



BIRD'S-EYE VIEW

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ALL SEASONS
WILD BIRD
STORE

Red-bellied Woodpecker

+ Trumpeter or Tundra Swan?
Holiday Treats for Birds



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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.

DECK THE BOUGHS

Holiday Treats for Birds

By Guest Contributor MELISSA BLOCK

A GREAT WAY TO SHARE THE HOLIDAY SPIRIT WITH YOUR BACKYARD BIRDS IS TO DECORATE AN OUTDOOR TREE WITH EDIBLE ORNAMENTS.

There's a wide range of foods you can offer on a bird Christmas tree that will attract a wide variety of birds and the more you decorate a tree the more species you will see.

Make sure that your bird treat tree is visible from a comfortable spot in your house. What a delightful sight on a cold wintry day! It helps to pick a tree close to your regular feeders, which will help the birds find it more quickly. Evergreen trees are best because they also offer shelter for the birds. If you don't have a suitable tree consider a large upright branch, a potted evergreen tree or an inexpensive artificial tree instead. Avoid using thin thread or fishing line to hang the edible ornaments, which can become a tangle hazard for birds.

Decorate the tree early, since it may take a few days to a couple of weeks for birds to discover the holiday goodies. Be sure you have extra seed ornaments so you can replace them as

needed. If you don't want the squirrels to share in these treats we have seed bells made of Golden Safflower, which squirrels tend to dislike. We also have a snowman made from White Safflower and Golden Safflower. Birds love it, but squirrels might leave it alone.



We have a wide selection of birdseed ornaments in our stores. You'll find birdhouses decorated with seeds and tidbits of fruit for a special treat. Our cute little seed and nut stars are solid seed, containing black oil sunflower, pecans, peanuts and millet and features a red raffia hanger. The seed hearts work well in any temperature, there's no mess, and no waste and they never melt. We have individually wrapped seed balls with premium blends that will draw a wide variety of your backyard birds. All of these, plus seed wreaths, bells and hearts are also great gifts for neighbors, teachers or friends. ■

Cannabis (aka hemp), coming soon to a feeder near you?

If you pay attention to the news, you're probably very aware that cannabis (derived from hemp) products, whether they be for food, fiber or medicinal purposes have become very popular lately.



Our company recently helped fund and coordinate a research study through Milliken University which was conducted by the Minnesota Ornithologists Union (MOU) to determine the viability of hemp seed as a wild bird food. According to many accounts, prior to World War II, hemp was a very popular naturally occurring food source among wild birds in Minnesota and we wanted to determine if that was still true today.

Recently, the Minnesota Department of Agriculture started an Industrial Hemp Pilot Program in which they engaged growers and industry to begin growing, processing and exploring potential markets for this new crop. The wild bird food industry was identified with strong potential. They are still sorting out all of the legal and regulatory issues (red tape), but it appears that we may soon be able to market hemp legally as a wild bird food ingredient.

We are still waiting for final research to be compiled, but initial accounts are very favorable for certain wild bird species preferring hemp seed over some other popular ingredients like Black Oil Sunflower and White Proso Millet. We do know that hemp has excellent nutritional value, with high protein and oil content. If you can get past the historical stigma, hemp has very valuable potential as a new industrial crop for our local farmers and agricultural industry. We will keep you posted as we learn more.

Al and Dave Netten

Trumpeter or Tundra?

Clues for Distinguishing Two Oft-Confused Swan Species

They swim gracefully (or feed ungracefully) in the water. They fly gracefully, in small to large V-formations. They honk or whistle. They are definitely swans, with their long necks and stout bodies. But of the two types of swans seen locally, either Trumpeter Swan or Tundra Swan, which is which?

If each type of swan is side-by-side, distinguishing them is easy. Trumpeter Swans will always be the larger birds. But what if they are not side-by-side? Then look and listen!

LOOK in the Summer and Winter

In this region, you will be seeing Trumpeter Swans. They nest here in the summer and move very little in winter migration, only needing open water with available vegetation to survive. Visit Mississippi Drive Park (aka Swan Park) near Monticello to see wintering swans; the warm power plant water provides the open water they need. Tundra Swans, however, spend their summers in the high Arctic and winters at Chesapeake Bay.



Trumpeter Swan



Tundra Swan

Trumpeter Swans usually have a solid black beak. Tundra Swans usually have some yellow on the beak.

LISTEN and LOOK in Spring and Fall

At these times, birds are both flying and feeding during migration. **Trumpeters** will give their characteristic HONK, usually a single note but sometimes up to three. When they are swimming, look at their face; the black color between the bill and eyes usually form a wide "cat's-ears" shape. They almost never have yellow spots along with the black.

Tundras will give various whistles and hoots, which when given by multiple individuals, can sound like the battle scene of an old western movie. In fall, they can be seen regionally in large feeding groups, especially on the Mississippi River between Alma, Wisconsin and Lansing, Iowa, before continuing their southeastward migration. When they are swimming, look at their face; the black color between the bill and eyes usually form a narrow "snail's antennas" shape, almost always with accompanying yellow spots.

