

25<sup>th</sup>

**ALL SEASONS  
WILD BIRD  
STORE**

CELEBRATING 25 YEARS!

# BIRD'S-EYE VIEW

Volume 25 Issue 2 | March/April 2018

Marshals of the Marsh

## Red-wing Blackbirds

+ Seed Innovations  
Spring Migrants

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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.

### SEED INNOVATION

By Guest Columnist MELISSA BLOCK

## *A New Gold Standard*

Not long ago, one of our best-selling seeds was an innovation looking for acceptance among industry insiders and consumers.

#### **A Higher-Oil-Content Safflower is Born**

Golden Safflower, trademarked NutraSaff™, is relatively new to the birdseed menu.



*Golden Safflower*

It was born from the research of safflower breeders at Montana State University's Eastern Agricultural Research Center, in an attempt to create a variety of safflower—an established annual seed crop—with higher oil content. The non-GMO hybrid safflower seed, developed using cross-pollination, was successful in achieving their goal.

The new product, dubbed “Golden Safflower”, has 15% higher oil content, 25% higher protein content, and 30% higher fat (energy) content than regular white safflower. It also has a 40% thinner outer hull than white safflower.

#### **Golden Safflower Gains Acceptance with Bird Feeder Markets**

Cultivated safflower has a variety of uses. Depending on the oil content in the seeds,

safflower may be used as an edible oil, birdseed or meal for livestock. Growers and packers were at first very skeptical of this new non-GMO hybrid. Because of this reluctance, Safflower Technologies International decided to take this new kind of safflower directly to the bird feeder markets at the retail level.

The first store to try it out was a wild bird store in Michigan. The staff and customers found that birds loved it and preferred it 2-to-1 over the harder-shelled white safflower.

Golden Safflower's popularity continues to grow. Through trial and error, backyard birders discovered that birds have an easier time digesting and extracting the inner “meat.” Another positive is that squirrels have a tendency not to like Golden Safflower. We say, “tendency” because with squirrels you never know! Cardinals, chickadees, nuthatches, grosbeaks and goldfinches all love Golden Safflower. ■



*A chickadee flips for Golden Safflower*



## Product Innovation in Birdfeeding

Melissa's article about Golden Safflower, an extremely successful product introduction for us, highlights the importance of always looking for innovative, new ways to improve your experience as a birdfeeding hobbyist. With that in mind, I'll share this story.

I recently attended an interesting meeting at the Department of Agriculture. This is a rare occurrence—I kind of equate it to seeing how sausage is made. That being said, the topic was pretty interesting: a meet-and-greet regarding industrial hemp production in the state of Minnesota. I was invited by Carrol Henderson of the DNR to talk about the possible viability of hemp seed being marketed for wild bird food (*insert flying high joke here*). According to Carrol, hemp seed used to be a staple food of many local songbirds and he was quite excited about the idea of being able to provide hemp as a "new" wild bird food option if the political and regulatory powers can figure out how they really feel about hemp production in our state (*not everyone likes the idea, go figure*).

I was excited to learn about a new product that could have value to our customers in their backyards as a "new" yet historically preferred bird food option. Industrial hemp does not have THC, which is the compound that triggers intoxicating and munchy feelings if ingested. Your birds won't be extra happy or hungry but hemp does have loads of nutritional value.

Things are in an exploratory phase right now and I can't promise that you'll be able to buy hemp seed anytime soon from us, but we'll keep on top of the developments as they progress. Lots of sausage needs to get made first.

*Dave Netten*



*Worry-Free Guarantee!*

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.

## SPRING MIGRANT CHECKLIST

# They're Coming!

By Minnetonka Manager CAROL CHENAULT

Spring migrants are arriving! Here are some birds to look for in the backyard and beyond in March and April.

### MARCH ARRIVALS

**Look for these visitors to backyard feeding stations and birdbaths:**



☐ Red-winged Blackbird



☐ Eastern Bluebird



☐ American Robin

### APRIL ARRIVALS

**Look for these visitors to backyard feeding stations and birdbaths:**



☐ Brown Thrasher



☐ Hermit Thrush



☐ House Wren

**Look for these on a bird walk in the park, in the woods, or on a local trail:**



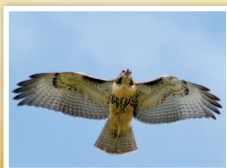
☐ Eastern Phoebe



☐ Northern Harrier



☐ Bald Eagle



☐ Red-tailed Hawk

**Look for these on a bird walk in the park, in the woods, or on a local trail:**



☐ Golden-crowned Kinglet



☐ Ruby-crowned Kinglet



☐ Yellow-rumped Warbler



☐ Broad-winged Hawk



# Red-winged Blackbird

The ubiquitous Red-winged Blackbird isn't likely to win any popularity contests among backyard birders. Still, the species stands out among other songbirds with fetching colors, a familiar song and fascinating social behaviors. Let's take a closer look at one of Minnesota's marshals of the marsh.

