



BIRD'S-EYE VIEW

Volume 27 Issue 5 | September/October 2020

ALL SEASONS
WILD BIRD
STORE

TIGERS OF THE SKY

Great Horned Owls

Staff Picks

September/October Seasonal Notes



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Eagan, MN 55122
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WHITE BEAR LAKE

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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.

SEASONAL TASKS

By Minnetonka Manager CAROL CHENAULT

End-of-season Backyard Maintenance

The busy nesting season is winding down and birds are preparing for migration or settling in for the long winter. It's the perfect time to take stock, tidy up and make some changes to your feeding stations.

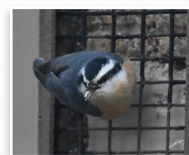
Cleaning Tasks

- ☐ **Take down oriole feeders after the second week of September.** Wash them well with soap and water and disinfect them with either bleach (1:10 solution) or white vinegar (50:50 solution).
- ☐ **Clean out bird houses.** Leave a bird house or two out for the winter to provide shelter as a winter roost for chickadees, nuthatches and Downy Woodpeckers.
- ☐ **Remove lime deposits from heated birdbaths.** Fill the birdbath with a water and white vinegar (50:50 solution) and let it sit overnight. Scrub it out with a birdbath brush the following morning and rinse thoroughly.

Seed and Feeders

- ☐ **Leave hummingbird feeders up.** Hummingbird feeders should stay full of fresh nectar—some female and juvenile hummingbirds remain until late October.

- ☐ **Add feeders for suet and peanut pick-outs** to entice Red-breasted Nuthatches, woodpeckers, White-breasted Nuthatches and Black-capped Chickadees.



A visiting Red-breasted Nuthatch eats suet.

- ☐ **Add a feeding station just for Blue Jays** about 20' from the other feeders to keep them from disturbing smaller birds. They will feast on in-shell peanuts, caching them for later use. Blue Jays warn other birds of impending danger from predators like owls, hawks, cats and snakes. Blue Jays call the alarm and send the other birds fleeing, saving them from hawks like the Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawks during the winter months.
- ☐ **Add a feeder for finches.** Goldfinches remain all year, disguised in their muddy olive winter plumage. Serve Nyjer & Chips, Finches' Choice, Nyjer, or Fine Chips in a finch feeder.

(continued on page 2 . . .)

Gratitude

All and I, along with our entire staff, want to express our sincerest thank-you to you, our customers, who have not only continued to purchase and visit our stores, but have been extremely patient with us as we've adjusted over the past six months to this new era of pandemic retail.

We have experienced extreme kindness and understanding as we've instituted all of the changes that were necessary to keep you and our staff safe in our stores. Thankfully, we don't have any horror stories of angry people, defiant about wearing masks, or that we closed early, or that for a time they could only purchase curbside.

As we have long believed, you can tell a lot about a person just from the simple fact of whether they feed the birds or not. You are kind and thoughtful—and for that, we are very grateful.

We hope that you've found greater value in the hobby that we are so passionate about as you spend more time at home. I know that I've been more in tune with the comings and goings of every creature in my yard lately.

It's been so interesting and extremely humbling at the same time. Our personal frustrations and inconveniences don't matter in the greater view of the natural world. The birds and trees and planets just keep doing what they always do in the beautiful rhythm of nature's laws.

That being said, our experience of being forced to slow down has had a tremendous impact on the natural world and hopefully this is one of the many takeaways from this unique time. Most notably, cleaner air and cleaner waterways. We wish you all health and happiness along with this reminder that is also a strong theme laced throughout this issue: winter is coming.

Please note: Eagan Hours Changing

Starting on October 5th we will be changing the Eagan location's store hours to 10am–6pm, Monday through Friday and 9am–5pm on Saturday. I think this will be the last of any changes we make to our operating hours for quite a while. We have found our stride with what works best during the pandemic and hopefully nothing catastrophic happens and we'll be able to stick to it.

~Dave Netten

SEASONAL TASKS, CONTINUED

By Minnetonka Manager CAROL CHENAULT

(... continued from page 1) You'll be grateful for the extra finch accommodation just in case it's a winter that redpolls and Pine Siskins visit!

Since goldfinches tend to land on the upper perches of feeders first, be sure to rotate the food in your feeder to ensure that it stays fresh longer: empty your feeder into a paper bag, check for cleanliness then fill the feeder part way with new seed and fill the top portion of the feeder with the seed from the bag.



A Pine Siskin relishes Nyjer seed from a finch feeder.

