



# BIRD'S-EYE VIEW

Volume 28 Issue 4 | July/August 2021

ALL SEASONS  
WILD BIRD  
STORE

Barn Swallows photo by Ray Marshall

MINNESOTA'S SPECIES OF

## Swallows

A Young Birder

A Tribute to Al & 30 Years

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#### BLOOMINGTON

816 West 98th St.  
(Clover Center)  
Bloomington, MN 55420  
**952.884.4103**

#### EAGAN

2143 Cliff Rd.  
(Cedar Cliff Shopping Center)  
Eagan, MN 55122  
**651.459.0084**

#### MINNETONKA

4759 County Rd. 101  
(Westwind Plaza)  
Minnetonka, MN 55345  
**952.935.5892**

#### WHITE BEAR LAKE

2703 East Cty. Hwy. E.  
(Cty. Rd. E. and Hwy. 120)  
White Bear Lake, MN 55110  
**651.653.8705**

#### WAYZATA & WILD BIRD DELIVERS

15710 Wayzata Blvd.  
(394 Frontage Rd.)  
Wayzata, MN 55391  
**952.473.4283**

#### WILDBIRDSTORE.COM

*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 **KATRINA HASE**

## Discovering birds at age 11



*Athina Toeniskoetter color-codes her Field Guide.*

### A Trip to Madera Canyon Ignites Interest

Forced into distance learning due to COVID-19, Athina Toeniskoetter's family chose to spend the winter in Arizona near her grandparents.

When a bird enthusiast and family friend came to visit, Athina reluctantly agreed to tag along on a day trip to Madera Canyon. The canyon's visitor center had dozens of bird feeders that attracted large numbers and species of birds—from tiny hummingbirds to large turkeys.

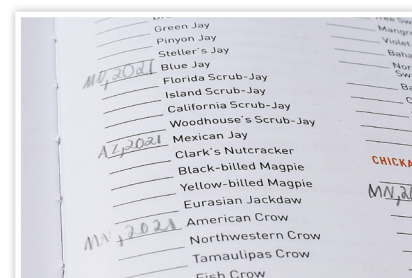
Athina eagerly checked off each species of bird she saw on the provided checklist, then persuaded her party to continue into the park to find more bird species to add to her growing list. She was hooked.

### A Bird-themed Birthday Gift

Upon her return to her home in Edina, Minnesota, Athina urged her mother to put up bird feeders so she could attract birds to her yard. Her mother surprised her with a trip to the Bloomington All Seasons Wild Bird Store for her 11th birthday to select some feeders and seed. As an additional gift, Athina received a copy of the *Peterson Field Guide to Birds of North America*.

### Feeding, Watching, and Keeping Track of Birds

Athina's passion for birds has grown exponentially in the following months—as have the number of feeders in her yard (she currently has 17). Her Peterson Guide is bountifully marked with color-coded flags denoting birds she has seen and birds she would like to see. She marks her sightings with the date and location in the back of the book. She goes for bird walks with friends and family, photographing her sightings and returning home to confirm the identifications. ... *continued on page 2*



*Athina marks sightings in her Peterson Guide.*



## A Tribute to Al and 30 Years in Business



Dave and Al Netten

As I mentioned in our last issue, 2021 marks our 30th Anniversary as All Seasons Wild Bird Store. Our family getting into the “bird business” was not something anyone would have predicted. Here’s a tribute to the man responsible.

My father, Al, had been a corporate man his entire life, working up the ranks from electrical engineer to executive at Control Data. In 1986, he found himself at a bit of a career impasse.

After exploring different opportunities, he ended up working in commercial real estate, and later added consulting work. He seemed a lot more engaged with the consulting work and I think it sparked his entrepreneurial spirit.

By that time, I was in college. I remember one day, my dad called and wanted to take me to lunch—a treat for this poor college kid. At lunch, he started telling me about this “bird store” that he was thinking about buying and I remember looking at him and then asking the question, what the heck is a bird store?

Our family had been feeding birds since I was little and he told me that’s the store where he buys his seed and supplies. As I listened, I could tell he was excited about it and was making plans to be the owner/investor and letting the current staff run the store. He was 55 years old at the time; I thought it seemed a little late in the game to be starting something new, since many of my friends’ parents were thinking about retirement and “slowing down”.



