



ALL SEASONS
WILD BIRD
STORE

BIRD'S-EYE VIEW

Volume 22 Issue 2 | March/April 2015

Grape Encounters

+ Feed Nectar-Loving Spring Migrants
+ Bird Banding Explained

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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.

SEASONAL TIPS

By Wayzata Manager MELISSA BLOCK

Time to Dish Out the Jelly!

Almost all of us like some grape jelly. Interestingly, some of our backyard birds—besides orioles—also love grape jelly! Jelly provides a quick, energy-rich source to refuel both weary spring migrants and some winter-worn natives.

Downy, and Hairy Woodpeckers snacking on the grape jelly.

In early spring I would have to fill the grape jelly dish every day. As the summer approached and the insects became more plentiful, the grape jelly consumption slowed down.



(From left) Gray Catbirds, American Robins, House Finches, and Red-Bellied Woodpeckers are some examples of birds that enjoy grape jelly besides orioles.

Types of Jelly

Many types of jelly are attractive to birds, but the most preferred flavor is dark grape jelly. Sugar-free options are not suitable for birds because they don't provide the proper energy source that birds can digest.

Who Likes the Sweet Stuff?

When I first started trying to attract orioles to my yard, I set out a small amount of grape jelly in a dish. To my surprise, the first bird that showed up was a Gray Catbird. I had never seen one of these sleek, gray birds before. After the Gray Catbird, a couple of robins showed up. Then the House Finches decided to partake. Lastly, the Baltimore Orioles came. I even noticed some Red-bellied,

One key for attracting orioles is to get your grape jelly out early in the season, which will attract the early migrators. Offer the jelly in small dishes. There are a number of oriole feeders that have a small dish for grape jelly and small stakes for orange halves, which are another favorite for many birds.

RELATED: Turn to page 4 for nectar-feeding tips and a Gray Catbird bird bio!

In Praise of our Staff

Running a Business for the Birds Has Everything to do With People

As I get a little longer in the tooth, I've come to realize how vital each and every member of our staff is to our active small-family business, and the importance of our mutual values in how we go about our business every day—values like kindness, loyalty, fairness, curiosity, joy, an interest in birds and knowing how to treat people right. Those are the cornerstone values that result in good service and create long and loyal relationships with our customers. Those same values have resulted in long and loyal employee tenures with our company.

We often focus on birds during the hiring process, but now when I look at it, we end up hiring the people experts who have an interest in becoming the bird experts, just as our tagline states: "Your backyard birding experts." I like to think that the "bird" part is secondary to our success. The "people" part is the key to unlocking an excellent customer experience. Thank you, staff!

~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.**



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MAR.
&
APR.

Early Spring

By Minnetonka Manager CAROL CHENAULT

- ☐ Prepare for spring migrants and follow their progress on **journeynorth.org**.
- ☐ Watch the skies overhead for flocks of migrating Tundra Swans and Snow Geese.
- ☐ **Start a bluebird trail (see details at bbrp.org). Eastern Bluebirds begin returning in early March.**
- ☐ Mount a Wood Duck house on a pole and protect with a baffle. Wood Ducks return in early March.
- ☐ Open Purple Martin houses after martins are seen in the area.
- ☐ Clean out bird houses and nest boxes from the prior year.
- ☐ Put up a wren house and a chickadee house. Place the chickadee house out of the direct sight line of nesting wrens, as this may reduce the conflicts between wrens and chickadees.
- ☐ Provide nesting materials with **Best Nest Builder™**.
- ☐ During the last week of April put out nectar feeders for hummingbirds and feeders for orioles, including half oranges, grape jelly, nectar and mealworms.
- ☐ **Reapply WindowAlert™ decals each spring to prevent window collisions. For especially problematic areas of the house, use ABC Bird Tape (shown) for full window coverage.**
- ☐ Bring feeders to All Seasons for cleaning (fees apply).
- ☐ Cracked feeders allow water to pool in the birdseed, causing mold and mildew growth. Replace damaged feeders with new easy-to-clean versions, such as the **Squirrel Buster®** family of feeders or **Aspects Quick Clean®** Feeders.
- ☐ Scrub birdbaths with 9 parts water and 1 part bleach, then use **Bird Bath Protector** to keep it clean.
- ☐ Moving water attracts more birds. Try a **Water Wiggler™** in the bath or an **Easy Mister** in your garden.
- ☐ Rake up shell debris and dispose in the trash.
- ☐ Use no-mess seed and mixes, such as **Medium Chips** and **Kracker Jax**, for enjoyable bird feeding that leaves no shells to clean up.
- ☐ Measure 12 feet from trees and install a pole with a squirrel baffle for squirrel-resistant bird feeding.



