



BIRD'S-EYE VIEW

Volume 28 Issue 2 | March/April 2021

ALL SEASONS
WILD BIRD
STORE

Minnesota's Wrens

+ A Look at Beaks 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

BIRDS' BEAKS: *Specialized Tools*

BIRDS' BEAKS HAVE EVOLVED DIFFERENTLY IN EACH SPECIES IN RESPONSE TO SPECIFIC ENVIRONMENTS. Beaks serve a number of purposes: grooming, mating, defending, feeding themselves and feeding their young.

IS IT A BILL OR A BEAK?

Both terms can be used interchangeably. Most often we use the word *beak* when talking about songbirds and *bill* when talking about waterbirds—like ducks, geese and other water-loving birds.

Whatever it's called, a beak is a type of mouth, with no teeth, that is covered by a layer of a protein called *keratin* (think fingernails or rhino horns). In nearly all birds, both upper and lower jaws can move.

BEAK SHAPE TELLS A STORY

A bird's beak can tell us a lot about the bird, especially what it eats. The shape of a bird's beak is designed for particular types of food, like seeds, insects, nuts, nectar, or small mammals.



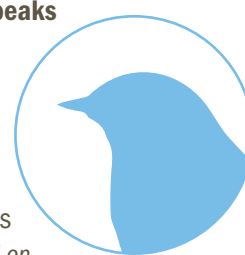
A hooked beak usually tells us that the bird is a meat eater. Birds of prey like owls, hawks and eagles have hooked beaks. A hooked beak is a very strong beak, securely attached

to the skull, with the upper part protruding over the lower part. Birds with hooked beaks use their beaks to tear the flesh of their prey into pieces small enough to swallow.

A cone-shaped beak is perfect for manipulating and cracking seed shells. These beaks have a special feature that makes cracking seeds easier: the edges of the lower beak fit into special grooves in the upper beak. The size of this beak helps indicate the size and kind of seed the bird can eat. Cardinals, grosbeaks, larger sparrows and larger finches each have a generous-sized cone-shaped beak for eating bulkier seeds. Smaller birds, like goldfinches, have a more petite cone-shaped beak, which is better for eating fine seeds, like thistle.



Birds with pointed, thin beaks are usually insect or worm eaters. They use their beaks to pick insects off leaves, twigs and bark. This bill shape also helps dig into the ground easily. These birds may also eat fruit. (Continued on page 2 ...)



Spring—and our 30th Anniversary!

Spring is just around the corner and we're so excited for the spring migration to begin in the coming weeks and months! Being near a primary migration flyway like the Mississippi River is one of the reasons that birding in our region is so fantastic and why we have so many different species that visit our area.

Birds are spectacular creatures with spectacular beauty, songs and stories. Over the next few issues of *Bird's-Eye View*, we'll be taking a more in-depth look at some of the anatomical specialties that have evolved in birds to help them survive and thrive, along with picking out a few individual species to highlight and put what you may see in your yard into clearer context. We hope you enjoy learning about birds as much as we do!

2021 is an exciting year for us because it's our 30th year in business. Time flies (pun intended)! We're thrilled to have been around for a generation or more and are looking forward to continuing the legacy of helping you enjoy the natural world right outside your window—we truly strive to be *Your Window to Nature*, as our tagline says.

To you, our customers, we are grateful for your business and for the many long lasting relationships we've made. To our staff, you're simply the best at what you do and we're honored that you continue working with us. We're looking forward to what the next 30 years will bring!

~Al and Dave Netten

Join the Conversation!

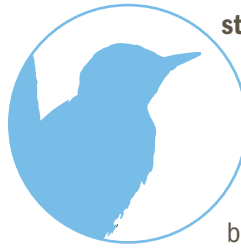
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FEATURE ARTICLE (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

Warblers, robins, creepers and orioles fit into this category.



Woodpeckers have very strong beaks, which taper to a tip. This chisel-like beak is used for pecking holes in wood, seeking out insects from under the bark. Woodpeckers use

their long tongues, which are often longer than their beaks, to gather the insects they find. Their beaks also help prevent physical trauma from such hard

pecking by diverting forces away from their brains.

Hummingbirds also have a very specialized beak.

