



ALL SEASONS
WILD BIRD
STORE

BIRD'S-EYE VIEW

Volume 21 Issue 2 | March/April 2014

He or she?

Sleuthing for the Sex of Look-Alike Species



In this issue...

Great Backyard Bird Count ...	1
Chirps.....	2
Migrating Birds.....	2
Bird Identification.....	3
Seasonal Checklist.....	4
Featured Products	4

BLOOMINGTON

816 West 98th St.
(Clover Center)
Bloomington, MN 55420
952.884.4103

EAGAN

2143 Cliff Rd.
(Cedar Cliff Shopping Center)
Eagan, MN 55122
651.459.0084

MINNETONKA

4759 County Rd. 101
(Westwind Plaza)
Minnetonka, MN 55345
952.935.5892

WHITE BEAR LAKE

2703 East Cty. Hwy. E.
(Cty. Rd. E. and Hwy. 120)
White Bear Lake, MN 55110
651.653.8705

WAYZATA & WILD BIRD DELIVERS

15710 Wayzata Blvd.
(394 Frontage Rd.)
Wayzata, MN 55391
952.473.4283

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.

GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT

Top 25 Backyard Birds

The 2012–2013 results from 453 Feeder Watch reporting stations in the North Central Region—which includes part of Canada and all of Minnesota—are in! Here are the top 25 backyard birds, ranked by the percentage of reported visits to feeders (in descending order).

1. Black-capped Chickadee ▶	14. Red-bellied Woodpecker ▶
2. Downy Woodpecker	15. Pileated Woodpecker
3. White-breasted Nuthatch	16. Pine Siskin
4. Blue Jay	17. Mourning Dove
5. Dark-eyed Junco ▶	18. Pine Grosbeak
6. Hairy Woodpecker	19. American Robin ▶
7. Common Redpoll	20. European Starling
8. American Goldfinch ▶	21. Purple Finch ▶
9. House Sparrow	22. Hoary Redpoll
10. House Finch	23. American Tree Sparrow
11. Red-breasted Nuthatch ▶	24. Northern Flicker
12. Northern Cardinal	25. Brown Creeper ▶
13. American Crow	

Shifting Cycles, Birds and Business

In mid-February, we had the pleasure of hosting John Robinson, an esteemed author, biologist and ornithologist, at one of our team meetings to discuss his ideas about bird migration, climate change and changing bird populations. From a “bird business” standpoint, we’ve seen extreme fluctuations in our business cycles over that past few years and felt they may be related to some shifts occurring in the natural world. Here are some of the highlights of what we learned:

- ✱ **Migration occurs 0.8 days earlier for every 1°C our temperature averages rise.**
- ✱ **Many species, like Northern Cardinals and American Robins, are expanding their northern ranges and we may begin to see more species in our area that haven’t commonly resided here.**
- ✱ **Populations of some species are growing in our area, like Black-capped Chickadees and Northern Cardinals. Some populations are declining, like American Goldfinches and Common Grackles.**
- ✱ **After rapid population expansions, non-native species like House Finches and House Sparrows are beginning to steadily decline.**

These insights are helping us understand why we’ve seen increases in Safflower sales, which cardinals and chickadees love, and decreases in Nyjer™ sales, which goldfinches and irruptive species like Pine Siskins and Common Redpolls love to eat. This year we didn’t have any redpolls or siskins in the area, and we have seen a sharp decline in Nyjer demand from last year.

After 20+ years in the “bird business” we’re coming to realize that our business cycles are mostly driven by what mother nature cooks up each season. As you can see, we’re still learning new things with each passing day and that’s a big part of what makes running a small family business so much fun!

Al and Dave Netten

Welcome back!

Prepare Your Yard for Spring Migrants

By Minnetonka Manager CAROL CHENAULT

To be sure, one of the joys of feeding birds is hosting migratory birds for a brief time each spring as they make their way to summer breeding grounds. With some preparation—and a little luck!—you may be able to entice one of these migrants to stay and raise their broods in your own backyard.

	Typical Arrival Dates	Uses a Nestbox	Visits Feeders	Preferred Feeder Food
Red-winged Blackbird	March 10	No	Yes	All Seeds
Eastern Bluebird	March 2-16	Yes	Yes	Mealworms
Killdeer	March 2-17	No	No	-
Wood Duck	March 19	Yes	Yes	Ground Feeder, Corn
Tree Swallow	March 19-April 3	Yes	No	-
Eastern Phoebe	March 21-30	No	No	-
Common Loon	March 27-April 1	No	No	-
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	April 2-26	No	Yes	All Seeds
Purple Martin	April 5-11	Yes	No	-
House Wren	April 17-29	Yes	Yes	Mealworms
Yellow-rumped Warbler	April 2-6	No	No	-
Gray Catbird	April 27-May 6	No	Yes	Mealworms, Jelly
Baltimore Oriole	April 29-May 4	No	Yes	Mealworms, Nectar, Oranges, Jelly
Ruby-Throated Hummingbird	May 3-6	No	Yes	Nectar
Indigo Bunting	May 4-9	No	Yes	Mixes, especially with Millet



MALE-FEMALE Look Alikes



by Minnetonka Manager CAROL CHENAULT

▲ Blue Jays are a monomorphic bird species.

Bird species in which the male and female look the same are called *monomorphic*. Several of our favorite backyard bird species are monomorphic, such as Black-capped Chickadees, Blue Jays, House Wrens and Mourning Doves. Other monomorphic species in Minnesota include American Crows and Bald Eagles. Here are some clues to help you figure out who's who of the look-alike birds in your backyard.