Bird Banding Basics

Perhaps you’ve noticed something unusual attached to a Black-capped Chickadee at your feeder. Perhaps you noticed in less fortunate circumstances, when a migrating warbler died against your window. In each case, that unusual numbered “silver bracelet” on the bird is known as a bird band.



A volunteer bands a Gray Catbird.

Why Birds are Banded

Banding allows researchers to discover information about birds that could not be found through observation, listening or photography.

The nine numbers on a silver leg band, or letters and numbers on a neck collar, mark a bird as an individual, much like our Social Security number.

Info Gleaned from Bird Bands

Three main bits of data are communicated in bird banding. Other information may be gleaned, depending on what is being studied.



AGE

First, how old can wild birds get? The initial answer is very discouraging. For a bird hatched in any particular year, between approximately two out of ten youngsters will not survive their first winter. However, once they have learned good sources of food, shelter and safety, the average wild bird will live just over four years (depending on species). Bird banding can identify the oldest of these birds. For example, bird banding tells us that the oldest known Black-capped Chickadee in North America, in its twelfth year of life in 2015, lives around Pillager, Minnesota. On the Pacific island of Midway, a Laysan Albatross nicknamed “Wisdom” is still raising young at 63 years old.

TRAVEL

Second, where do birds go? Banding has shown us that Minnesota’s summer Blue Jays can spend the winter in Texas, that Purple Martins will winter in the Amazon River basin and a small population of

shorebirds breeding in Scotland spend the winter off the coast of Peru.

POPULATIONS

Third, how many birds are out there? A bander in Wisconsin observed Downy Woodpeckers at her suet feeder for two weeks and then banded for two weeks. After observing, the most she had seen at one time was six. After banding, she had captured and released 58 birds, and still had unbanded Downy Woodpeckers coming to her suet. I have a personal example as well. My wife and I banded 74 Northern Saw-whet Owls over one six-week period, where naturalists thought we would be lucky to band a few.

Citizen Science: What You Can Do

Once a bird is captured, banded and released, the “lottery” (Aldo Leopold’s word) of seeing that bird again begins. For hunted birds, about 1 in 10 banded birds are “re-found.” For wild songbirds, this ratio is less than 1 in 1,000. If you can fully read the band on a bird, please report this to either 1-800-327-BAND or reportband.gov. Each report is very important. But don’t capture birds on your own without a permit from the Bird Banding Laboratory. Watch your local parks and DNR events for bird banding educational and hands-on experience. ■



Mark Newstrom is a staff member at our Minnetonka store. He’s also an Avian Field Ecologist and founding director of the North Central Bird Observatory, which is dedicated to avian research in Minnesota and Wisconsin.

2014 Lowry Nature Center Banding Counts

Species	Count	Species	Count
Black-capped Chickadee	77	Western Palm Warbler	3
Slate-colored Junco	27	Yellow-rumped Warbler	3
White-breasted Nuthatch	18	Brown-headed Cowbird	2
American Tree Sparrow	16	Chipping Sparrow	2
Red-winged Blackbird	15	Common Grackle	2
White-throated Sparrow	12	Common Yellowthroat	2
Northern Cardinal	11	Harris’ Sparrow	2
Blue Jay	7	Least Flycatcher	2
Downy Woodpecker	7	Magnolia Warbler	2
Clay-colored Sparrow	6	Nashville Warbler	2
Ovenbird	6	Wilson’s Warbler	2
Red-bellied Woodpecker	6	Yellow-throated Vireo	2
American Goldfinch	5	Blackpoll Warbler	1
American Redstart	5	Eastern Phoebe	1
Gray Catbird	5	Field Sparrow	1
Yellow Warbler	5	Fox Sparrow	1
Hermit Thrush	4	Hairy Woodpecker	1
Song Sparrow	4	House Finch	1
Swainson’s Thrush	4	Orange-crowned Warbler	1
American Robin	3	Rose-breasted Grosbeak	1
Black-and-White Warbler	3	Traill’s Flycatcher	1
Lincoln’s Sparrow	3	Warbling Vireo	1
Red-eyed Vireo	3		
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	3		
		Total birds banded	291
		Total Species banded	46

