



# BIRD'S-EYE VIEW

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ALL SEASONS  
WILD BIRD  
STORE

## Thrush or Thrasher?

+ Birdhouse Tips  
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.

#### FEATURE ARTICLE

By Guest Contributor MELISSA BLOCK

## Save the **SNAGS!**

### WHAT DO YOU THINK WHEN YOU SEE A DEAD TREE? BIRDS, AND OTHER WILDLIFE, THINK "JACKPOT!"

Dead trees that are left upright to decompose naturally, called *snags*, are very useful for wildlife habitat, especially birds. Over 85 species of birds use nearly every part of a dead tree. Snags are often called *wildlife trees* by foresters.

### SNAGS ARE A SOURCE OF SHELTER

Snags start to fall apart as they age. The bark loosens and falls off. Birds, bats, squirrels, raccoons, and insects will all use snags for shelter. Bats will look for snags with loose bark to find shelter. Some butterflies also use the loose

bark for shelter. Birds use the cavities for nesting and for protection in bad weather.

House Wrens, chickadees and woodpeckers will excavate holes for nesting. A snag also provides mosses and lichen for nest building.

### SNAGS ARE LIKE A PANTRY

Snags are correlated to the

number and distribution of a variety of urban woodpeckers. As the wood starts to soften, insects start to inhabit. Woodpeckers love soft wood to peck into. Bark beetles lay their eggs in the rotting wood and birds and animals eat the insect larvae. Woodpeckers, flickers, nuthatches, and sapsuckers will listen for insect larvae in snags. They find food in the larval and pupal stages of insects. This is important especially in the winter. Snags also provide great places for squirrels and birds to hide food.

### SNAGS PROVIDE LEAF-FREE PERCHING

Snags provide perching areas where birds, especially eagles, hawks and owls, can watch for either predators or prey. Birds can also find hiding places in the nooks and crannies of a dead tree.

### SNAGS FEED THE SOIL

Snags also provide a means for important nutrients to cycle back into the soil. As the wood decomposes it aids in new plant growth. Many species of fungi grow only on dead wood, breaking it down. (continued on p.2)



## Feeding the Birds isn't Just Good for the Birds

In the hustle and bustle and news cycles of today's world, it seems to me that more and more people are questioning their purpose and looking for meaning more than ever before. Maybe it's just a product of my middle age, but as we continue to be bombarded with ads, emails, texts and anything else that we can view on a screen, I feel we are losing more and more of our human connection to one another and our connection with nature.

Our business is part of an industry association that has done quite a bit of research on the benefits of bird feeding and the data is clear: **we, as humans, benefit from the activity of feeding the birds.** It lowers blood pressure, lowers stress and improves mood among many other things. These are real and measurable benefits to our health. Seems much better than taking another pill to me.

Don't get me wrong, bird feeding helps the birds too, but us knowing that is one of the big reasons we do it and also why it feels so good.

But the biggest reason it feels good is **our desire for connection with and enjoyment of the natural world.** Maybe you've heard the term *forest bathing*? It's essentially the simple act of walking through a forest and bathing in nature, which has been proven to have many of the same type of benefits.

The industry association that I mentioned has just launched a national campaign titled *Feed the Birds, Reap the Benefits* to bring awareness to this phenomenon on a larger scale and to try and attract new hobbyists. You probably already feel many of the benefits since you're part of our family of bird feeders, but it's encouraging to know that it's a proven benefit and also a great reason to share it with your friends and family members. To good health!

~All and Dave Netten

### Join the Conversation!

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## FEATURE ARTICLE (CONTINUED FROM P.1)

### PLAN FOR SNAGS IN YOUR LANDSCAPE

If you have room in your landscape, plan for at least one snag, even if it's a small one. Keep an old or damaged tree to provide wildlife habitat. Dying or dead trees can often remain intact for many years. Of course, if a dead or dying tree poses a safety concern, then consult with a certified

arborist or municipal tree expert. Maybe the tree is still sound, but some of the branches need to be removed. If you can, leave those branches on the ground to rot and provide habitat. ■

## STAFF PICKS

By Minnetonka Manager CAROL CHENAULT

## Birdhouse Tips

### Open Nesters and Cavity Nesters

Our favorite songbirds can be *open nesters* or *cavity nesters*. Open nesters build or weave nests out in the open in cattails, bushes, trees or on top of ledges.

Cavity nesters use a birdhouse/nest box or hole in a tree to raise their young. Cavity nesters include: House Wrens, Black-capped chickadees, Eastern Bluebirds, Purple Martins, nuthatches, Tree Swallows and woodpeckers.



A house for cavity nesters

### Reduce Competition

The competition for natural cavities is fierce between cavity nesters. You can help by providing birdhouses for wrens and chickadees. They are the most likely to use backyard birdhouses. Check our *Nesting Notes* ([wildbirdstore.com/resources/getting-started/tips-for-bird-houses](http://wildbirdstore.com/resources/getting-started/tips-for-bird-houses)) to see if you have appropriate habitat for bluebirds.