They have long, flexible, needle-like beaks to probe deep into flowers. A hummingbird's beak is really just a protective sheath for its tongue, which is actually what they are using to get the nectar from a flower. Hummingbirds can actually open just the tip of their beak. ■



STAFF PICKS

By Minnetonka Manager CAROL CHENAULT

Wren Houses



RECYCLED MATERIALS

1. This wren house is made of recycled plastic to last many, many nesting seasons. It has an easy clean-out panel.
2. Also made of recycled plastic, this house has a flat bottom that removes for easy cleaning.

WOOD HOUSES

3. This traditional bird house is made from fir wood, specifically for wrens.
4. Made of cedar, this house can be mounted on a tree or pole for chickadees and wrens. The side panel opens for easy cleaning.

COMBINED MATERIALS

5. These cute birdhouses are made from cedar and have colorful poly roofs and reinforced portals. They're easy to clean. Each house comes with a hanging cable.

SHOP ONLINE

MINNESOTA'S Wrens

Minnesota hosts a number of species of wrens each summer, each with impressive songs, energetic personalities, an appetite for insects, and instincts to nest in specialized habitats.

MOST COMMON



House Wren

House Wrens are the most domestic. They're regular summer visitors throughout the state, seemingly uninhibited by areas developed by humans. They've been observed to nest in every region on the state. House Wrens thrive on insects—especially bugs, grasshoppers, caterpillars, moths and beetles. While they typically don't come to bird feeders, they will build out several nest sites in flower pots, bird houses, woodpeckers holes and more. **IDENTIFICATION:** This 11-12cm wren has a light eye ring, without a pronounced eyebrow stripe. Look for this gray-brown wren in gardens areas and open woods.



Sedge Wren

Sedge Wrens stake out grassy areas. They're typically heard more than seen, with their staccato territorial calls ringing out in areas where there is tall grass and scattered small shrubs. This summer migrant nests in a large number of counties and regions throughout Minnesota where grasslands occur and are relatively less common in the Twin Cities metro area. Sedge Wrens savor insects and spiders, which they skillfully pluck from vegetation. **IDENTIFICATION:** This "stubby" 11cm wren has a finely streaked crown, barred wings, and a buffy undertail.

MINNESOTA OCCURRENCE



Marsh Wren

Marsh Wrens are at home among the cattails and bulrushes. They are best represented in western regions of the state, plus central and south-central Minnesota. Their preferred marsh and wetland habitat makes them vulnerable to agricultural, industrial and residential development by humans. These summer migrants create globular dome nests among cattails and bulrushes and feast on insects and spiders. **IDENTIFICATION:** This relatively large, 13cm wren sports a black patch with white stripes on its back and has a prominent white eyebrow stripe.



Winter Wren

Winter Wrens seek areas of dense undergrowth. They're drawn to areas with conifers near water and swamps, with lots of woody debris and snags. They build their nests close to the ground in natural cavities, like the roots of over-turned trees. You may be lucky to spot this secretive wren scouring the forest floor and lower canopy in search of insects such as spiders, centipedes, ants, beetles and more. **IDENTIFICATION:** At 10cm, the Winter Wren smaller and darker than other wrens with a much stubbier tail.

LEAST COMMON



Carolina Wren



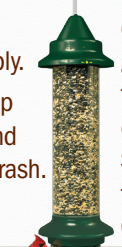
Carolina Wrens are sporadic visitors. They seek out both gardens and forest edges with undergrowth. While far more common in the south and south-eastern states, sightings in Minnesota have increased in all seasons since 2001 (*source: MNBirdAtlas.org*). Carolina Wrens may visit suet and seed feeders, while also eating a range of insects and even some small frogs and lizards. **IDENTIFICATION:** The largest wren (14cm), the Carolina Wren is almost the size of a sparrow. Look for its warm, rusty brown coloring and a prominent white eyebrow stripe. ■