- ❑ **Fill feeders with Golden Safflower.** This seed is less inviting to grackles, starlings and Red-wings, which is helpful during fall migration. Cardinals, goldfinches, chickadees, House Finches and others love Golden Safflower. After fall migration is completed, one option is to switch to a no-mess seed like Medium Sunflower Chips or Kracker Jax. These leave no mess and won't germinate in the spring. The pre-shelled seeds provide quick energy for less effort and help birds to survive severe weather.

Garden

- ❑ **Leave the stalks and seed heads of rudbeckia, sunflower, bee balm, aster and coneflower** as a fall feast for goldfinches and chickadees. When trimming shrubs, leave V-shaped branches to encourage robins and cardinals to nest in the spring. Create a brush pile in the back corner of your lot to provide cover for the birds and protection from predators, wind and weather.

Now you are ready for fall and winter visitors to your yard! ■

STAFF PICKS

By Guest Contributor CAROL CHENAULT

Early Autumn Must-Haves



Use any of the products below with our Erva 80" pole.

1. **Aspects Quick Clean Peanut Pickout feeder.**

2. **Red Peanut Wreath Feeder.** Holds whole peanuts—Blue Jays and woodpeckers love it!

3. **WindowAlert window clings.** Prevent window strikes during autumn migration!

4. **Erva 3-arm pole topper.** Holds 3 bird feeders.

5. **Coil Branch Arm.** Add it mid-length to your pole system to add feeder spots or perches.

5. **Twister.** Firmly holds pole system in place.

Sky Tigers: GREAT-HORNED OWLS

With stealth flight, amazing prey detection, strength out of proportion to its size, excellent camouflage and a powerful grip, this stunning raptor is an efficient predator.

Early naturalists described the Great Horned Owl as a "winged tiger" or a "tiger of the sky"—a moniker that speaks to this magnificent bird's exceptional predatory prowess. Like a tiger, the Great Horned Owl also draws much admiration for a majestic appearance that belies its fierceness.

Nearly 2 feet tall and with a wingspan that can reach more than 3.5 feet, the Great Horned Owl is one of the largest owl species, second only to the Snowy Owl. A brown-and-white-striped plumage creates effective camouflage in its native habitats of forests, woodlots, residential areas, and even deserts and open country. Large feather tufts at its crown create a horn-like appearance. And while these tufts may look like ears, they are unrelated to the owl's hearing.

Perhaps most striking about this owl's appearance are its golden-yellow eyes, their size so great in proportion to the owl's body that if we applied the same proportions to our human bodies, our eyes would be the size of grapefruits! Unable to swivel its eyes, the owl utilizes its exceptional neck mobility—up to 270 degrees—to fix on visual targets.

The powerful feet of the Great Horned Owl have a rough, knobby under-surface that provides superior grip. Their toes are sharp, forceful claws called *talons*. A ratchet-like mechanism allows talons

to lock in place around its prey or a perch. Prey are typically killed in an instant due to a piercing, crushing grip on the spine from talons that are 10 times stronger than a human hand's grip.

Great Horned Owls typically hunt as the sun sets or rises, but may also hunt in broad daylight. Their list of prey include mammals—including even skunks and porcupines—as well as birds (ducks, herons, crows, and even other raptors), and invertebrates. Able to carry 1.4 times their own body weight, these owls are undeterred by animals larger than their own bodies. They are the most dangerous predator of the American Crow.

Filling frigid skies with the sound of haunting "hoot" calls, Great Horned Owls begin establishing territories and attracting mates in the early winter, nesting in January. They'll incubate the eggs in nests abandoned from other birds, in tree cavities, stumps or snags for 30-37 days. Nestlings stay in the nest for 42 days, their cat-like screams demanding food from hard-working parents.

Classified as a low conservation threat, Great Horned Owls have few natural predators. They may be killed when they mantle over prey on the ground, or fall victim to starvation. Humans are the largest threat to these owls, through car strikes and the use of poisonous insecticides/rodenticides that make the way into the owls' bloodstreams through animals they consume. ■



*A pair of juvenile Great Horned Owls hunts by a river.
Photo by Ray Marshall*

Predatory Adaptations



Fluted flight feathers.

Primary wing feathers are serrated to reduce noisy turbulence and allow for nearly silent flight.

Facial disc feathers direct sound to the ears to detect sounds 10 times fainter than human ears can detect—like the sound of a mouse below a foot of snow.

Binocular vision. With eyes positioned on the front of its head like humans, the Great Horned Owl has overlapping fields of vision, allowing it to detect depth.