The first crew: Al & Lila Netten, Steve Endres, Diane Kissinger, Lisa Stewart

Within a few months, Al owned the Bloomington store. With some fresh energy, business acumen and some new ideas,

it began to do well under the new ownership. Steve Endres, the original store manager, still works there today and he played a large role in teaching Al about the bird business.

It also became clear that this was not going to be a passive investment activity for my dad. ( . . . *continued on page 3*)

## FEATURE ARTICLE (continued from page 1)

Athina has become proficient at feeding and attracting backyard birds. In her first months of birding, she’s already attracted Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, Baltimore Orioles, a Red-breasted Nuthatch, Blue Jays,



Baltimore Oriole. Photo by Athina.

American Goldfinches, House Sparrows (including one she calls Gerny), a breeding pair of Northern Cardinals (she named these *Carl* and *Cardi*), Mallard Ducks and more.

I recently interviewed Athina at her home about her new hobby and any advice she would have about getting kids interested in birds. She shared some great tips—in between calling out names of birds flying over that she’s learned to identify by sound.



Red-breasted Nuthatch. Photo by Athina.

## Athina’s Birding Tips

### Why care about birds?

They’re fun to look for—they’re really beautiful, especially their colors. Plus, they’re interesting—how they get food and water, how they make their nests, and how they’re free to travel and migrate to different parts of the world. Bird watching keeps me busy during “corona”. I’m not bored—I’m outside and have something to do.



Goldfinch on Best Nest Builder. Photo by Athina.

### How do you know where to look for birds?



Athina takes a photo to help ID a bird.

I use the **Smart Bird ID app**. You can search for the type of bird you want to see, then travel there—the birds will probably still be nearby, especially if they’re nesting. Or you can search for birds in your location so you know what to look for.

### How do you identify birds?

I use the **Merlin Bird ID app**.

It asks you to select your location, the size of the bird, its colors, and what it was doing when you saw it, then it gives suggestions. You can also use it to identify a bird from a photo you took. I also like to use the “explore birds” function to see pictures and hear sounds of birds—the sound of a Blue-winged Teal sounds like an evil laugh!

### What feeder do you recommend?

I have a **window feeder** in my room—I can watch it in my mirror while I’m doing home school. It attracts a lot of different birds.



Her favorite feeder is a hopper window feeder. Photo by Athina.

### You make your own seed mix.

#### What’s in Athina’s Mix?

**Mealworms, sunflower seed, Songbird Delight, and peanuts.** I put it in a **tray feeder** and get a whole variety of birds with one feeder. Some of it gets on the ground, which attracts more birds that like to eat from the ground: Blue Jays, Chipping Sparrows, Dark-eyed Juncos, White-throated Sparrows and more.



Athina’s custom mix.

### What should kids know about birding?

People get the wrong idea about bird watching. They think it’s just for older people and just sitting around and waiting. It’s not. It’s like a scavenger hunt. You walk, you take pictures of what you see, then you can go home and ID them later. And it’s something you can do with anyone of any age—so there are lots of people who can join you. ■

## Join the Conversation!

Facebook.com/WildBirdStore

Twitter: ASWildBirdStore

Instagram: AllSeasonsWildBirdStore

## Share your photos!

Share your photos for our in-store displays and Facebook page! Send digital files to: carol@wildbirdstore.net

# MINNESOTA'S Swallows

Swallows are found around the world, on all continents, including Antarctica. Here in Minnesota, you can find three species of swallows: Barn Swallow, Tree Swallow, and Cliff Swallow.



**BARN SWALLOWS** are sparrow-sized, with a steely blue back, wings and tail, and tan-to-white underparts. Their throat and forehead feature rusty spots. Their tail extends beyond the wingtips and the long outer feathers give the tail a deep fork.

They feed on the fly, snagging insects in flight with rapid wing beats and quick, tight turns and dives. They hunt insects over fields, parks, marshes, ponds, and coastal waters.

Barn Swallows drink and bathe on the wing. They dip down to take a mouthful of water or touch their belly to the surface for a quick rinse.

Barn Swallows make nests from mud in places sheltered from the elements—in shallow caves or on cliff faces, but also barns and other structures.