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"> ✓ One of the first signs of spring are the flocks of migrating Tundra Swans and Snow Geese flying high overhead. ✓ Watch for early March migrants—male American Robins return before the females, Red-winged Blackbirds and Canada Geese. <p>Tips:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Avoid feeding flocks of blackbirds by filling feeders with Golden Safflower. This seed attracts many songbirds but is less interesting to grackles, starlings and Red-wings. ❑ Mount a wood duck house on our high quality pole with 18" ground twister and protect with a baffle. ❑ Clean out bird houses and from last year and replace damaged houses. Place chickadee houses out of direct line of sight of nesting wrens to reduce territorial conflicts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Eastern Bluebirds begin returning—be ready for them with live mealworms. ✓ Great Blue Herons return to the edges of ponds and wetlands. ✓ Male Ring-necked Pheasants crow their double squawk to attract a female and proclaim nesting territory. ✓ March 11, 1878 was the earliest ice-out date for Lake Minnetonka. April 13th is the median date. <p>Tips:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Apply new Window Alerts to patio doors and picture windows to prevent bird strikes. ❑ Provide nesting materials with a Best Nest Builder. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ FIRST OF THE YEAR sightings of Killdeer, Song Sparrows, Brown-headed Cowbirds and Common Grackles. ✓ Eastern Chipmunks are above ground and scurrying through yards. ✓ Eastern Screech Owls have eggs in the nest. ✓ Northern Flickers call. <p>Tips:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Bring feeders to your neighborhood All Seasons store for cleaning—fees apply. ❑ Rake and sweep up birdseed debris and dispose of in the trash. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Eastern Bluebirds choose nest boxes. Do yours need replacing? ✓ Eastern Phoebes and Song Sparrows vocalize. ✓ Sandhill Cranes and Western Meadowlarks return or migrate through and the first Turkey Vultures return. ✓ Male Ruffed Grouse perform drumming displays. <p>Tips:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Cracked feeders allow water to pool in the bird seed causing mold and mildew growth. Replace damaged feeders with new easy to clean versions such as the Squirrel Buster family of feeders or Aspects Quick Clean feeders. 

April: WEEK BY WEEK

Week 1	2nd Week	3rd Week	4th Week
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Migrating female American Robins return, about a month after the males arrived. ✓ Leopard frogs and painted turtles emerge. ✓ Belted Kingfisher and Common Loons return. ✓ House Finches build nests—often in peculiar places! ✓ FIRST OF THE YEAR returning Hermit Thrush, Vesper Sparrow, Fox Sparrow, and Ruby-crowned Kinglet. Dark-eyed Juncos will be leaving soon. ✓ Black bears awaken—protect your bird feeders! <p>Tip:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Supply suet and mealworms to nourish spring migrants while insects are scarce. Pacific Bird Mealworm and Peanut suet is a great choice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Great Egrets, White Pelicans and mallards return to the open water. ✓ Chipping Sparrows and Yellow-rumped Warblers return to backyards. Song Sparrow singing fills the air. ✓ The air is alive with the wood frogs' barking call and Western chorus frogs' "metallic clicker" sounds and the loud rattling call of the Belted Kingfisher. ✓ Robins build nests. <p>Tip:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Add a deck rail-mounted birdbath. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Brown Thrashers arrive and sing their rich musical phrases, repeated in pairs. ✓ Barn Swallows and Yellow-headed Blackbirds return. ✓ Mallard Ducks are nesting. ✓ Chickadees select birdhouses and construct nests of moss and fine grasses. ✓ FIRST OF THE YEAR House Wrens sing their territories. ✓ Broad-winged Hawks return to the northland. <p>Tips:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Attract more birds to your birdbath with moving water—use a Water Wiggler to stir the water. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Migrating White-throated Sparrows crowd feeding stations. ✓ Watch Bald Eagles raise their young at ustream.tv/decoraheagles ✓ Tulips, daffodils and hyacinths bloom, as are woodland wildflowers. <p>Tips:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Scrub birdbaths with 9 parts water and 1 part bleach then use Bird Bath Protector to keep it clean. ❑ Use an ant trap (a moat filled with water) or Nectar Fortress to prevent ants from entering nectar feeders. ❑ Last Friday in April is Arbor Day. Plan to add bird, bee and butterfly friendly plants to your landscape.  <div style="background-color: red; color: white; padding: 10px; border-radius: 50%; text-align: center;"> <p>Put out nectar and grape jelly feeders for hummingbirds and orioles during the last week of April!</p> </div> 