### Avoid Predation

Hanging a chickadee or wren birdhouse from a shepherd's hook with a baffle on the pole to prevent predation is a best practice. Clean out the birdhouse between nestings. House wrens will raise two broods a year and will reuse the house if you clean it out. See our *Nesting Notes* online or in our stores for more information.



### Bluebird House

The PVC Bluebird Nest box (above) is a bluebird favorite. This weather-resistant house is made from durable PVC and a composite roof. Gently squeeze the sides of the house to remove for easy nest monitoring. Mount on a rebar pole with a conduit cover. Buff the pole with steel wool to protect the nest from climbing predators. Poles and houses are sold separately in our neighborhood stores. This house is also a favorite of chickadees.



### Wren Houses

This house is made from 98% recycled material, easy-to-clean and weather-resistant poly lumber. The house features a seamless overhang roof, vents and drainage. The roof lifts opens for easy cleaning.

This recycled wren house features a large roof overhang and is made out of recycled poly lumber. To clean out, simply remove the clear plexiglass at the base of this house. This house will never rot, split or crack.



# THRUSHES & Thrashers

Similar Names,  
Different Families



**Wood Thrushes** (Family *Turdidae*) are related to American Robins.



**Brown Thrashers** (Family *Mimidae*) are related to Northern Mockingbirds.

An easy way to tell these two birds apart: Brown Thrashers have yellow eyes.

With their beautiful songs, alliterate names and often remarkable resemblances, it's easy to confuse thrushes and thrashers. Both are *Passerine*—perching—songbirds, but their family tree splits into unique branches.

## Thrushes are part of the *Turdidae* Family

Turdids found in Minnesota include: **American Robins**, **Eastern Bluebirds**, **Veerys**, and **Swainson's**, **Hermit** and **Wood Thrushes**. All are known for their large eyes, stout legs and feet, straight and medium-sized bills, and rich, flute-like songs.

Members of this family have spotted plumage as juveniles, although many species, like robins and bluebirds, shed their spots as adults.

In the Twin Cities area, we are most likely to see American Robins, Eastern Bluebirds and Wood Thrushes. Swainson's and Hermit Thrushes and Veerys range in the more northern parts of our state. Most turdids migrate, yet some robins and bluebirds may overwinter.

## Thrashers are part of the *Mimidae* Family

Peterson's Field Guide to Birds of North America describes mimids as "excellent songsters; some mimic other birds. Strong-legged, usually longer tailed than thrushes, bill usually longer and more decurved."

Common members of Family Mimidae are **Northern Mockingbirds**, **Gray Catbirds** and **Brown Thrashers**, while only the latter two species are typical to Minnesota.

Stan Tekiela, author of *Birds of Minnesota Field Guide*, calls Brown Thrashers "prodigious singers" because the male has over 1,100 documented song types—the largest repertoire of all North American Birds. ■

**Family Turdidae**

- Spots (as juveniles or adults)
- Medium-sized, slender bills
- Stout legs and feet
- Eat fruit, insects, worms, snails
- Rich, flute song
- Partial to complete migration
- Found worldwide

**Members:**

- American Robin (juvenile)
- Eastern Bluebird (juvenile)
- Hermit Thrush
- Veery
- Swainson's Thrush
- Wood Thrush

**Family Mimidae**

- Long, slender bills
- Longer tails
- Strong legged
- Eat fruit and insects
- Sings in phrases, mimics other birds
- Complete migration
- Found in New World only

**Members:**

- Brown Thrasher
- Northern Mockingbird (not native to MN)
- Gray Catbird

**Fun fact:**  
A mockingbird sings each phrase three times, a thrasher sings each phrase twice, and a catbird sings each phrase once



