



BIRD'S-EYE VIEW

Volume 26 Issue 2 | March/April 2019

**ALL SEASONS
WILD BIRD
STORE**

THE WONDER OF

Nests

A Changing Twin Cities Bird Scene
Seasonal Notes



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EAGAN

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(Cedar Cliff Shopping Center)
Eagan, MN 55122
651.459.0084

MINNETONKA

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(Westwind Plaza)
Minnetonka, MN 55345
952.935.5892

WHITE BEAR LAKE

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

WAYZATA & WILD BIRD DELIVERS

15710 Wayzata Blvd.
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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.

NESTS

By Guest Columnist MELISSA BLOCK

To Each, Their Own Nest

Each of our backyard birds has a style of nest that is unique to the species. Here's a look at the nest-building practices of a selection of our favorite songbirds.

Northern Cardinal



A week or two before the female cardinal starts building, she begins to visit possible nest sites with the male following along. The pair call back and forth, hold nesting material in their bills as they assess each site.

Cardinal nests tend to be wedged into a fork of small branches in a sapling, shrub or vine tangle, 1'-15' high and hidden in dense foliage. Dogwood, honeysuckle, hawthorn, grape, red cedar, spruce, pines, hemlock, rose bushes, blackberry brambles, elms, sugar maples, and box elders are typical nest sites.

The cardinal nest cup has four layers: coarse twigs (and sometimes trash bits) covered in a leafy mat, then lined with grapevine bark and finally grasses, stems, rootlets, and pine needles. (Customer photo by Elizabeth Traff)



Males sometimes bring nest material to the female, who does most of the building. She crushes twigs with her beak until they're pliable, then turns around in the nest to bend the twigs around her body, and pushes them into a cup shape with her feet.

The nest typically takes 3-9 days to build; the finished product is 2"-3" tall, 4" across, with an inner diameter of about 3". Cardinals usually don't use their nests more than once.

House Wrens

House Wrens nest in old woodpecker holes, natural crevices, and nest boxes (or discarded tins, shoes, etc.) provided by humans. This bird's association with open woodland is



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Linda Gorr, Eagan Manager, Retires

As some of you may know by now, we have bid adieu to one of the best employees we've ever had the pleasure and honor to work with. Linda Gorr, longtime manager of our Newport and then Eagan locations has chosen to retire after a tremendous tenure in the wild bird retail business. Here are some highlights from her amazing career.

- Entered the backyard birding business 40 years ago, when she went to work for Gray Milling in St. Paul in the Lilydale shopping area in the late 1970s.
- In the early 1980s she started her own backyard birding business and became a co-owner of Cardinal Corner.
- In the last half of 1980 she joined the MN Greenery Wild Bird Store in Newport and became the Manager of that store.
- In 1996, 22 years ago, All Seasons Wild Bird Store acquired the Newport store from MN Greenery and Linda continued to manage the Newport store for All Seasons.
- In 2002, All Seasons moved the Newport store to Eagan, with Linda still managing.
- During the 22 years that Linda has been with All Seasons, she has hired and trained 37 part-time employees.

Needless to say, Linda has been a stalwart in our company and a true gem and will be greatly missed by all of us.

Terri Doll, Promoted to Eagan Manager

We'd also like to invite you to join in welcoming Terri Doll to her new store manager position at Eagan. Terri was promoted from her previous positions as Senior Sales Associate and Office Administrator to Store Manager at Eagan. Terri has a diverse background which includes corporate human resources and real estate investing and we are very confident that she's up to the task of her new role. I know she's looking forward to meeting all of our loyal Eagan customers.

Dave Netten



Join the Conversation!

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Twitter: ASWildBirdStore

Instagram: AllSeasonsWildBirdStore



Dave and Al Netten with Linda in 1996

A Changing Bird Scene

Since the beginning of this author's life in the mid-1950s, the variety of birds seen in and around the Twin Cities area has surprisingly changed. Here are a few examples of bird species that were not here then or were much less abundant. I will then give two examples of birds that are, sadly, harder to find.

AMERICAN ROBINS

Until the late 1980s, I regularly participated in National Audubon Society's Christmas Bird Count. At that time, American Robins were an exciting "rarity". These winter days, it is even more surprising to not have numerous robins somewhere in town.

CANADA GEESE

Canada Geese were considered gone from the state, until a small population was discovered at Silver Lake in Rochester. From these approximately 4,000 birds, intensive and very successful reintroduction efforts began in the mid-1960s. In only a decade, geese were again being seen nearly throughout Minnesota.

