



# BIRD'S-EYE VIEW

Volume 26 Issue 5 | September/October 2019

**ALL SEASONS  
WILD BIRD  
STORE**

**BIRDS' MULTI-TOOLS:**

# Fancy feet!

**Mealworms**

**September/October Seasonal Notes**



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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.

## SUPPLEMENTAL FEEDING

By Minnetonka Manager CAROL CHENAULT

# Versatile Treats: Mealworms

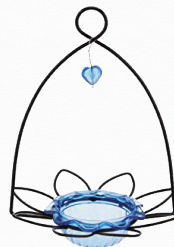
Many birds—not only orioles and bluebirds—enjoy mealworms and will benefit throughout the year from the protein, fat and fiber they provide.

Mealworms are actually the larval form of the mealworm beetle, also known as the darkling beetle. They are not slimy but rather easy to work with. Serving mealworms will aid your birds throughout the winter cold and into spring reproduction and summer nestling and fledgling feeding.

Birds attracted to mealworms—in the winter and throughout the year—include cardinals, nuthatches, chickadees and woodpeckers. During Minnesota's spring and summer, mealworms also benefit Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, orioles, bluebirds and Scarlet Tanagers.

### Live Mealworms

Since their movement attracts attention, birds seem to prefer live mealworms. Live mealworms should be served in a smooth-sided cup or container with 1-2" high sides. Live mealworms need to be stored in the refrigerator. Using a window feeder brings the birds up close for excellent viewing!



*This flower-style dish feeder is both pretty and practical for serving mealworms.*

### Dried Mealworms

Dried mealworms are very versatile and never spoil. They can be mixed right in with your birdseed in a hopper, tray, tube or dish-style feeder. Sprinkle dried mealworms with olive oil for extra nutrition. In the spring and summer, soaking the dried mealworms in nectar and serving them in a dish feeder attracts orioles.



*Purchase dried mealworms in a bucket or a pouch.*

## My First Favorite Bird

We started feeding the birds when I was a very young boy growing up in Bloomington, near the Minnesota River bluffs. Wildlife and birds were abundant due to the lush habitat and mature oak trees surrounding us. Being that I was young, I was also into watching Saturday morning cartoons and one of my favorites was a show called Woody Woodpecker.

Woody was best known for his cackling, laughing call and to this day, that's the thing that I remember the most about him. Something like this: *Haa-ha-ha-ha-haaa, haa-ha-ha-ha-haaa, hahahaha-haaa.*

My love of Woody only increased after I first saw my real life Woody Woodpecker, the enormous and impressive Pileated Woodpecker. They weren't common in our neighborhood, but every once in a while you'd see them attached to or fluttering between the large oaks. Their call sounded nothing like the cackle of Woody, but I learned to discern it from a distance and could readily recognize it after a while.

It was always very exciting whenever I'd spot one and try and follow it through the trees. We didn't use suet to feed the birds back then, so the Pileated wasn't common in our yard or at the feeders, but I loved them more than any other bird at the time. Now, it's very common to attract them to suet and peanut feeders and yet I still get very excited every time I spot one.

There is certainly something extremely alluring and timeless about these majestic birds. They have a beauty that's striking, yet it's easy to see how they could be related to something much more prehistoric. I've always wondered what the creator of Woody Woodpecker was thinking when he conjured the cackling character for the cartoon. Or maybe he just heard the laughing call and took it from there...*Haa-ha-ha-ha-haaa, haa-ha-ha-ha-haaa, hahahaha-haaa.*

~Dave Netten



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## Best Mealworm Products

### Our Picks

#### 1. EASY MEALWORM FEEDING

For really easy dried mealworm feeding, select a suet cake, seed cake, bell or seed cylinder that includes dried mealworms within the product. *Shown: Mealworm and Peanut suet cake by Pacific Bird and Co.*

#### 2. DROLL YANKEES: BO'S MARMALADE FEEDER

Great for offering treats to orioles and more. The cup is easily removable for cleaning and is made of durable polycarbonate. Use this feeder to offer grape jelly, an orange half, or mealworms to a variety of birds.

#### 3. HANGING ORIOLE FLOWER FEEDER

With perching areas shaped like the petals of a flower, this oriole feeder provides pegs for orange halves and an orange plastic bowl for serving grape jelly, live mealworms, or dried mealworms soaked in nectar.



Photo by Bob McFarlin

## Upside-Down Suet Feeders

### Favor Clinging Birds; Discourage Grackles and Starlings

#### 1. GREEN SOLUTIONS UPSIDE-DOWN SUET FEEDER

The Green Solutions recycled upside-down feeder holds one standard-size suet cake and is made from 10 plastic containers. Because this bird feeder is made from durable recycled plastic, it's virtually maintenance free. The feeder screens have rust-resistant polyester powder-coat finish, so clean-up is easy. Guaranteed never to fade, crack or split. Fasteners are stainless steel for extra durability.



