



BIRD'S-EYE VIEW

Volume 18 Issue 3 | July/August 2011

ALL SEASONS
WILD BIRD
STORE

Blackbirds

When is a black bird a *blackbird*?

Say "bye-bye" to ill-behaved pests

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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.

FEATURE ARTICLE

Summer's (Least) Wanted...



By Wayzata Manager MELISSA BLOCK

Just when we get to enjoy the warmth and beauty that comes with longer days, along come those nasty pests! Nuisance birds, pesky mammals and annoying insects are all a part of summers in Minnesota.

Strategically select feeders

Grackles, starlings, and red-wing blackbirds can overwhelm feeders and crowd out other birds. To deter these large nuisance birds, try using the **Droll Yankees® Yankee Whipper®** feeder.

The perches on the Yankee Whipper are calibrated to drop away from the feeding port when larger birds land. Cardinals and chickadees love this feeder!

To keep red-winged blackbirds from dominating your feeders, use feeders that physically exclude

them. Feeders with no perches, short perches, caged tube feeders and Nyjer® feeders without trays are designed to discourage larger birds.

Adjust your seed mix

Avoid starlings by using our **Bye-Bye Starling** mix. It consists of hard-shelled seeds (black oil sunflower, stripe sunflower, safflower, and millet) that starlings have a hard time cracking open. Customers have also told us that Nutrasaff™ golden safflower or white safflower helps to keep both the starlings and grackles away.

Repel bees and ants

Bees and ants on hummingbird and oriole nectar feeders can also be pesky problems. We suggest treating nectar ports with a dab of pure mint extract to repel (*Continued page 4 . . .*)



20th Anniversary

Thanks to all of you who celebrated with us during our 20th Anniversary Sale in June!

We have thoroughly enjoyed serving you and will do our best to continue to earn your business every day.

We always say that we can tell a lot about a person just by the simple fact that they feed birds. Our customers are some of the most enjoyable, honest and caring people you'll ever meet. It makes what we do so much fun because you are so wonderful to interact with every day.

Times have certainly changed how we do what we do over the years, but our values have stayed the same: we believe in treating our employees and customers with kindness, fairness and respect and the rest tends to take care of itself. Family values in a family business can still stand the test of time. Thank you for your continued support!

~ Al and Dave Notten



Become a Frequent Feeder Member

Members receive a 10% discount on purchases throughout the year and special member-only offers. Register or renew at any All Seasons Wild Bird Store location for just \$15/1 year or \$25/2 years (may not be applied to gift certificates, delivery, services or membership fees).

JULY
&
AUGUST

Mid-Summer

By Minnetonka Manager CAROL CHENAULT



- Discourage invading grackles and squirrels with a **Droll Yankees® Yankee Whipper®** feeder. The perches are calibrated to drop away from the feeding port when larger birds or squirrels visit. Other songbirds, like cardinals and finches, love it!
- Offer mealworms and suet pellets in addition to seed to provide high energy, high protein fare for parent birds and nestlings. Starlings and grackles a problem? Try the **Droll Yankees® X-1 Seed Saver Feeder**. The cover lowers close to the feeder's tray to discourage larger birds from feeding. Smaller birds like cardinals and chickadees can easily sneak in for a treat!
- Eliminate mess and avoid seed germination in your garden and patio areas by using no-hull, no-waste seed like our **Medium Chips** (of black oil sunflower) or **Kracker Jax** mix.
- Provide an **in-shell peanut feeder at a distance from your other feeding stations to draw beneficial blue jays away from easily intimidated smaller birds and fledglings.**
- Provide **Bye-Bye Starling, Nutrasaff™ golden safflower** or **white safflower** to discourage European starlings from invading your yard.
- Dab nectar ports with mint extract to repel bees and wasps from hummingbird and oriole nectar feeders.
- Keep ants out of nectar feeders by hanging an ant moat filled with water above feeders.
- Remember to scrub birdbaths with 9 parts water to 1 part bleach and rinse well. Use **Birdbath Protector** to maintain a safe and healthy birdbath.
- Plant additional sunflowers by July 1st in your garden to provide blooms into the fall. Goldfinches, house finches and chickadees will eat from the seed heads as the plants mature.
- Planning a summer vacation?** Purchase the **Feed and Fill Service** to keep your feeders full while you are on vacation. Know someone who loves the birds but can't manage the bulk seed? Set them up with delivery service anywhere in the metro. Call our Wayzata store for details



What's a *Blackbird*?

By Wayzata Manager MELISSA BLOCK

“Blackbird” can be a misleading term!

Though sharing a similar plumage, black-colored backyard birds come from several different biological families, including: *Icteridae* (red-winged blackbirds, grackles, and cowbirds) *Sturnidae* (European starlings), and *Corvidae* (crows and ravens). Here's a guide to common backyard black birds:

Family *Icteridae*



Clockwise from top: Red-winged blackbird, brown-headed cowbird, common grackle

Though Icterids are diverse in color and lifestyle, you can best identify them by their long, sharp bills. Icterids include many familiar black species of birds, such as grackles and cowbirds, but also include colorful birds like meadowlarks, bobolinks, and orioles. Common black Icterids, such as those shown above, often travel together in mixed flocks.

