



**ALL SEASONS  
WILD BIRD  
STORE**

# BIRD'S-EYE VIEW

Volume 28 Issue 5 | September/October 2021

MINNESOTA'S SPECIES OF

## Sparrows

**How COVID-19 Impacted Bird Feeding**  
September/October 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

## Wrapping up Migration?



When we talk about fall bird migration, most of us think of our summer visitors leaving us and flying south. In fact, bird migration happens almost year-round.

### A Time of Leaving . . . and Arriving

Each autumn, those of us here in Minnesota say good-bye to our favorite summer birds—like orioles, hummingbirds and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks—as they head south to warmer climates. Yet, we also say hello to some of our winter visitors that migrate south to our area from northern Canada. We may welcome Pine Siskins, redpolls, crossbills, Evening Grosbeaks, and—when we're lucky—Snowy Owls.

### Fall is a Lengthier Migration

Unlike spring migration, fall migration is a more drawn-out experience. Fall migration can start as early as July and last through October; sometimes December. Fall migration starts in waves, beginning in the northern latitudes of Canada.

Male Baltimore Orioles start to leave our area in August. Ruby-throated Hummingbirds that migrate from Canada and Northern Minnesota may show up in our area through mid-October. Fall migration continues into the month of December for some species, especially for short-distance land birds like sparrows, blackbirds and jays. Some birds migrate from upper altitudes to lower altitudes, but otherwise remain within the same area.

### Weather and Food Sources Play a Role

When it comes to the timing of fall migration, a lot depends on food sources, especially insects. Weather also plays a role. For example, dry conditions may make food and water harder to find, so some birds may leave earlier than in previous years.

### Migration May Vary Within Species

There are some birds that used to migrate but now may stick around over the winter. For example, American Robins used to be a sure sign of spring, but now we're seeing more and more robins staying with us over the winter. Other robins may migrate, but just a short distance and for a short amount of time. And finally, some robins make a full migration south each fall. Bluebirds are another species that is increasingly spotted overwintering in Minnesota.

There's a fascinating migration map of 118 species from Cornell Lab of Ornithology's *All About Birds* website (do an internet search for "all about birds mesmerizing migration map" to find it). It really illustrates how when one migration ends, another begins. ■

## How Has COVID-19 Impacted Bird Feeding?

Recently, an industry association that we're very involved with performed a study to help understand the impact that COVID-19 has had on the bird feeding industry (*industry* seems like a strange term for what we do—I prefer bird feeding *lifestyle* instead). The results weren't terribly surprising and seem consistent with our experiences at All Seasons Wild Bird Stores.

There has been some growth in the bird feeding lifestyle as more people are spending more time at home, either due to not traveling or now working from home. Curiously, the growth was predominantly among people who had *already* been feeding birds at home, not new participants.

That being said, there was also a small group of new bird feeding participants in the 18–34-year-old demographic, which is not traditionally a strong one for us. For us as a business and in my opinion as a society, it's very encouraging to see that when given the time and opportunity at home, younger people start choosing to feed birds.

The reasons people feed birds haven't changed: the lifestyle brings joy, excitement, stress relief, calmness and a much desired connection with the outdoors. These are all really great benefits in this everchanging, opinion-charged world we live in today.

The bird feeding lifestyle provides an all-natural way to improve your mood and feel more connected to nature. It almost sounds like it's too good to be true; if it were a pill, someone would be making millions!

We truly hope that's what the majority of you experience by choosing this wonderful lifestyle. We're truly grateful to be part of something that is so enriching to so many. One of our managers always refers to her store as the "happy bird store" and I think there's no simpler way to express what we are trying to do both as a business and as a lifestyle. Happy bird feeding!

~Dave Netten



Young adults are discovering the benefits of feeding birds.

# A GUIDE TO *Common Minnesota Sparrows*

Sparrows are the “little brown birds” of our backyards, somewhat unremarkable in appearance or character. But a look at their family tree reveals there's more to sparrows than meets the eye.

### Old World and New World Sparrows

Old World Sparrows, or family *Passeridae*, include House Sparrows (common to Minnesota) and Eurasian Tree Sparrows (uncommon). They're also sometimes called *True Sparrows*.