Both male and female Barn Swallows build the half cup-shaped nest. They collect mud in their bills, sometimes mixing it with grass. Barn Swallows lay 1-2 broods per breeding season, with 3-7 eggs each. The eggs are creamy white, spotted with brown and gray.

**TREE SWALLOWS** are also small, sparrow-sized birds. They have pointed wings and a short, squared or slightly notched tail. Adult males are blue-green above and white below, with blackish flight feathers. They tend to glide in flight more than other swallow species.

Tree Swallows are named for their habit of building nests in tree cavities. Natural hollows are becoming harder to find so Tree Swallows will also use nest boxes—often those set out for bluebirds.

Tree Swallows live on a diet of insects, supplementing with plant foods when insects are scarce. They eat a variety of flying insects, like flies, mayflies, sawflies, bees, wasps, and dragonflies. They also eat spiders and moths.

The female Tree Swallow does most of the nest building. The nest is made mostly of grasses, but can include pine needles, mosses, and animal hair and is lined with feathers. They lay 1-2 broods each breeding season, with 4-7 eggs each. The eggs, which start out as a pale pink, become white after a few days.

**CLIFF SWALLOWS** look brownish with dark throats and white underparts, but in good light you'll see their iridescent dark blue backs and pale underparts, with a rusty patch on their rumps. They have a brick red-colored ring around their head and a white forehead patch.

When feeding in flocks with other swallows, Cliff Swallows tend to stay higher in the air. They eat flying insects, feeding usually in groups of at least two, sometimes up to hundreds. They feed over lakes, ponds, marshes, and rivers. Cliff Swallows eat flies, bees, wasps, ants, moths, and more.

Cliff Swallow pairs choose a colony, taking over an existing nest or starting a new one. Some colonies can number up to 1,000 nests. Colonies appear on cliff sides, caves, building eaves and highway overpasses. They gather bits of mud in their beaks and mold them into place, until the nest has a gourd shape. The nest is lined with dried grass.

Cliff Swallows lay 1-2 broods each season, with 1-6 eggs each. The eggs are creamy white with brown speckles or blotches. ■

## CHIRPS (continued from page 2)

He started working at the store every day and began planning to expand the business to more stores. He seemed fulfilled with this new career.



Dave Netten, Linda Gorr and Al Netten at the Newport store

A few years later, he approached me about joining the business. Back at that first lunch conversation, I would never have imagined that I would

be doing what I'm doing today. I owe that opportunity to him and am truly grateful.

Al is still the going strong and recently celebrated his 85th birthday. I can say without any hesitation that he still loves working at the bird store and it's one of his favorite places to be.

All of us that have had the privilege to work with Al over the years have been blessed in so, so many ways. I know I've learned a tremendous amount about business, about integrity, about treating people well and the joy of working in a family business. I couldn't have asked for a better partner.

I'm 50 now and it's difficult to comprehend that he was just 5 years older than me when he began this journey. It's been a great 30 years and it's been great to work with my dad for most of it.

If you happen to see Al in the Bloomington All Seasons Wild Bird store on one of your visits, wish him a belated happy birthday! Life rarely goes as planned, but if you follow your heart, it somehow seems to work out! ■

~Dave Netten



# Seasonal Notes

By Minnetonka Manager CAROL CHENAULT

## July: WEEK BY WEEK

July is Minnesota's warmest, sunniest month.