# Seasonal Notes

By Minnetonka Manager CAROL CHENAULT

## March: WEEK BY WEEK



Week 1	2nd Week	3rd Week	4th Week
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ One of the first signs of spring are the flocks of migrating <b>Tundra Swans</b> and <b>Snow Geese</b> flying high overhead.</li> <li>✓ Watch for early March migrants—male <b>American Robins</b> return before the females, <b>Red-winged Blackbirds</b> and <b>Canada Geese</b>.</li> <li>✓ Spring sounds include <b>Northern Cardinals</b> whistling loudly for long periods to announce territory, cooing male <b>Mourning Doves</b> and loudly honking <b>Canada Geese</b>.</li> <li>✓ <b>Wild Turkeys</b> begin their courtship as toms gobble, flare their tails and strut.</li> </ul> <p><b>Tips:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Mount a <b>Wood Duck house</b> on our high-quality pole with 18" <b>ground twister</b> and protect with a <b>baffle</b>.</li> <li>❑ Clean and repair last year's birdhouses.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>Great Blue Herons</b> return to the edges of ponds and wetlands.</li> <li>✓ March 11, 1878 was the earliest ice out date for Lake Minnetonka. April 13th is the median date.</li> <li>✓ Male <b>Ring-necked Pheasants</b> crow their double squawk to attract a female and proclaim nesting territory.</li> </ul> <p><b>Tips:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Eastern Bluebirds begin returning—be ready for them with <b>live mealworms</b>.</li> <li>❑ Use <b>seed cakes</b> or <b>cylinders</b> to prevent starlings from scattering seed or deer from licking feeders clean at night.</li> </ul>  	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ FIRST OF THE YEAR sightings of <b>Killdeer</b>, <b>Song Sparrows</b>, <b>Brown-headed Cowbirds</b> and <b>Common Grackles</b>.</li> <li>✓ <b>Eastern Chipmunks</b> are above ground and scurrying through yards.</li> <li>✓ <b>Eastern Screech Owls</b> have eggs in the nest.</li> <li>✓ <b>Northern Flickers</b> call.</li> </ul> <p><b>Tips:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Bring feeders to your neighborhood All Seasons store for cleaning—fees apply.</li> <li>❑ Rake and sweep up birdseed debris and dispose of in the trash.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>Eastern Bluebirds</b> choose nest boxes.</li> <li>✓ <b>Red-winged Blackbirds</b> trill loudly and <b>Eastern Phoebe</b>s and <b>Song Sparrows</b> vocalize.</li> <li>✓ <b>Sandhill Cranes</b> and <b>Western Meadowlarks</b> return or migrate through and the first <b>Turkey Vultures</b> return.</li> <li>✓ Male <b>Ruffed Grouse</b> perform drumming displays.</li> <li>✓ Western chorus frogs call from grassy ponds and roadside ditches.</li> </ul> <p><b>Tips:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Use no-mess seed and mixes such as <b>Medium Chips</b> and <b>Kracker Jax</b> for enjoyable bird feeding that leaves no hulls to clean up.</li> </ul>

## April: WEEK BY WEEK

Week 1	2nd Week	3rd Week	4th Week
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ April is our windiest month in Minnesota.</li> <li>✓ Migrating female <b>American Robins</b> return, about a month after the males arrived. Male robins are singing with gusto.</li> <li>✓ Leopard frogs and painted turtles emerge.</li> <li>✓ <b>Belted Kingfishers</b> and <b>Common Loons</b> return</li> <li>✓ Dandelions and crocuses bloom!</li> <li>✓ FIRST OF THE YEAR returning <b>Hermit Thrush</b>, <b>Vesper Sparrow</b>, <b>Fox Sparrow</b>, <b>Ruby-crowned Kinglet</b>. <b>Dark-eyed Juncos</b> will be leaving soon.</li> </ul>  <p><b>Tip:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Supply <b>suet</b> and <b>mealworms</b> to nourish spring migrants while insects are scarce.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>Great Egrets</b>, <b>White Pelicans</b> and <b>mallards</b> return to the open water.</li> <li>✓ <b>Chipping Sparrows</b> and <b>Yellow-rumped Warblers</b> return to backyards. <b>Song Sparrow</b> singing fills the air.</li> <li>✓ The air is alive with the wood frogs barking call and Western chorus frogs "metallic clicker" sounds and the loud rattling call of the <b>Belted Kingfisher</b>.</li> <li>✓ <b>Robins</b> build nests.</li> </ul> <p><b>Tip:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Measure 12 feet from trees and install a pole with a <b>squirrel baffle</b> or for squirrel resistant feeding. See our handout, <i>Discouraging Squirrels</i>, in our stores for advice.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>Brown Thrashers</b> arrive and sing their rich musical phrases, repeated in pairs.</li> <li>✓ <b>Barn Swallows</b> and <b>Yellow-headed Blackbirds</b> return.</li> <li>✓ <b>Mallard Ducks</b> begin to nest.</li> <li>✓ <b>Chickadees</b> select birdhouses and construct nests of moss and fine grasses.</li> <li>✓ FIRST OF THE YEAR <b>House Wrens</b> sing their territories.</li> <li>✓ <b>Broad-winged Hawks</b> return to the northland.</li> </ul> <p><b>Tips:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Hang a <b>Best Nest Builder</b>, made of fine cotton fibers, to supply building materials for nesting birds.</li> <li>❑ Check out our blog at <b>wildbirdstore.com</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Migrating <b>White-throated Sparrows</b> crowd feeding stations.</li> <li>✓ Rafts of <b>coots</b> return to area lakes.</li> <li>✓ <b>Eastern Bluebirds</b> incubate their first clutch of eggs.</li> </ul> <p><b>Tips:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Scrub birdbaths with 9 parts water and 1 part bleach then use <b>Bird Bath Protector</b> to keep it clean.</li> <li>❑ Attract more birds to your birdbath with moving water—use the <b>Water Wiggler</b> to stir the water.</li> <li>❑ Last Friday in April is Arbor Day. Plan to add bird, bee and butterfly friendly plants to your landscape.</li> </ul> 

Put out nectar and grape jelly feeders for hummingbirds and orioles during the last week of April!