VEERY

The Veery is a variety of thrush, slightly smaller than a robin, with mostly a light brownish head, back and tail, and a whitish breast with smudgy light brown spots just below its head. It is known for its rich, downward spiral of song. In many parks around the Twin Cities area and in wet, wooded areas around Minnesota, the Veery would make its presence felt from mid-spring through mid-fall, migrating to Brazil in the winter. However, its song is becoming more scattered with the years, mostly due to loss of habitat and nest parasitism by Brown-headed Cowbirds.

HOUSE FINCHES

The first documented nesting in the Twin Cities was in 1989. Since 1992, House Finches have been seen in most of Minnesota.

TRUMPETER SWANS

Trumpeter Swans were gone from their traditional Minnesota breeding areas by the mid-1800s. Only a very concerted reintroduction effort by Three Rivers Park District (then Hennepin County Park Reserve District) has led to a small but steady and viable population. This effort began in 1966 and only ended in 2009.

AMERICAN TREE SPARROW

The American Tree Sparrow was once a very abundant winter visitor. This feisty little sparrow was Jim Gilbert's study species as he learned their habits and habitats in the early 1970s. However, a severe ice storm in the winter of 1983-84 decimated the population wintering in the Twin Cities area, and it is only since 2015 that this species has started to approximate its former numbers.



Read Mark's full article on our blog: wildbirdstore.com/blog

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reflected in its choice of nest sites: it rarely uses nest sites more than 100' from woody vegetation, but also avoids heavily wooded nest sites where it's hard to see predators coming.

Despite their small size, wrens can be fierce competitors for nest sites, sometimes evicting a larger species and claiming its cavity after the bird has already begun nesting.

House Wrens pile twigs into the cavities they choose to nest in, either to make a bed on which to build a soft-lined cup, or sometimes mounded up into a barrier between nest and entrance, seemingly to protect the nest from cold weather, predators, or cowbirds.



The cup of a wren's nest is built into a depression in the twigs and lined with just a few grams (less than 0.25 oz) of feathers, grasses and other plant material, animal hair, spider egg sacs, string, snakeskin, and discarded plastic.

Baltimore Oriole

Baltimore Orioles build remarkable, sock-like hanging nests, woven together from slender fibers.

The female chooses a nest site within the territory defended by her mate. She

anchors the nest firmly to a fork in the slender upper branches of a tree. Baltimore Orioles often nest in American elms, but will build in other trees, especially maples and cottonwoods. The distinctive nest usually hangs below a branch, but is sometimes anchored along a vertical tree trunk.



The female weaves the nest, usually 3"-4" deep, with a small opening on top and a bulging bottom chamber where her eggs will rest.

She anchors her nest high in a tree, first hanging long fibers over

a small branch, then poking and darting her bill in and out to tangle the hank. While no knots are deliberately tied, soon the random poking has made knots and tangles, and the female brings more fibers to extend, close, and finally line the nest.

Construction materials can include grass, strips of grapevine bark, wool, and horsehair, as well as artificial fibers such as cellophane, twine, or fishing line. Females often recycle fibers from an old nest to build a new one. Males may bring nesting material, but don't help with the weaving.

Building the nest takes about a week, but windy or rainy weather may push this as long as 15 days.

The nest is built in three stages: first, the female weaves an outer bowl of flexible fibers to provide support. Next, springy

fibers are woven into an inner bowl, which maintains the bag-like shape of the nest. Finally, she adds a soft lining of downy fibers and feathers to cushion the eggs and young.

Ruby-throated Hummingbird

A hummingbird nest is the size of large thimble, built directly on top of a branch rather than in a fork. It's made of thistle or dandelion down held together with strands of spider silk and sometimes pine resin.



Females build their nests on a slender, often descending branch, usually of deciduous trees like oak, hornbeam, birch, poplar, or hackberry; sometimes pine. (Customer photo by Keri Vander Werff)

The female stamps on the base of the nest to stiffen it, but the walls remain pliable. She

shapes the rim of the nest by pressing and smoothing it between her neck and chest.

The exterior of the nest is decorated (probably camouflaged) with bits of lichen and moss.

The nest takes 6-10 days to finish and measures about 2" across and 1" deep.

Nests are usually 10'-40' above the ground. Nests have also been found on loops of chain, wire, and extension cords. ■



Read Melissa's full article, including information about robin, Downy and Hairy Woodpecker nests, on our blog: wildbirdstore.com/blog

PRODUCT PICKS

1. This all-natural cedar wren house can be hung or post-mounted. Made from durable red cedar, this house features a side-opening door for easy clean out, an overhanging roof for protection and air vents for proper ventilation. Made in USA.