| Week 1   | 2nd Week  | 3rd Week   | 4th Week  |
|--|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>Goldfinches</b> are our latest nesting songbird, nesting in July and fledging young in August.</li> <li>✓ <b>Barn swallows</b> fledge.</li> <li>✓ A new generation of Monarch butterflies is emerging.</li> <li>✓ <b>Purple Martin</b> colonies are noisy with adults feeding young.</li> <li>✓ 5-8 <b>House Wren</b> young are still in the nest.</li> </ul> <p><b>Tips:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Attract more goldfinches with <b>The Best Nest Builder</b>.</li> <li>❑ Plant additional sunflowers from seed July 1 to provide blooms into the fall. Goldfinches, House Finches and chickadees will eat from the seed heads as the plants mature.</li> <li>❑ Offer nesting orioles <b>live mealworms</b> or <b>dried mealworms</b> soaked in nectar.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Bird song decreases dramatically as nesting season wraps up for many species. Some birds have two or more broods such as <b>House Wrens</b> and <b>Eastern Bluebirds</b>.</li> <li>✓ Monarchs lay eggs on common milkweed plants.</li> <li>✓ <b>Osprey</b> young are still in the nest.</li> <li>✓ <b>Great Blue Heron</b> juveniles leave the nest.</li> <li>✓ Canada thistle plants release their seeds on fine white filaments.</li> </ul> <p><b>Tip:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Our <b>Feed and Fill service</b> will care for your birds while you are on vacation. Call our Wayzata store at 952-473-4283 for more details.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>Canada Geese</b> are flying again, now that their molting is complete.</li> <li>✓ Bird migration season begins as several shorebird species such as <b>Lesser Yellowlegs</b> and <b>Sandpipers</b> begin migrating. Many species of shorebirds nest in the tundra and migrate through Minnesota to places as far south as Argentina.</li> </ul> <p><b>Tip:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Clean birdbaths with 9 parts water to 1 part bleach; rinse well; then add <b>Bird Bath Protector</b> to keep it clean longer.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ 2nd brood of <b>Barn Swallows</b> hatch.</li> <li>✓ <b>Mallards</b> are on the wing again following their molt.</li> </ul> <p><b>Tips:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Hummingbirds are active at nectar feeders and flowers into October. The females and juveniles stay the latest into autumn. Try a <b>Nectar Dot Feeder</b> to feed hummingbirds by hand!</li> <li>❑ Add a <b>24" coil mount branch-shaped arm</b> to your <b>pole system</b> as a perch and for additional places to hang feeders.</li> </ul> |

We lose 2-3 minutes of daylight in August.

## August: WEEK BY WEEK

| Week 1  | 2nd Week  | 3rd Week  | 4th Week   |
|---|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>Mourning Doves</b> are on their third clutch of eggs.</li> </ul> <p><b>Tips:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Unlike most songbirds, goldfinches feed their young seeds that have been shelled and partially digested. Keep your feeders clean and full to attract them.</li> <li>❑ Mint extract on nectar ports helps to repel bees, wasps and bald-faced hornets. Hanging the feeder from an <b>ant trap</b> prevents ants from reaching the nectar.</li> <li>❑ Replace your <b>Window Alert</b> decals every six months to prevent window strikes by migrating warblers and others.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ The white-lined sphinx moth, often called the hummingbird moth, feeds during the daytime on petunias and other garden flowers.</li> <li>✓ In preparation for migration, <b>Purple Martins</b> group together on utility lines.</li> <li>✓ 2nd generation of monarch butterflies is on the wing.</li> <li>✓ Some warblers such as <b>Nashville</b> and <b>Yellow Warblers</b> begin migrating.</li> <li>✓ <b>Common Nighthawks</b> migrate through in the afternoons and early evenings while eating flying insects.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Clusters of monarchs in trees signals migration is beginning.</li> <li>✓ <b>Chimney Swifts</b>, <b>Franklin's Gulls</b> and various shorebirds are in migration.</li> <li>✓ <b>Great Egrets</b> gather a dozen or two at a time along the shorelines.</li> <li>✓ <b>Mourning Doves</b> continue nesting—they can have as many as 5 broods a year.</li> <li>✓ A second brood of <b>Barn Swallows</b> leaves the nest.</li> </ul> <p><b>Tip:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Add <b>Fire Mix powder</b> to bird seed to deter squirrels. One package treats 40 pounds of bird seed with cayenne chili pepper and ground pepper seeds. Birds have few taste buds and don't react to the powder.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Juvenile <b>Wood Ducks</b> now look more like the adults.</li> <li>✓ Juvenile <b>Common Loons</b> are still with the adults but begin to have more adult plumage.</li> <li>✓ Migrating monarchs are flying south one by one, anywhere from ground level to 7,000 feet up. Migrant monarchs live up to 11 months. Non-migrants live for 30 days. There can be 2-3 generations of monarchs in a summer in MN.</li> </ul> <p><b>Tip:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ As birds gather in pre-migration flocks, avoid large numbers of grackles and starlings at feeders by filling feeders with <b>golden safflower</b> or <b>white safflower</b>. Use <b>Bye, Bye Starling</b> to provide a sunflower mix but still discourage European Starlings.</li> </ul> |