Nectar Solutions



Orioles will also drink hummingbird nectar, but need bigger ports and prefer a weaker nectar mix.

Still-Sweet Jelly Alternatives

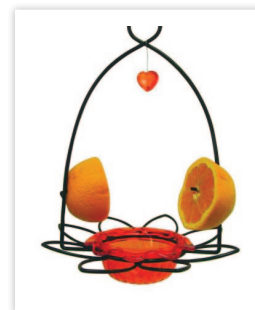
In addition to grape jelly, orioles enjoy nectar. You can make the oriole nectar yourself, using a 6 to 1 ratio (6 parts water to 1 part sugar). Orioles will also drink hummingbird nectar, but need bigger ports than those on a typical hummingbird feeder. If you make your own nectar, we have a **unique all-in-one container that makes it easy to measure, mix, heat, pour and store the nectar (shown)**. There's also nectar in powder and liquid concentrate.



Nectar feeders must be cleaned on a frequent basis. Nectar left out too long can ferment or grow mold or fungus, all of which are harmful to our nectar-loving birds.

Oriole Flower Feeder

With perching areas shaped like the petals of a flower, this oriole feeder provides pegs for orange halves and a bowl for grape jelly. The feeder is powder-coated black with an ornamental orange jewel hanging from the center. The **Oriole Flower Feeder** also works great for serving live mealworms or dried mealworms soaked in nectar. Yum!



Nectar Defender Concentrate

Naturally Fresh nectar is an easy, fast way to make nectar for hummingbirds and orioles. It comes in a liquid concentrate and powder form. It contains Nectar Defender, a naturally occurring micronutrient, which helps keep nectar fresh much longer. Naturally Fresh nectar contains no artificial preservatives or dyes. ■



BIRD BIO

Gray Catbirds

Identification, Foods and Habitat

Have you ever noticed a jaunty, slate-gray bird with a black cap, narrow bill and long, dark tail dining at your oriole feeders? If so, you're lucky to have a Gray Catbird visiting your yard!

These otherwise secretive summer migrants may appear at feeders to feast on grape jelly and mealworms. More typically, they forage for insects and berries in the dense thickets that line streams and areas disturbed by humans—like roads, fencerows, and forest edges.

Calls and Sounds

Likely to be heard before seen, the Gray Catbird's distinctive "mew" call sounds a bit like a frustrated feline (hence its name). Once you train yourself to hear it, you may begin to notice catbirds even in urban areas.

A close relative of mockingbirds, catbirds have the ability to mimic other songbirds, stringing together a long, Frankenstein-ish song of disjointed quotes. A careful listen may reveal phrases borrowed from Northern Cardinals, Baltimore Orioles, chickadees and others.



Gray Catbird

Behavior

Catbirds are enjoyable to watch and photograph in your backyard. They perch easily from narrow branches or feeder wires—sometimes at acrobatic angles—as they dine. Their dark black eyes give them an alert appearance, an impression that's reinforced by their habit of expressively flipping their tail up, revealing a bright chestnut-colored rump. They vocally announce their presence at feeding stations and politely take turns at jelly feeders with orioles and house finches.



This Gray Catbird demonstrates a characteristic upturned-tail

GRAY CATBIRD FACTS

Dumetella carolinensis

- About 9" long
- Dark gray with black cap and chestnut underbelly
- Males/females look alike
- Long, narrow beak

SIMILAR SPECIES

- Northern Mockingbird
- Brown Thrasher

RANGE

- Summer breeding throughout much of North America
- Complete winter migration to southern states

NESTING

- Cup-shaped nest
- 4-6 turquoise-colored eggs
- 2-3 broods/year

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.