Old World Sparrows are not native to the Americas, though as a result of humans they're now found throughout the world.

New World Sparrows, or family *Passerellidae*, are sometimes called *American Sparrows*. They're native to North and South America, and include all but one of the species of sparrows found in Minnesota.

Though they may look similar, the two groups are actually not closely related. Old World Sparrows have short, strong bills that curve downward. New World Sparrows are more finch-like, with cone-shaped bills. Curiously, New World Sparrows have more in common with Old World Buntings than they do with Old World Sparrows.



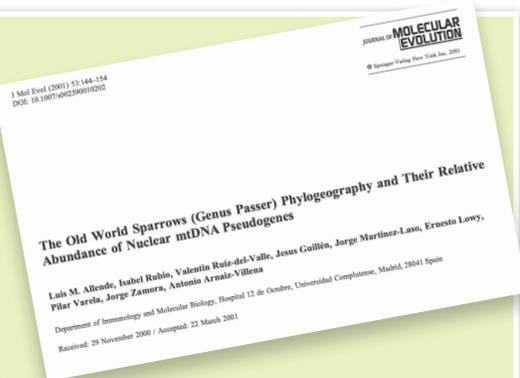
Old World Sparrows (left) have short, strong bills that curve downward. New World Sparrows (right) have a conical bill shape.



### ONLY FOR BIRD NERDS!

Until 2015, New World Sparrows were typically lumped together with buntings in a family called *Emberizidae*. You'll likely still see New World Sparrows listed under that family name in some of your bird guides (such as Peterson's *Field Guide to Birds*). Modern DNA sequencing has led many scientists to shift New World Sparrows back to the *Passerellidae* family, splitting off from the *Emberizidae* family.

One thing is clear—the family relationships of this wide group of birds is not completely understood!



There's an exhaustive list of sparrows that migrate through, nest in, or spend the winter in Minnesota. On the next page, we'll present a selection of sparrow species broadly found throughout Minnesota (reference: *Birds in Minnesota* by Robert B. Janssen). For more about the sparrows' habitats and more, pick up a copy of Stan Tekiela's *Birding for Beginners* or visit [allaboutbirds.org](http://allaboutbirds.org).