## Early Sounds of Spring

Male Red-winged Blackbirds are one of the first songbirds to arrive each spring, migrating north from the southern United States, Mexico and Central America. Perched atop cattails, males sing their territories with the familiar "konk-a-ree" song. Further into spring, you may witness Red-wings performing a visual accompaniment to their song. Called a "song spread" display, males fluff their feathers, raise their shoulders and spread their tail feathers as they sing.

## Polygyny by Necessity

Unlike most songbirds—which have a single mate per brood—male Red-winged Blackbirds mate with several female blackbirds within their territories. Anywhere from 5 to 15 females crowd their cup-shaped nests into a single male Red-winged Blackbird's territory. Experts believe this polygyny is a necessity due to a scarcity of suitable habitat. A benefit of this arrangement is that male and female Red-winged Blackbirds cooperate to defend the nests from intruders and predators.

## Communal Behaviors

Red-winged Blackbirds are social birds that travel and roost in huge flocks during migration and smaller groups year round. They forage in flocks that include members of different species, including Brown-headed Cowbirds, Common Grackles, European Starlings and Yellow-headed Blackbirds.

While fiercely territorial on their nesting grounds, blackbirds seem to agree that foraging areas are neutral. As a visual sign of good faith, male Red-winged Blackbirds hide their red shoulder epaulets while foraging in groups, only revealing them when provoked.

Back in the marsh, communal behavior continues in the form of cooperative nest defense called "reciprocal altruism." Basically, this means "I'll protect your grounds against a predator, if you'll do the



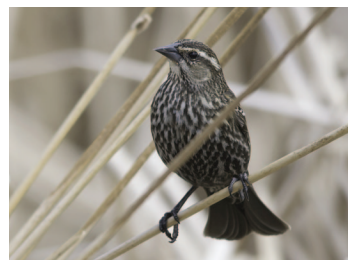
*Song spread display*



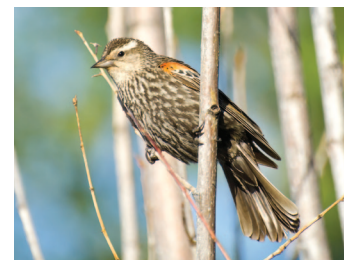
same for me." Red-winged Blackbirds will also "flash mob" predators, in a shared attempt to scare them away from nesting areas.

## Diet

Red-winged Blackbirds will eat nearly any seed, but switch to primarily insects and fruit while raising their 2-3 broods. They prefer to forage on the ground. Feeders with small or no perches and upside-down suet feeders can help to control their feeding frenzies. Another option is to spread some inexpensive seed or cracked corn on the ground, away from feeders, to keep them occupied and away from other songbirds. ■



*Female Red-winged Blackbird. They're smaller than males and often confused with sparrows or female Rose-breasted Grosbeaks.*



*Immature Red-winged Blackbirds are streaked like females, but have red patches.*

## DID YOU KNOW . . . ?

- ✧ Red-winged Blackbirds are one of the most abundant land birds in North America. However, their populations declined by over 30% throughout most of their range between 1966 and 2014, according to the North American Breeding Bird Survey.

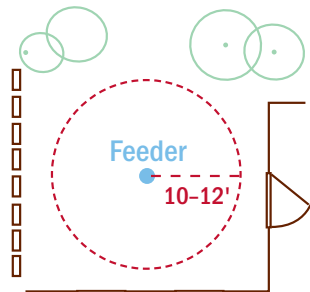
## Create a Basic Pole System

### Minnetonka Manager Carol Chenault's Simple, Squirrel-Resistant Pole Set-Up

A pole system feeding station set-up allows you to place feeders in an optimal location in your yard to prevent critters from reaching them. Optimally, place your pole system 12 feet from over-hanging limbs or deck railings with a baffle on the pole 5 feet off the ground.

A pole system needn't be complicated to design or implement. This system can support three hanging feeders, includes a squirrel baffle and is 88" in total height. Visit our store in person or online to see prices (use your Frequent Feeder Member discount for additional savings).

For more information about defeating squirrels, pick up our *Discouraging Squirrels* information sheet in any of our stores, or visit our website: [wildbirdstore.com/resources/troubleshooting-pests](http://wildbirdstore.com/resources/troubleshooting-pests) ■

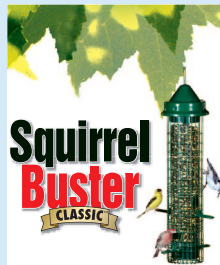


Place feeders outside squirrels' jumping ranges.