2. This birdhouse is made from 98% recycled material, is easy to clean and weather resistant. It features an overhang roof, vents and drainage. The roof lifts open for easy cleaning. Fifteen plastic containers are used to make this house.



3. Chickadees and wrens both use this birdhouse. It's made with long-lasting inland red cedar and that features proper drainage and ventilation. The side opens easily for cleaning. The hole size allows both wrens and chickadees to enter but excludes larger birds.

4. This recycled wren house with a green roof and taupe base features a large roof overhang, and is made out of recycled poly lumber. To clean out, simply remove the clear plexi at the base of this house.

March & April

SEASONAL NOTES

By Minnetonka Manager CAROL CHENAULT

March

- ❑ Watch for migrating Tundra Swans and Snow Geese flying high overhead. Also watch for early March migrants: Golden-crowned and Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Eastern Phoebes, Yellow-rumped Warblers, male American Robins, Red-winged Blackbirds, American Crows, Bald Eagles and Wood Ducks.
- ❑ Mount a **Wood Duck house** on a pole and protect with a **affle**.
- ❑ Be ready with **live mealworms** for returning Eastern Bluebirds beginning in early March. 
- ❑ Clean out birdhouses and nest boxes from last year and replace cracked or damaged houses.
- ❑ Put up a **wren house** and a **chickadee house**, placing the chickadee house out of direct line of sight of nesting wrens to reduce territorial conflicts.
- ❑ Provide nesting materials with **The Best Nest Builder**.

- ❑ Use seed in pre-formed seed cylinders or seed cakes like **Bugs, Nuts & Fruit, Golden Safflower, Flaming Hot Feast or Wild Bird Feast** to prevent starlings and House Sparrows from scattering seed and to prevent deer from licking the feeders clean at night. 
- ❑ Red-winged Blackbirds return in March. Fill feeders with **Golden Safflower**, which attracts many songbirds but is less interesting to grackles, starlings and Red-wings. Enjoy the trill of the Red-wings!
- ❑ Reapply **WindowAlert decals** each spring to prevent window collisions. This is especially important to protect migrating birds that are not familiar with your yard.
- ❑ Bring feeders to your local All Seasons store for cleaning. Fees apply.
- ❑ Scrub birdbaths with 9 parts water and 1 part bleach then use **Bird Bath Protector** to keep it clean.

- ❑ 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.
- ❑ Rake up shell debris and dispose of in the trash while wearing a mask.
- ❑ 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' from trees and install a pole with a squirrel baffle for squirrel resistant feeding.
- ❑ Plan to add bird, bee and butterfly friendly plants to your landscape.
- ❑ About the third week of March watch for returning Killdeer, Song Sparrows, grackles.

April

- ❑ Migrating female American Robins return now, about a month after the males.
- ❑ Track oriole, hummingbird and monarch migration at: journeynorth.org
- ❑ In early April, leopard frogs and painted turtles resurface.
- ❑ Belted Kingfishers and Common Loons arrive around the first week of April.
- ❑ Wood Ducks begin egg-laying.
- ❑ Screech Owl eggs hatch. 
- ❑ About the second week of April, Fox Sparrows, Hermit Thrush, Chipping Sparrows and Tree Swallows return.
- ❑ Black Bears come out of their dens. Protect your bird feeders!
- ❑ Purple Martins return possibly the first but always by the end of the second week of

- April. Open **Purple Martin houses** after martins are seen in the area.
- ❑ Third week of April: wood frogs' barking calls and western chorus frogs' metallic clicks fill the air near ponds.
- ❑ Watch for the first Mallard Ducklings to hatch!
- ❑ During the last week of April, put out **nectar feeders** for hummingbirds and feeders for orioles including half oranges, grape jelly, nectar, **mealworms** and **Insect-to-Go suet pellets**. 
- ❑ Hang your nectar feeder from an **ant trap**, which is a moat filled with water. Ants can't swim and therefore cannot get to the nectar.

- ❑ Migrating White-throated Sparrows appear in abundance. House Wrens return and begin calling and selecting bird houses.
- ❑ Eastern Bluebirds incubate eggs.
- ❑ Scrub birdbaths with 9 parts water and 1 part bleach, then use **Bird Bath Protector** to keep it clean.
- ❑ Attract more birds to your birdbath with moving water. The **Aurora Water Wiggler** provides constantly rippling water and has a light that casts a soft glow of a gradually changing rainbow of colors. The light comes on at dusk and glows for three hours and automatically shuts off after three hours. 

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