Red-winged blackbird

This common backyard bird is usually the first of the summer migrants to arrive. The male red-winged blackbird has a red and yellow patch on its shoulder, but sometimes only the yellow shows. The female is more subdued in color, with a streaked brown body and white eyebrow. Red-winged blackbirds love swamps

and marshy areas. The bulk of their diet is insects, but they love almost any kind of birdseed available!

Common grackle

The common grackle is another summer migrant to Minnesota. The male has a black body and an iridescent blue/black head. The females are similar to males, but smaller and a little duller. Grackles dine on fruit, insects, and, of course, birdseed.

Brown-headed cowbird

Brown-headed cowbirds are the only parasitic bird in Minnesota. Instead of building their own nests, females lay eggs in existing nests of other species, abandoning their young to be raised by unsuspecting foster parents. Like other blackbirds, brown-headed cowbirds are summer migrants to Minnesota. Males are a glossy black with a chocolate brown head. Females are slightly duller in color and have a streaked chest. Cowbirds eat insects and seeds, the latter which includes most any kind of birdseed.

Family *Sturnidae*

This family of non-native birds are sharp-billed, with shorter tails than Icterids. The black *Sturnidae* you're likely to spot in your neighborhood is the European starling.

European starling



European starling

Although non-native, European starlings reside in Minnesota year-round. In the fall and winter, starlings are an iridescent purple/black covered with white speckles. As their feather tips wear in the spring and summer, the white speckles disappear, and they take on an all-iridescent purple/black appearance. Their bills also

change color: from grayish in the fall, to yellow in the spring. Females and males model the same colors. Their diet includes insects, and all the bird seed and suet they can find.

Family *Corvidae*



American crow (left) and common raven (right)

Their large size, long and strong bill, and nostrils covered by forward-pointing bristles characterize this family of perching birds. Aside from black birds such as crows and ravens, the *Corvidae* family also includes jays and magpies.

American crow

The American crow is a large (18") bird with an all-black body, bill, legs and feet. Males and females look alike. This highly intelligent bird—it's been observed using tools to obtain food and even inventing games—eats fruits, insects, mammals, fish, carrion and anything put out in a bird feeder.

Common raven

The Common raven is larger than the American crow (24") with a large, powerful bill. More slender and less social than crows, ravens are more commonly found farther north in Minnesota. Among the smartest of all birds, the raven is a terrific problem solver. ■

DID YOU KNOW...?

Starlings are renowned mimics, not only imitating the calls of other birds but also the sounds of ringing phones, family pets and sounds heard around the farm!

Summer's Least Wanted

(... continued from page 1)

bees and wasps. Bee guards—mesh inserts for some hummingbird feeder models—also help keep bees out of nectar.

The best solution we've found for discouraging ants is to hang an ant moat above your nectar feeders—water creates an impassible physical barrier, since ants can't swim! Pick up a stand-alone ant moat for existing feeders, or consider purchasing a feeder model with a built-in ant moat, like the

Aspects® HummZinger or **Bird's Choice™ Oriole-Fest** feeders.

Baffle furry nibblers

If you're a backyard birder, chances are you've battled squirrels or raccoons at some point! We've got plenty of strategies to help you combat fuzzy thieves. A good starting point: hang feeders on a pole system that is at least 10–12 feet away from any jumping-off point for the squirrels, then mount a baffle (such as our **Woodlink® Wrap Around Squirrel Baffle**) to prevent both squirrels and

raccoons from climbing up the pole. The baffle needs to be mounted at least five feet off the ground. ■



Woodlink® 14" Wrap Around Squirrel Baffle

CAROL'S FAVORITE FEEDER

Squirrel Buster® Plus Squirrel and large bird deterrent

If the best viewing in your yard happens to be a location that squirrels can easily access, try the **Brome Bird Care Squirrel Buster® Plus**. This feeder is resistant to squirrels and large birds and it's effective in deterring red and gray squirrels as well as grackles, starlings, doves and blue jays.



Squirrel Buster Plus components are designed to be assembled and dismantled easily by hand, without tools, and to fit into your dishwasher. Clean feeders are as important to wild birds as clean dishes are to

humans. Grimy bird feeders can be a source of illness that can be fatal for birds. With Squirrel Buster Plus detachable components it is effortless to provide the birds you love with a safe and healthy feeder. The Squirrel Buster Plus features UV-stabilized ABs and polycarbonate resins, rust-proof/powder-coated aluminum and stainless steel components. ■

GREAT IDEAS



Ant Moat Keep ants out of nectar feeders

The **Nectar Protector® Jr.** is a great way to keep the ants from invading your hummingbird and oriole feeders. Simply hang the red dish above your feeder, fill it with water and refill as needed. Your birds will be happy, your ants will not.



Suet Plugs Won't melt in summer heat

A lot of people think you should only use suet in the cold-weather months. We strongly disagree! We actually sell much more suet in the summer than the winter. Don't miss out on attracting all species of woodpeckers, chickadees and nuthatches to your yard this summer. Our favorite is **Attractor™ No Melt Suet Plugs!** They are cold rendered, don't spoil or melt and the birds love them.

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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Sign up for *Bird Bytes*, our weekly e-newsletter, and receive timely information about backyard birding, store events and exclusive discounts.