#### TRY IT WITH THESE FEEDERS AND ACCESSORIES

##### Squirrel Buster Classic Bird Feeder

This is one of our best-selling feeders, featuring a sturdy, weather-resistant design and weight-sensitive mechanism that closes feeding ports to squirrels.

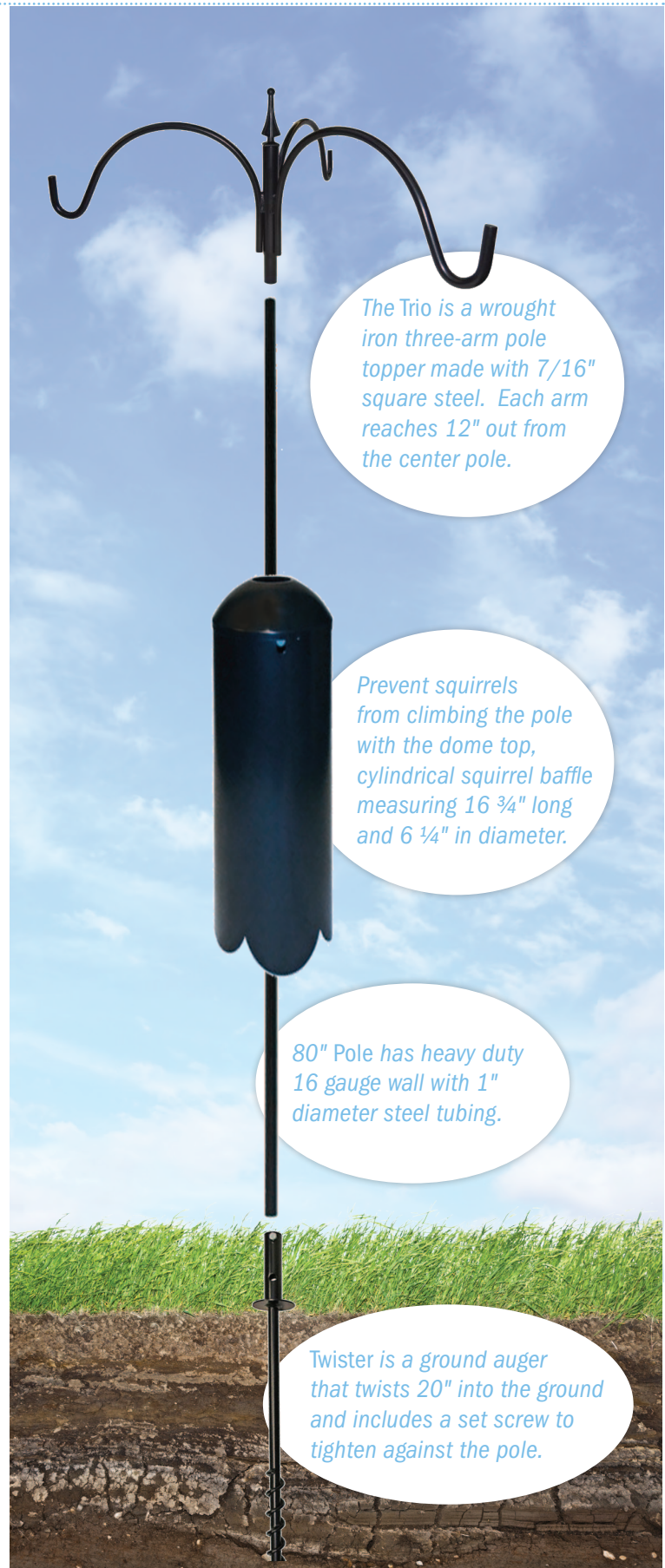


##### Quick Clean Berry Mesh Nyjer Finch Feeder

Sturdy feeder includes a removable base for easy cleaning. The mesh sides allow the seed to remain fresh and provides ample space for the clinging goldfinches, sparrows, chickadees and juncos to perch.

##### 24" Branch Coil Arm

Add places for birds to perch or spots for more feeders with a quick-mounting 24" branch-shaped arm. This coil-mounting hanger easily attaches to a one-inch diameter pole. ■



The Trio is a wrought iron three-arm pole topper made with 7/16" square steel. Each arm reaches 12" out from the center pole.

Prevent squirrels from climbing the pole with the dome top, cylindrical squirrel baffle measuring 16 3/4" long and 6 1/4" in diameter.

80" Pole has heavy duty 16 gauge wall with 1" diameter steel tubing.

Twister is a ground auger that twists 20" into the ground and includes a set screw to tighten against the pole.

**Have an idea for a future issue of *Birds-Eye View*?** Photos and articles may be submitted by email to [info@wildbirdstore.net](mailto:info@wildbirdstore.net).  
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