#### 2. BIRDS' CHOICE RECYCLED DOUBLE UPSIDE-DOWN SUET FEEDER

This is a great suet feeder to discourage pesky birds. Woodpeckers can cling upside-down to eat the suet. Other birds, like starlings, grackles, and crows can't access the suet because they can't cling upside-down. It has a vinyl-coated grid that the birds can cling to. It holds 4 suet cakes and is easy to fill by simply lifting the roof. Made from recycled plastic and milk jugs, it's guaranteed to never crack, split, or fade. Includes a hanging cable.



# Bird feet:

# AVIAN MULTI-TOOLS

Pause to consider the functions required of various birds' feet: perching, clinging, walking, swimming, preening, carrying objects, egg rolling, mating displays, and even heat loss regulation. It turns out that a foot's functions emerge as an arrangement of the toes.

## The Toes Do the Work

Birds are considered *digitigrade*, which means that they generally walk on their toes, not on their entire foot. Most birds have 4 toes. How these toes are arranged will tell us a lot about their habits.

## Toes of Perching Birds

Songbirds are considered perching birds. They have independent, flexible toes, with one facing backwards and three facing forward, best for grasping perches. This is called *anisodactyl*.



Pine Siskin:  
*anisodactyl (perching) foot*

When perching birds sit, a tendon on the backside of their foot automatically flexes, locking their toes around a perch, like a branch. When their feet are in this position, their toes are locked in place—so sleeping birds don't fall. As the bird stands up, the tendon releases.

## Toes of Water Birds

Water birds, like ducks, have webbing between their toes for swimming. Gulls also have similar webbed feet to provide more surface area for walking in soft mud near water.



A Snowy Egret uses its yellow toes as lures

Wading birds, like herons, have long toes which help spread their weight over a large area to help walking on soft surfaces near the water's edge. The Snowy Egret has bright yellow toes that it wiggles as lures to attract fish.

## Toes of Raptors

Raptors, like hawks, eagles, and owls use their large claws to capture, kill, and carry prey with their feet. Owl feet are even more

unique in that they can also rotate one toe forward, so they have three toes forward and one toe backwards for perching.

## Toes of Clinging Birds

The toes of clinging birds, such as woodpeckers, are arranged differently from perching birds. They have *zygodactyl* feet, which means that two toes face forward and two toes face backwards. Owls and most parrots also have *zygodactyl* feet. This foot shape allows these birds to climb up, down and along the trunk of a tree, and to hang upside-down.

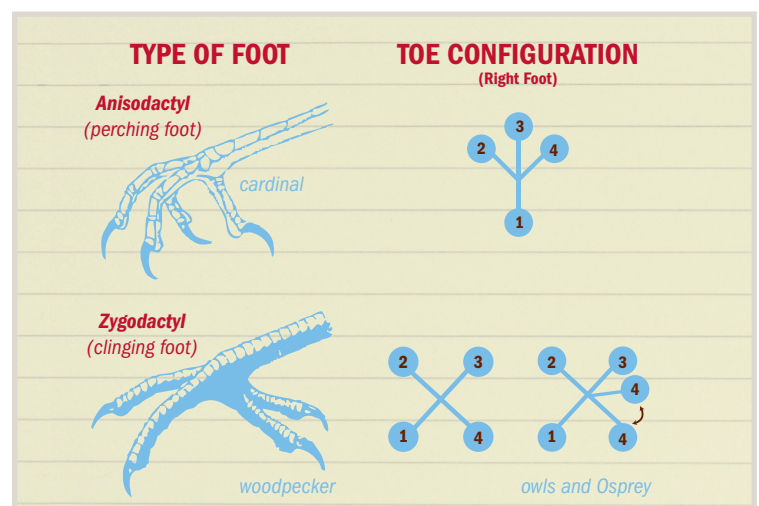


Pileated Woodpecker:  
*zygodactyl (clinging) foot*

With this *zygodactyl* arrangement, woodpeckers can access upside-down suet feeders while most other birds cannot. An upside-down suet feeder can eliminate suet raiders like Red-winged Blackbirds, starlings, grackles and crows, since they cannot cling upside down as easily as woodpeckers.