**House Sparrow**  
Old World Sparrow



**Clay-colored Sparrow**



**Song Sparrow**



**White-throated Sparrow**



**Harris's Sparrow**



**Eastern Towhee**



**Vesper Sparrow**



**Lincoln's Sparrow**



**American Tree Sparrow**



**White-crowned Sparrow**



**Chipping Sparrow**



**Savannah Sparrow**



**Swamp Sparrow**



**Fox Sparrow**



**Dark-eyed Junco**

# 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"> <li>✓ 13 hrs, 1 min of daylight Sept 5 declines to 11 hrs, 56 min of daylight on Sept 26.</li> <li>✓ Monarchs migrate south one by one.</li> <li>✓ Migrating <b>hummingbirds</b> will continue to visit nectar feeders into October.</li> <li>✓ <b>Orioles</b> leave Minnesota.</li> <li>✓ <b>Wild Turkeys, Wood Ducks, Blue Jays</b> and <b>Red-bellied Woodpeckers</b> feast on acorns from red and white oaks.</li> <li>✓ <b>Robins, waxwings</b> and <b>cardinals</b> munch fruit from Highbush Cranberry bushes and Mountain Ash trees.</li> </ul> <p><i>Tip:</i> September is an excellent time to plant perennials. For bird, bee, butterfly and other pollinator-friendly plants, check out the <b>Landscaping for Birds</b> page on our website.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Snapping turtles hatch out of clutches laid upland in late May or early June.</li> <li>✓ Now is peak bird migration over Hawk Ridge in Duluth.</li> <li>✓ Zinnias provide seeds for <b>goldfinches</b> as monarch butterflies and bees visit wild asters and sedum.</li> <li>✓ Rafts of <b>coots</b> and flocks of <b>Franklin's Gulls</b> return.</li> <li>✓ <b>Ruby-throated Hummingbirds</b> leave northern MN, but not the southern parts of the state.</li> <li>✓ The first killing frost is typically around Sept 15th.</li> </ul> <p><i>Tip:</i> 9/13 is Grandparents' Day—take a bird walk together!</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Some <b>Blue Jays</b> migrate south out of MN, but others from Canada will be here all winter.</li> <li>✓ The first <b>Dark-eyed Juncos</b> and returning native <b>sparrows</b> arrive and feast on Finches' Choice on the ground.</li> <li>✓ Now is peak migration for <b>Yellow-rumped Warblers</b>.</li> <li>✓ 9/22 is the autumnal equinox—the date autumn officially begins.</li> </ul> <p><i>Tip:</i> Indian meal moths are very active in September. Store your seed in sealed tins and hang a sticky trap.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ First <b>Snow Buntings</b> return.</li> <li>✓ Watch for the arrival of <b>White-throated Sparrows</b> as they scavenge on the ground under feeding stations.</li> <li>✓ <b>Northern Flickers</b> migrate through the area, though some do winter here.</li> <li>✓ Groups of <b>Common Loons</b> gather on area lakes in preparation for migration.</li> <li>✓ Birdbaths may ice over at night.</li> </ul> <p><i>Tip:</i> Keep <b>Nyjer</b> 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"> <li>✓ 11 hrs, 35 min of daylight on 10/3 declines to 10 hrs, 11 min on 10/31.</li> <li>✓ Sugar maples dot the landscape in burnt orange and red.</li> <li>✓ Late-migrating <b>hummingbirds</b> visit nectar feeders.</li> <li>✓ Migrating waves of <b>American Robins</b> and <b>Cedar Waxwings</b> relish clean birdbaths.</li> <li>✓ A larger influx of <b>Dark-eyed Juncos</b> and <b>American Coots</b> arrives.</li> <li>✓ <b>Golden-crowned</b> and <b>Ruby-crowned Kinglets</b> migrate through woodlands. The last of the <b>Yellow-rumped Warblers, Palm Warblers, vireos,</b> and <b>flycatchers</b> leave MN for the winter.</li> <li>✓ Large flocks of <b>Red-winged Blackbirds</b> and <b>grackles</b> migrate overhead.</li> <li>✓ White-lined sphinx moths feed on hostas and petunias.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ A larger influx of <b>White-throated Sparrows</b> arrives.</li> <li>✓ Late-season butterflies, like clouded sulfers, red admirals, painted ladies and a few monarchs visit New England asters and Mexican sunflowers.</li> <li>✓ Migrating waterfowl include the <b>American Wigeon, Blue-winged Teal</b> and <b>Northern Pintails</b>.</li> </ul> <p><i>Tips:</i> Take time to clean out or take down your bird houses. If you leave the houses up over the winter, open the side or bottom of the bird house to prevent mice from nesting. Ice forms overnight—time to get a <b>heated birdbath!</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>Turkey Vultures</b> glide southward overhead.</li> <li>✓ <b>Fox, White-throated and American Tree Sparrows</b> join the <b>Dark-eyed Juncos</b> feeding on Finches' Choice from the ground under bird feeders.</li> <li>✓ Beavers are busy cutting trees for their winter store.</li> <li>✓ <b>Common Loon</b> migration peaks in mid-October but can continue into December, depending on available open water.</li> <li>✓ Waterfowl migration is in full swing, including <b>Redheads, Canvasbacks, Lesser Scaup</b> and <b>Northern Shovelers</b>.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>Goldfinches</b> are in their brownish winter plumage.</li> <li>✓ <b>Tundra Swans</b> whistle as they migrate high overhead.</li> <li>✓ <b>Bald and Golden Eagles, hawks, goshawks</b> and <b>Merlins</b> fly over Hawk Ridge in Duluth.</li> <li>✓ Migrating <b>American Robins</b> relish ripe crabapples.</li> </ul> <p><i>Tip:</i> Compressed seed cylinders of <b>Golden Safflower</b> or <b>Flaming Hot Feast</b> deter squirrels. Added plus—no loose seed for the deer to lick up!</p>