Huge eyes with a high density of motion-sensing vision cells. Their pupils dilate widely to allow in maximum light for excellent night vision. A higher density of rod cells allow them to detect movement and low light better.

Sharp talons grip 10x stronger than a human hand.

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"> ✓ 13 hrs, 1 min of daylight Sept 5 declines to 11 hrs, 56 min of daylight on Sept 26. ✓ Monarchs migrate south one by one at about 11 mph. ✓ Orioles leave Minnesota. ✓ Warbler migration continues. ✓ Crows gather in communal groups. ✓ Wild Turkeys, Wood Ducks, Blue Jays and Red-bellied Woodpeckers feast on acorns. ✓ Robins, waxwings and cardinals munch fruit from Highbush Cranberry bushes and Mountain Ash trees. <p><i>Tip:</i> Switch to Golden Safflower while grackles and Red-wings are flocking in migration. It is less appealing to them.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Now is peak bird migration over Hawk Ridge in Duluth. ✓ Zinnias provide seeds for goldfinches as monarch butterflies and bees visit wild asters and sedum. ✓ Rafts of coots and flocks of Franklin's Gulls return to area lakes. ✓ Ruby-throated hummingbirds leave northern MN, but not the southern parts of the state. ✓ The first killing frost is typically around the 15th, signaling the end of the growing season. <p><i>Tip:</i> 9/13 is Grandparents day—take a bird walk together!</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The first Dark-eyed Juncos and returning native sparrows arrive and feast on Finches' Choice on the ground. ✓ Squirrels make nests from leafy branches in the trees. ✓ Now is peak migration for Yellow-rumped Warblers. ✓ 9/22 is the autumnal equinox—autumn officially begins. <p><i>Tip:</i> Indian meal moths are very active in September. Store your seed in sealed tins and hang a sticky trap—available in our stores.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Watch for the arrival of White-throated Sparrows as they feed on the ground under the bird feeding stations. ✓ Groups of Common Loons gather on area lakes in preparation for migration to the Gulf Coast or Atlantic Seaboard. ✓ First Snow Buntings return. ✓ Northern Flickers migrate through the area, though some do winter here. <p><i>Tip:</i> Keep Nyjer feeders full and fresh for American Goldfinches, our latest nesting songbirds.</p>

October: WEEK BY WEEK

Week 1	2nd Week	3rd Week	4th Week
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 11hrs, 35 min of daylight on 10/3 declines to 10 hrs, 11 min on 10/31. ✓ Sugar maples paint the landscape with burnt orange and red. ✓ Late-migrating hummingbirds visit nectar feeders. ✓ A larger influx of Dark-eyed Juncos and American Coots arrives. ✓ Migrating waves of American Robins and Cedar Waxwings relish clean birdbaths. ✓ Golden-crowned and Ruby-crowned Kinglets migrate through woodlands. The last of the Yellow-rumped Warblers, Palm Warblers, vireos, and flycatchers leave MN for the winter. ✓ Large flocks of Red-winged Blackbirds and grackles migrate overhead. ✓ Vibrant reds of Virginia Creeper and Staghorn Sumac delight observers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Late-season butterflies like clouded sulfers, red admirals, painted ladies and a few monarchs visit New England asters and Mexican sunflowers. ✓ A larger influx of White-throated Sparrows arrives. ✓ Migrating waterfowl include the American Wigeon, Blue-winged Teal and Northern Pintails. <p><i>Tips:</i> Ice forms on birdbaths overnight. Install a heated birdbath to provide a stable source of water for your backyard birds.</p> <p>Wrap trunks of young trees to protect them from deer rubs and scrapes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Turkey Vultures glide southward overhead. ✓ Golden-crowned and Ruby-crowned Kinglets migrate. ✓ Common Loon migration peaks in mid-October but can continue into December, depending on available open water. ✓ Fox, White-throated and American Tree Sparrows join the Dark-eyed Juncos feeding on Finches' Choice from the ground under bird feeders. ✓ Waterfowl migration is in full swing, including Redheads, Canvasbacks, Lesser Scaup and Northern Shovelers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Most Eastern Chipmunks enter hibernation. ✓ Tundra Swans whistle as they migrate high overhead. ✓ Eagles, hawks, goshawks and Merlins fly over Hawk Ridge in Duluth. ✓ Migrating American Robins relish ripe crabapples. <p><i>Tip:</i> Medium Chips (shelled sunflower) and Kracker Jax do not leave any shell mess under your feeder. Add some dried mealworms and suet pellets to any seed mix for an extra energy boost. These are all especially nice in window mounted feeders—no mess!</p>