



BIRD'S-EYE VIEW

Volume 21 Issue 6 | November/December 2014

ALL SEASONS
WILD BIRD
STORE

Chilling Out

+ Surprising Species that Weather our Winters
Late Autumn/Early Winter Seasonal Checklist

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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.

BIRD BIOLOGY

Downy Warmth for Winter

By Wayzata Manager MELISSA BLOCK

Just How Does that Bird Stay Warm?

Minnesota backyard birds have developed numerous physical and behavioral adaptations to help them make it through harsh winters. Those traits help us, too! Like the birds, we've adapted down feathers into our coats and comforters to help keep us warm and cozy. But, as you well know, no matter what we do around here, the winters are still harsh. Even the birds shiver.

Snuggle into that Down

As the temps drop, you may see birds sitting on a perch all "fluffed up," especially in the morning. This technique allows for extra air pockets in between feathers, surrounding the bird's body in warmth. Also, most birds grow extra feathers in the fall to give them additional insulation in the winter. It's not unusual to see a bird standing on one leg or crouched to cover both legs with feathers. Some birds can even tuck their bills into their shoulder feathers for warmth.



▲ Birds fluff their feathers for extra warmth

Leg Warmers & Boots

Birds that are well-adapted to cold weather have specialized scales covering their legs and feet. This helps minimize heat loss and makes them less susceptible to freezing. Another fascinating adaptation is temperature regulation. Birds control the temperature of their legs and feet separately from their bodies. Basically, the arteries carrying warm blood are positioned very close to the veins carrying cold blood, keeping everything a nice warm temp. Birds have adapted another neat trick: they constrict muscles to pump the warmer blood into their feet.

Winter Fat

Many birds gorge during the fall when food sources are abundant. Feeding heavily just before dusk helps to build up fat reserves to serve as insulation and provide energy to get through the cold nights. As birds shiver they raise their metabolic rate and generate more body heat as a short-term solution to cold. This requires more calories and leaves them frantically searching for food in the early morning. (continued on page 4...)

Hope to see you this Holiday Season!



Gift-giving season is fast approaching and we want to remind you about the benefits of shopping local. Simply stated, dollars spent at small businesses in our communities stay in our communities. All Seasons Wild Bird Store supports numerous other local small businesses with our dollars—and those dollars come from you, our customers. On that note, American Express will again be promoting Small Business Saturday on Saturday, November 29, and we will be participating. We hope to see you this holiday season!


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.

NOV.
&
DEC.

Late Autumn/ Early Winter

By Minnetonka Manager CAROL CHENAULT

- ☐ Feed birds seeds and mixes without shells, such as **medium chips** and **Kracker Jax**. They're less work for the birds to eat and less mess for you. A win-win!
- ☐ Increase the energy and warmth-producing fat content of your feeding station with additional **suet and peanut feeders**.
- ☐ Add **dried mealworms, suet pellets** and **Berry Nutty** to trays and platform feeders for high-energy winter feeding.
- ☐ **Help Blue Jays cache food by hanging an in-shell peanut feeder.**
- ☐ Welcome Goldfinches, Red Polls, Pine Siskins and juncos with **Nyjer™ and Chips** mix or **Finches' Choice** seed. (Note: Nyjer is more squirrel resistant.)
- ☐ Leave out a birdhouse or two for chickadees, Downy Woodpeckers or Bluebirds. They will huddle in the house this winter.
- ☐ Install a **clamp-on deck rail hanger** for easier access to feeders and close-up bird watching.
- ☐ Insert a **Dry, Dry Birdie** birdbath **insert** to allow birds to drink from a heated birdbath but not to bathe.
- ☐ Attract more birds with a **heated birdbath**.
- ☐ **Add a large-capacity feeder like the Sky Café to reduce trips outside to fill feeders.**
- ☐ Install a **winter roosting box** in a location that is warmed by the morning sun. Roosting boxes are used by chickadees.
- ☐ Treat yourself and your loved ones! Buy a **jigsaw puzzle** featuring your favorite birds and Naturescape's **Backyard Birds** or **Backyard Birds II** CD to fill those long winter evenings with the sites and sounds of summer.
- ☐ **We've got several illustrated bird guides to identify and track species you see in your backyard and beyond, such as Crossley ID Guide books, Peterson Field Guides, Stan Tekiela's Birds of Minnesota and more. They make great gifts, too!**



Winter Surprises

Surprised by some of the birds you see in your backyard during our harsh winter months? Some over-wintering birds aren't obvious or typical visitors from year to year.



Robins & Bluebirds

Common lore celebrates the arrival of the first bluebirds or robins of spring. In reality, if there are sufficient natural food sources on their breeding grounds, **American Robins** and **Eastern Bluebirds** will remain all winter in the area where they spent the summer. We had customers feeding mealworms to bluebirds all last winter, and one couple even skipped a winter vacation to tend to their bluebirds!

Finches

Don't be fooled into thinking your bright yellow **American Goldfinches** have left for the winter—they're still busy at backyard feeders, but the males lack their bright yellow breeding plumage.



▲ A group of American Goldfinches in autumn

As protection against predators, goldfinches molt in the fall to an olive drab, with the males closely resembling the females. The males can be easily mistaken for other species in the winter, and often people come to the errant conclusion that goldfinches have left. Feeding goldfinches all winter ensures some will stay in your area to nest in the spring.

