean peanut feeder](#) to "clinging" birds ■



Feeder Fresh™

Prevent Excess Moisture in Your Seed

Feeder Fresh helps keep feeders dry and reduces mold toxins. It is chemically similar to sand but is produced to maximize moisture absorption. Feeder Fresh does not swell when it absorbs the moisture and the particles do not clump together. Once the Feeder Fresh absorbs it's own weight it will discontinue absorbing and be identical to the sand grit that birds normally ingest. ■



▶ [Feeder Fresh stops mold before it forms.](#)

BACKYARD BIRDING QUIZ

TRUE OR FALSE?

- ① **Common bird seeds contain antioxidants that help birds resist infections.**
___ True ___ False
- ② **Having access to supplemental food, like that in a bird feeder, reduces a bird's stress levels.**
___ True ___ False
- ③ **Survival rates are higher for birds that have access to supplemental food, like that in a bird feeder, than birds that don't.**
___ True ___ False
- ④ **You shouldn't feed the birds in the fall because it may delay their migration and cause them to suffer in the cold.**
___ True ___ False

Answers: 1. True, 2. True, 3. True, 4. False
(Study conducted by Milliken University.)

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.