## A "Hybrid" Foot

White-breasted Nuthatches hang upside-down, but do not have *zygodactyl* feet. Instead, you might classify nuthatches as perching/clinging hybrids: their toes are still arranged as a perching bird, but they have an extra large claw on one backward-facing toe that allows them to keep a grip better than most other perching birds. ■







# Seasonal Notes

By Minnetonka Manager CAROL CHENAULT

## September: WEEK BY WEEK



Week 1	2nd Week	3rd Week	4th Week
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Orioles leave Minnesota to overwinter in the neo-tropics.</li> <li>✓ Migrating <b>hummingbirds</b> will continue to visit nectar feeders into October.</li> <li>✓ <b>Wild Turkeys, Wood Ducks, Blue Jays</b> and <b>Red-bellied Woodpeckers</b> feast on acorns.</li> <li>✓ <b>Crows</b> gather in communal groups.</li> <li>✓ Watch for <b>Cedar Waxwings</b> gobbling mountain ash trees' ripe orange fruit.</li> <li>✓ Warbler migration continues: look for <b>Chestnut-sided</b> and <b>Magnolia Warblers</b>.</li> </ul>  <p><i>Tip:</i> Switch to <b>Golden Safflower</b> while grackles and red-wings are flocking in migration. It is less appealing to them.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Now is the peak bird migration over Hawk Ridge in Duluth.</li> <li>✓ <b>Ruby-throated hummingbirds</b> leave northern Minnesota but more southern parts of the state will continue to see them.</li> </ul>  <p><i>Tip:</i> Indian meal moths are very active in September. Store your seed in tins on the deck, in the garage or in the shed. To remove moths, <b>install a sticky trap</b> specifically for Indian meal moths (sold in our stores).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Some <b>Blue Jays</b> migrate south out of MN but others from Canada will be here all winter. In-shell Peanuts are a favorite food for their winter caches.</li> <li>✓ The first <b>Dark-eyed Juncos</b> arrive.</li> </ul> <p><i>Tip:</i> Sprinkle <b>Finches' Choice</b> on the ground for Juncos and returning native sparrows.</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Fall color shows red in Virginia creeper vines, sumac and red maples.</li> <li>✓ Birdbaths may ice over at night.</li> <li>✓ Watch for the arrival of <b>White-throated Sparrows</b> as they feed on the ground under the bird feeding stations.</li> <li>✓ Groups of <b>Common Loons</b> gather on area lakes in preparation for migration to the Gulf Coast or Atlantic Seaboard.</li> </ul> 

## October: WEEK BY WEEK

Week 1	2nd Week	3rd Week	4th Week
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Watch for migrating waves of <b>American Robins</b> and <b>Cedar Waxwings</b>. They love a fresh birdbath!</li> <li>✓ <b>Golden-crowned</b> and <b>Ruby-crowned Kinglets</b> appear in woodlands as they migrate. The last of the <b>Yellow-rumped Warblers, Palm Warblers, vireos,</b> and <b>flycatchers</b> leave MN for the winter.</li> <li>✓ Large flocks of <b>Red-winged Blackbirds</b> and <b>grackles</b> migrate overhead.</li> <li>✓ <b>Franklin's Gulls</b> remain on area lakes into November.</li> <li>✓ White-lined sphinx moths feed on hosta and petunias in daylight hours.</li> <li>✓ MN loses 3 minutes a day of daylight in October. Take your Vitamin D!</li> </ul> <p><i>Tip:</i> Take time to clean out or take down your birdhouses. If you leave the houses up over the winter, open the side/bottom of the bird house to prevent mice from winter nesting.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Late season butterflies like clouded sulfers, red admirals, painted ladies and a few monarchs can be seen on New England asters and Mexican sunflowers.</li> </ul> <p><i>Tip:</i> Give your feeders a good cleaning before winter. Use a solution of one part bleach to 10 parts hot water or a mild solution of dish detergent. Clean feeders inside and out, including all feeding ports, perches, lids and platforms. Rinse the feeders with clear water for at least 10 seconds and make sure that it's completely dry before refilling. We offer a <b>bird feeder cleaning service</b> if you'd rather have us do it!</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>Turkey Vultures</b> glide southward overhead.</li> <li>✓ <b>Common Loon</b> migration peaks in mid-October but can continue into December, depending on available open water.</li> <li>✓ <b>Fox Sparrows, White-throated and American Tree Sparrows</b> join <b>Dark-eyed Juncos</b> feeding on Finches' Choice on the ground under bird feeders.</li> <li>✓ Waterfowl migration is in full swing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ The majority of eastern chipmunks have begun hibernation.</li> <li>✓ <b>Goldfinches</b> are in their brownish winter plumage but many will visit feeders all winter for Golden Safflower and Nyjer &amp; Chips.</li> <li>✓ Ripe crabapples are a treat for migrating <b>American Robins</b>.</li> <li>✓ Listen for the <b>Tundra Swans</b> migrating high overhead.</li> </ul>  <p><i>Tips:</i> It's time for <b>heated birdbaths</b>. Fill your heated birdbath with white vinegar and let it soak overnight in the house. Scrub it out to remove lime deposits and rinse before returning it outdoors. Fill heated birdbaths with cold water to reduce evaporation and ice formation along the edges.</p> <p>Add some <b>dried mealworms</b> and <b>suets pellets</b> to any seed mix for an extra energy boost.</p>