Article condensed for print. See the full article and graphics at WildBirdStore.com/blog ■

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FEEDER FAVORITE

By Guest Columnist KATRINA HASE; Photos by KATRINA HASE

Red-bellied Woodpecker

Hear Them Once, Recognize Them Everywhere

Do yourself a favor right now. Go to allaboutbirds.org/guide/Red-bellied_Woodpecker/sounds and listen to the call a Red-bellied Woodpecker makes. Once you hear it, you'll recognize it easily on your walks through the woods, in your backyard and around town. Their "churr" is difficult to describe but readily recognizable! Chances are the sound will become quite familiar, as Red-bellied Woodpeckers are rather common in our area.

Opportunistic Omnivores

Red-bellied Woodpeckers weren't always common in our region. These omnivorous birds pushed north and northeast from their original southern range, partly due to the prevalence of backyard bird feeding. Red-bellied Woodpeckers change up their diet at feeding stations, selecting seed, peanuts, cracked corn, suet and even nectar and grape jelly as it's offered. Ever the planners, Red-bellied Woodpeckers may wedge large seeds and nuts into wood crevices as a personal cache to return to when food is scarce.

Total Borers

When they're not partaking of our bird buffets, Red-bellied Woodpeckers use their sturdy, chisel-like beaks to bore into trees in search of spiders, beetles and centipedes. Their long, barbed, and sticky tongues search for and retrieve insects within the drilled cavities. A sturdy tail prop and pronged feet—two toes that reach up and two that reach down—ensure the Red-bellied Woodpecker can sturdily explore vertical trunks for tasty tidbits.



A Beak for Multiple Functions

A versatile multi-tool, the Red-bellied Woodpecker's beak also serves as a mallet, drumming out resonant beats on loud or hollow objects to proclaim territories and

availability to the opposite sex. Once a woodpecker pairs with a mate, together they will use their beaks to burrow a nest hole a foot deep into a dead tree. They'll line the nest with woodchips created in the excavation.

Nesting Habits

Both male and female Red-bellied Woodpeckers work to incubate the nest of 3–8 white eggs and feed nestlings. Reluctant nestlings wait nearly a month before fledging, then continue to return to their parents for safety and food for several more weeks.

Misleading Name

Named for one of their least distinct features—a slight rusty region on the lower belly—the Red-bellied Woodpecker is more notable for its more visible zebra-stripe pattern up its back, white chest and red nape and cap (males) or red nape (females). Juveniles are muted with a brownish cap. ■



Red-bellied Woodpeckers are happy to consume a variety of food sources at your feeding stations, including—but not limited to: corn (female shown), suet (male shown), grape jelly (male shown), and Joe's Mix (female shown).

What's on a Bird Lover's Christmas List?

We polled our staff to find what they want most for their homes and yards.

Create Laser Art Minnesota Ornaments

Share your love of Minnesota with these sweet ornaments for any season! They're the perfect memento, gift or reminder of home and look great on a tree.



Each is created with laser love in a Minneapolis art studio.

They're crafted from a variety of reclaimed woods, then sanded and finished by hand with a non-toxic, plant-based wood oil.

Choose from lighter woods like birch, maple, ash, oak or darker woods such as cherry, cedar, fir, mahogany. Each tree is unique and subtle variations in wood tone make each ornament unique as well!

Beautiful Leaf Birdhouses



Beautiful Leaf birdhouses are made by hand in Detroit Lakes, Minnesota from reclaimed barn wood and found items like birch bark, lichen and stones. The Beautiful Leaf company has been supplying bird houses to All Seasons Wild Bird Stores for 27 years!

Mr. Bird Seed Shapes

Mr. Bird was started in 1996 in San Antonio, Texas and is still operated by Birch and Velma Smith. Their collection of seed products makes great holiday gifts. The solid seed **Frosty Snowman** comes with a hanging net. The grapevine **Seed Angel** is decorated with seed, millet sprays and dried floral. The **Rustic Wreath** is a grapevine wreath decorated with premium seed, juniper and millet sprays.

Their darling wooden **Casitas wren houses** are covered in treats for the birds. In the spring after the food is gone, move the house to a suitable nesting site.

Seed balls and shapes are solid premium seed (some with pecans and peanuts) and come with a raffia or jute hanger. Select from products like their **Ollie Owl**, **Christmas Bell**, **Seed and Nut Ornament**, and **Little Star Ornament**.



LoonTune

The LoonTune creates both the wail and tremolo sounds of the Common Loon. The birch handles come from renewable forests located in northern Minnesota. The LoonTune is made, assembled and packaged in the Twin Cities.



Stan's Books

Bird lovers will enjoy these selections by local resident, naturalist, wildlife photographer and prolific author Stan Tekiela.



A Year in Nature with Stan Tekiela—A Naturalist's Notes on the Seasons

Learn from the expert in this collection of some of the 500 newspaper columns from Stan's 20 year long Nature Smart series.

Backyard Birds—Welcomed Guests at our Garden and Feeders

The book guides the reader through the lives of the most popular backyard birds. The stunning photography captures the birds in action. For more than 30 years Stan has "fed birds not only to draw them closer, but also to observe their behaviors and learn more about them."



Wild Birds—North America's Most Unique Birds

Showcasing 28 bird species with breathtaking photography and fascinating facts, this book is a delight. Get to know North America's birds this summer! ■

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.