Size

Size variations can be helpful in deciphering the sex of monomorphic species. For some species, as in the Bald Eagle, the female is larger than the male. The size difference may be visible in larger raptor species but unless the songbirds are side by side the size differential between the sexes is difficult to determine.

Even though these birds don't have obvious gender differences in their plumage it is often possible to determine males from females based on behavior.

Migration

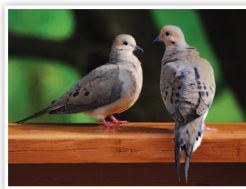
Generally, migrating males arrive at breeding grounds before the female of the species. For example, large flocks of American Robins in early spring are likely to consist entirely of males. Female robins generally arrive weeks later.

Courtship Displays

Courtship rituals also help distinguish males from females. One very sweet example is when the males of many bird species will feed the females to solidify the pair bond.

Another example is the call and response of Black-capped Chickadees. The male chickadee gives a two to three note "fee-bee" call. The female follows closely behind the male giving a "dee" call, to which the male may respond by offering her a tidbit of food.

The male Mourning Dove performs a dramatic aerial courtship display known as "flapping-gliding flight." First, he leaves his cooing perch while vigorously flapping and noisily clapping his wings. Next, after rising as high as 100 feet, he makes a long spiraling glide in a complete circle then



▲ Male Mourning Doves also have iridescent neck feathers; females don't.

does a series of flaps and glides before landing on a perch.

Bird Song

Song can provide clues to a bird's sex. But first, it's important to distinguish songs from calls. Calls are simple, unmusical sounds uttered by both sexes to communicate specific messages such

as warning, begging or to stay in contact with others of the flock. Songs, however, are complex groups of notes, typically performed by males during breeding season to announce a territory and advertise availability to females. (A notable exception is the female cardinal, one of few female songbirds that sings.)

Nesting Behavior

Nest-building habits provide great clues for identifying the male of a species. For example, the male House Wren builds the start of several nests at once. He places sticks in several houses, while singing prolific songs. The female inspects all of the possible nest sites and makes the final choice of where to complete the nest.

Both sexes of Blue Jays participate in nest building, but a division of labor is evident during incubation—the female Blue Jay incubates the eggs and the male brings her food.

Early in the breeding season, male and female American Crows tend to stay very close to one another. The male follows the female's every move, flying after her and alighting next to her on a branch. Later, the female incubates the eggs and the male feeds her.

With some patience and observation you can identify guys and gals of monomorphic birds in your backyard. Give it a try! ■

SEASONAL CHECKLIST

MARCH
&
APRIL

Early Spring

By Wayzata Manager MELISSA BLOCK

☐ Start a bluebird trail!

See details at bbrp.org ▶



☐ Prepare for spring migrants and follow their progress on JourneyNorth.org

☐ Watch the skies overhead for flocks of migrating Tundra Swans and Snow Geese.

☐ Mount a Wood Duck house on a pole and protect with a baffle. Wood Ducks return in early March.

☐ Open Purple Martin houses as soon as martins are sighted in the area (check [Facebook.com/wildbirdstore](https://www.facebook.com/wildbirdstore) for customer sightings!).

☐ Put up a wren house and a chickadee house. Place the chickadee house out of direct line of sight of nesting wrens. This may reduce the conflicts between the wrens and chickadees.

☐ Provide nesting materials with **The Best Nest Builder™**. ▶



☐ Clean out birdhouses and nest boxes from last year.

☐ Put out nectar feeders for hummingbirds and feeders for orioles between April 15 and April 26. For orioles, include half oranges, grape jelly, nectar and mealworms.

☐ Reapply **WindowAlert™** decals each spring to prevent window collisions. ▲



☐ Bring feeders to any of our All Seasons Wild Bird Stores for cleaning (fees apply).

☐ Scrub birdbaths with 9 parts water and 1 part bleach then use Birdbath Protector™ to keep it clean.

☐ Rake up hull debris and trash.

☐ Plan to add berry-producing plants like high-bush cranberry, plants for cover like arborvitae and those for seed production like purple coneflower and sunflower to your backyard.

FEATURED PRODUCTS

New! Mealworm Feeder

Entice bluebirds to visit with this attractive new feeder from Birds' Choice™!



▲ Feed bluebirds in style.

Coming Soon! We are excited to introduce a new mealworm feeder for bluebirds. It has a black metal wire frame in the shape of a flower with a blue glass cup in the center. The flower is situated horizontally on a vertical black wire frame. The hanger is accented with a blue heart-shaped crystal. We have yet to see a prettier way to showcase a cup of mealworms. But beauty is in the eye of the beholder, because

those bluebirds sure love mealworms, either live or freeze-dried. A full cup of worms in this pretty feeder will please everyone! ■

New! Fresh Nectar Defender

Liquid nectar protector prolongs nectar freshness and prevents spoilage naturally.

We now offer a new product, developed to protect the freshness of hummingbird nectar. No more frequent changes or wasted nectar! Feeder Fresh™ Nectar Defender™ is an all-natural, bird-safe product that protects the freshness of nectar and stops spoilage. It incorporates a mineral micronutrient that hummingbirds already naturally consume in their diet of nectar and insects. Simply start with fresh nectar and add one tablespoon per quart of nectar. Store extra nectar in the refrigerator to replace nectar that becomes cloudy or spotted in your feeder. An extra benefit of this product is that it keeps your feeder cleaner, too! ■



▲ Finally! Keep nectar fresh longer!

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.