Most of the raspberry-colored finches we see are male **House Finches**. The first-year juveniles are not as brightly colored as older adult males. The plumage of male House Finches can vary greatly, from orange to a red



▲ House Finch (left) and Purple Finch (right)

raspberry. A few of us may see **Purple Finches** migrate south, feeding in nomadic foraging flocks. Look for the lower sides and belly to be "clean" or white (not brown streaked) on the male Purple Finch. The female Purple Finch has a distinctive white eyebrow and white lower cheek patch. House Finches also tend to be more active and noisier than Purple Finches, fluttering and tweeting incessantly.

Red Polls & Pine Siskins

Widespread failure in seed-crop production (specifically in spruce, other conifers, alder and birch trees) forces **Red Polls** and **Pine Siskins** to venture south in search of food. Their resulting migration patterns are unpredictable and irruptive. Every few years the Red Polls show up in great numbers. Several winters ago we had over 200 Red Polls in our yard at one time. Red Polls have better plumage insulation than other birds their size. Their feather weight increases by one third from July to November. Pine Siskins are distinguished from other finches by narrow, pointy bills; notched tails; and yellowish flight-tail feathers.



▲ Pine Siskin

Blue Jays

Populations of **Blue Jays** shift about in preparation for the winter cold. You will likely have them brightening your winter landscape but they may not be the same individuals that were around this summer. Some of these jays will be travelers from northern territories. Upon arrival they busily store seeds and nuts in caches for winter feeding.

Brown Creepers

The **Brown Creeper** is a year-round resident in most of their range, except the northern parts; the latter populations do engage in some migratory behavior, moving several hundred miles south. Look for them in the Metro area spiraling up and around tree trunks and limbs as they forage.

Juncos

A far more typical winter visitor is the Dark-eyed Junco. These birds arrive in late September from their breeding areas in the western mountains and Canada, sporting charcoal gray and white plumage. Juncos glean seeds and insects from twigs, leaves and the ground cover of leaves and windfall. They're entertaining as they hop forward and kick their feet back, scratching the ground for food. Juncos prefer poking around on the ground below feeders but can be attracted to hanging feeders as well. Maintaining a clean water source by using a heated birdbath attracts juncos as well as birds that don't normally eat at seed feeders, such as robins and bluebirds. ■



▲ Dark-eyed Junco

SEASONAL FEEDING TIPS

(... continued from page 1) With fewer daylight hours to forage for food, bird feeders provide easy access to much-needed fat and calories.

Warm, Restful Nights

Many birds enter *torpor*, a reduced metabolic state which requires fewer calories to maintain a proper body temperature. Torpor can be dangerous because, while in this state, birds have slower reactions and become more vulnerable to predators. However, since it conserves energy, it's a necessary adaptation to the severe cold.

A Little Help from Their Friends

Some small birds, especially chickadees, gather in flocks at night and crowd together in small, tight spaces to share body heat. They roost in shrubbery and evergreens and



▲ A couple of sparrows huddle together to stay warm even empty birdhouses. There are specialized "roosting boxes" for this purpose, and those are available at our stores.

What You Can Do

As long as birds have access to energy-producing food—like suet, peanuts and sunflowers—and shelter from the wind (in an evergreen, birdhouse or roosting box), they can survive our cold winters. Birds

at sites with feeders are in overall greater health than at sites without feeders. Access to feeders lowers stress levels and increases body condition, which helps birds survive the winters.

Survival rates are 38% higher in areas where bird feeders are present (per Millikin University, 2011–2013). ■



▲ Roosting box

FEATURED PRODUCTS

Gift Card

Perfect for Bird Lovers!

Wouldn't it be easier to give the gift of Joe's Mix in an envelope than a difficult-to-wrap seed bag? We have the perfect solution: buy an All Seasons gift card! Our beautifully designed gift cards are available in any amount—whether it's \$5, \$20 or \$100, we will fit your budget. Great for everyone on your list! ■



of hostess gifts, teacher gifts, stocking stuffers and ornaments. You may even find something that you just have to have for yourself!

Seed Ornaments

Convenient and Enjoyable Gifts



Birdseed balls and wreaths are perfect for the holidays, but we like them for anytime of the year. The solid seed ball ornament is 3.5" wide, and comes ready to hang. The birdseed wreath is 8" wide and also comes ready to hang. Both the seed balls and wreaths are made up of black oil sunflower, safflower, millet, peanuts and cracked corn. Feed the birds in your favorite outdoor spot with these decorative ornaments! ■

Holiday Decorative

Bird-themed Holiday Décor



You'll be able to find something for every nature lover on your list at our All Season Wild Bird Stores. We have a great selection

WINTER BIRD MYTHS

Winter Birds Myth: If you leave town during winter, the birds that rely on the food from your feeders will die.

👉 **Winter Birds Fact:** Research has proven this one wrong. Scientists have shown that chickadees, for example, will eat only 25% of their daily winter food from feeders. They find the other 75% in the wild.

Winter Birds Myth: Birds always migrate in flocks.

👉 **Winter Birds Fact:** Though many birds migrate in flocks—Common Nighthawks, American Robins, swallows and European Starlings, for example—other species migrate alone. The most amazing example of this is a juvenile hummingbird that has never migrated before, yet knows when to fly, where to fly, how far to fly and when to stop. And it does this all alone.

Read more: birdsandblooms.com/birding/birding-basics/winter-birds-myths-facts/#ixzz3GF6rIU2o

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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