**FEATURE ARTICLE**

**Summer Birding Guide**

By Wayzata Manager MELISSA BLOCK

Our summer birds are back, building nests and raising their young. Here are some early summer birding tips for providing what they need to thrive during this important time.

**Welcome hummingbirds and orioles**

Hummingbirds and orioles both feed on nectar. You can supply liquid nectar in a feeder or strategically plant nectar-rich plants such as fuchsia, salvia, zinnias, nicotiana, honeysuckle and petunias to attract these colorful birds. For best results, opt for red-colored blossoms. Orioles especially enjoy grape jelly, orange halves and mealworms (the latter especially when feeding their young). Consider mixing dried mealworms with nectar for a treat orioles will absolutely love.

Looking for an oriole feeder? Our Oriolefest feeder is a staff favorite and includes feeding dishes for nectar and jelly and a post for an orange half. We also carry an oriole feeder made out of recycled materials by Bird’s Choice (see page 4) that has dishes for grape jelly and mealworms, and spikes for mounting orange halves. Clean feeders every 2–3 days using a bleach solution, (see page 2) and rinse well. Avoid ants by installing an ant trap. Spritz nectar ports with cooking spray or mint extract to deter bees and wasps.

**Provide special care for baby birds**

It’s a common dilemma: should you help a baby bird that falls from a nest or leave it alone? The majority of birds we think are abandoned are healthy fledglings and should be left alone; their parents are nearby watching and tending to them.

If the baby bird is sparsely feathered and not capable of hopping or walking, it’s most likely a nestling. Intervene if you have reason to believe it’s in danger. Look for a nearby nest and place it inside. Don’t worry about leaving a scent; most birds have a poor sense of smell.

**Offer a source of clean, moving water**

Consider installing a Water Wiggler (see photo, page 2) in your birdbath. This product creates water movement, which not only attracts birds, but also prevents mosquitoes from laying their eggs in the birdbath. (Continued page 2…)
Summer Birding Guide (...continued from page 1)

Keep your birdbaths clean using a bleach solution (9 parts water to 1 part bleach), or white vinegar. Be sure to rinse the bath well. Adding a capful of Birdbath Protector helps maintain a clean and healthy birdbath.

**Discourage unwanted window pecking**

At this time of year, birds are very territorial—defending their territory, mate, nest and food sources, so you may find birds repeatedly attacking their reflection in your windows. They think they are attacking a rival bird (but a good-looking one, of course). Break up the bird’s reflection by applying newspaper or soap, or by hanging flash/scare tape to the outside of windows. Once the hormones die down, so will the window attacks!

**Send blackbirds packing**

Two summer visitors that aren’t welcome in our backyards are common blackbirds: the common grackle and European starling. Both birds come in large groups and eat vast quantities of our birdseed, not leaving much for our other birds. The easiest solution is to use white safflower or golden safflower. Cardinals, chickadees, house finches, grosbeaks and other favorite birds will enjoy this seed. Be careful not to mix the safflower with other varieties—starlings and grackles will just kick the safflower out to get at the other goodies.

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In Depth: Baltimore Orioles

By White Bear Lake Manager BOB ELLIS

One of the most striking songbirds to visit backyards is the oriole. The vivid orange and black coloring of a male Baltimore oriole is unmistakable and dramatic. While both sexes display a white wing bar, the female’s palette is more subdued, with a dull yellow body and grayish-brown wings. Young orioles appear similar to females in color. Juvenile males molt into their adult orange and black while wintering in Central America. You may hear orioles before you see them: the flute-like call of the Baltimore oriole is clear and loud.

Oriole nesting and habitat

Baltimore orioles make their summer home in broadleaf woodlands and forest edges over all of Minnesota—in fact, over most of the eastern United States. A Baltimore oriole’s nest is quite distinctive; the female weaves a pouch from long strands of plant material on a high branch, very often in a cottonwood tree, here in Minnesota. She then lines it with grass, feathers or even animal fur. Orioles will utilize soft nesting material such as yarn and cotton if offered.

Attracting orioles

Orioles eat insects and fruit and can be attracted to feeders that offer nectar, mealworms, grape jelly, or fruit—especially oranges. They’re sometimes spotted feeding from hummingbird feeders if they can manage a grip, but prefer oriole-specific nectar feeders that feature larger ports and roomier perches.

Grape jelly or orange halves are good offerings during spring and fall migration. While orioles will continue to visit a jelly feeder throughout the summer, mealworms are attractive to oriole parents; their growing young need the protein. Once the young can fly, the parents will bring them right to the food, which is much easier than the constant ferrying of food the parents do up to this point. Use a dish feeder for jelly or mealworms—or, better yet, both at once—to make a particularly versatile and successful oriole feeder.

Identifying oriole species

You may encounter Orchard orioles in open wooded areas in southern and western Minnesota. Orchard orioles are smaller, have a deep chestnut-red body and sport a black hood and wings. Another oriole species is the western Bullock’s oriole. These birds look similar to Baltimore orioles.

Classifying orioles

Orioles are in a group of birds known as icterids. It may surprise you that this group also includes birds that most backyard birders would rather not see—blackbirds, grackles and cowbirds. Compare the outline of an oriole to a red-winged blackbird. You’re likely to notice the family resemblance.

Mealworms Keep Orioles Coming Back

By White Bear Lake Manager BOB ELLIS

Live or dried mealworms make a great supplement for orioles.

A large portion of an oriole’s diet consists of insects, especially when they are raising young from mid-June through July. Mealworms are a wonderful way to keep your orioles coming throughout the summer months. Other birds will appreciate the source of protein as well. Don’t be surprised if bluebirds, chickadees, nuthatches and many others make themselves regular guests of your mealworm feeder.

Our locations carry live mealworms in various quantities as well as dried mealworms for those folks not sure if they want to keep live worms in their refrigerator.

We carry a splendid orange glass dish feeder that can be used for both live and dried mealworms or to offer grape jelly. This feeder is also available in deep blue if you prefer.
Birdola Seed Stackers

Birdola Seed Stackers are a great new way to offer premium seeds. These disc-shaped cakes are held together by natural gelatin. Their cake form prevents birds from “sweeping” their bills through the seed and spilling it on the ground. The No Waste Stacker is a 100% edible cake with no hulls, no waste and no hassle.

To use, simply slide the center hole of the disc-shaped Seed Stacker over the rod on the Vista Dome or EZ Feeder. You can even use all three varieties of Seed Stackers at once.

Aspects Mini-Hummzinger

Aspects Mini-Hummzinger is a hummingbird feeder that is easy to clean and easy to fill. It has an 8-oz. capacity, three feeding ports and a built-in ant moat. The top just snaps off for easy filling and cleaning. Just take the feeder apart and throw it in your dishwasher to clean!

Bird’s Choice Feeder

This great feeder is constructed almost entirely of recycled plastic materials! A clear acrylic roof gives you a great view of your orioles and protects your food offerings from rain. Spikes on the bottom of the feeder are great for offering orange halves, and the plastic dishes are perfect for either grape jelly or mealworms. The bright orange coloring is attractive and helps catch the attention of the orioles.

The poly-lumber used to build this feeder is made from recycled plastic containers, making it extremely durable and easy to clean. Ten plastic containers were diverted from landfills by this feeder alone!

Aspects Mini-Hummzinger feeder

Bird’s Choice recycled oriole feeder

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