

25<sup>th</sup>

ALL SEASONS  
WILD BIRD  
STORE

CELEBRATING 25 YEARS!

# BIRD'S-EYE VIEW

Volume 25 Issue 1 | January/February 2018

Common Bird, Uncommon Past

## House Finch

+ Backyard Resolutions  
Birding Apps



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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.

#### EXPERT TIPS

By Minnetonka Manager CAROL CHENAULT

## New Year Resolutions

### 10 Simple Ways to Enhance Your Backyard Birding Experience This Year



**1. Start the day with a few minutes outside listening to the birds.** Use these moments in nature to fill the birdbath, offer in-shell peanuts to Blue Jays or fill the feeders when needed.

**2. Plan to plant for pollinators, birds and butterflies.** Pick up our handout *Birdscaping Basics* in our neighborhood stores or download it: [wildbirdstore.com/landscaping-for-birds/](http://wildbirdstore.com/landscaping-for-birds/).

#### 3. Use natural forms of insect control

by providing housing for bats and insectivores like House Wrens or Eastern Bluebirds. Remove stagnant water sources. Add a Water Wiggler or Layered Rock Waterfall to the birdbath to add water movement and prevent mosquitoes from laying eggs.



**4. Learn bird calls** by using a smart phone app, or the birdcall identification CD, *Birds of MN*.

**5. Keep cats indoors to protect backyard birds.** Cats are one of the biggest threats to the bird population.



#### 6. Protect birds from window strikes.

There are several methods to prevent window strikes, like using a feeder that suction cups to the window or using Window Alert decals on the window glass. Birds see these items and then realize the window is not a fly-through space.

**7. Save the birdseed for the birds and prevent predation on birdhouses** by using squirrel baffles on feeder poles, shepherd's hooks and birdhouse poles.



EXPERT TIPS CONTINUED PAGE 4



# Happy New Year!

## A Time of Gratitude and Resolution

As we flip the calendar over into another new year, Al and I would like to wish you and your families a very prosperous 2018. We're grateful to you for continuing to choose our local-family business for your backyard bird feeding needs. We're also extremely grateful to our wonderful staff for making this fun every day. We're embarking on our 27th year in this business and for us, it never gets boring or old as the retail and wild bird world keeps changing. We'll continue to do our best to bring you the best service and the best products that will hopefully create the best experience and enjoyment for you in your backyards. Blessings!

~Dave Netten



## Worry-Free Guarantee!

We want our customers to have a worry-free experience with every purchase. If you're not completely satisfied with *any item* purchased from our store, simply return it to us for an exchange or refund. **No worries . . . ever.**

## Get Social with Us

**Visit our Facebook page** (Facebook.com/WildBirdStore) to post photos, ask questions and be the first to know about upcoming sales and events.

**Follow us on Instagram** (@allseasonswildbirdstore) for stunning bird photos and more.



# Birding apps

By Guest Contributor MELISSA BLOCK

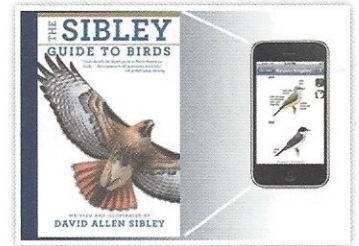


While I do love my paper field guides, they are not always easy to use when out on a bird walk. The books can be large, cumbersome, and hard to use when out in the field. Birding apps on your smart phone are perfect. They are easy to use, informative and easily accessible. These apps can serve as a field guide and help with bird identification while out on a walk. I've listed just a few of the more popular birding apps here.

## Field Guides

### Sibley eGuide to the Birds of North America (iOS, Android, Kindle Fire)

This app covers 810 species of birds, all the drawings, songs recordings, range maps and explanatory text found in the *Sibley Guide to Birds*.



Sibley eGuide app

### Peterson Birds of North America Field Guide (iOS)

Includes all the information from 8 *Peterson Field Guide* books, covering 800 species, range maps, songs and nest photos. You can compare similar species on one screen.



Audubon Bird Guide app

### Audubon Bird Guide (iOS, Android, Kindle Fire)

Covers 810 species using photos instead of drawings. It covers North America, Central and South America. Includes audio recordings, descriptive text, range maps, and nesting information.

### iBird (iOS, Android, Kindle Fire)

Five different versions are available, from *Lite* to *Ultimate*, with different features and species. Includes photos and drawings of 940 species (in the Pro version), audio recordings, and information on each species, behaviors, nests and eggs.

## Bird Identification

### Merlin Bird ID (iOS and Android)

Great app for beginning and intermediate birders. App asks 5 questions to help identify 400 common North American species: location, what time of day, size, and behavior. The app provides photos and descriptions of possible matching species based on this information.



Merlin Bird ID app

### Song Sleuth (iOS, Android version available spring 2018)

When opening the app, you're asked to enter your location and date to help winnow down the possibilities and to account for regional song dialects. Then you use your phone to record the bird song you want to identify. The app then shows you the spectrograph of the call and 3 possible matches. ■



# House Finch

## A COMMON BACKYARD BIRD WITH A STORIED PAST

The House Finch is a ubiquitous, year-round visitor to backyard feeding stations. It's a polite, mild-mannered bird that often shares a feeder with American Goldfinches and Black-capped Chickadees. They have a varied, vegetarian diet, eating anything from black oil sunflower and golden safflower, millet and Nyjer™ at feeding stations.



A House Finch eats dandelion seeds

Beyond our feeders, House Finches consume a large amount of weed seeds—they feed dandelion seeds to their young—and fruit. In early spring, when food sources are scarce, they'll eat flower and leaf buds, and sip maple sap.

### Description

At just under 6 inches, the male House Finch has red-to-orange plumage on its forehead and breast, over its eye, and on its rump. His sides are brown and his belly lighter, and he has streaks throughout. The female House Finch is completely brown with a heavily streaked chest. House Finch coloration can vary from red to yellowish, depending on the amount of carotenoids they consume.

Purple Finch House Finch



House Finches are often confused with Purple Finches. House Finches have streaks on their flanks, are more orange-to red colored, and have a square-tipped tail. Also, their red color is localized to the chest, head and rump.

### Habitat and Nesting

House Finches make their homes in cities, suburbs and farms and are seemingly uninhibited by areas of human activity. They build cup-shaped nests, often in ornamental vines growing on houses, on window ledges, in ornamental shrubbery around houses, or in hanging flower baskets (a popular site). These same sites are also common spots for night roosting.

### Courtship and Song

The male House Finch performs a unique song-and-flight display for females during courtship. The female may respond with a few notes that suggest the male's song. The typical song of a House Finch is a cheerful, warbling sound, and may be heard at any time of the year.

### Distribution

The scientific name of the House Finch (*Haemorhous mexicanus*) hints at the unique story of this bird's history. Originally found in



Male House Finch

Female House Finch

Mexico and the United States west of the Rocky Mountains, today's distribution map shows a broad range of House Finches across the entire US. They have unusual introduction and proliferation east of the Rockies (see box, below).

### Inbreeding and Disease

Since eastern House Finch populations descended entirely from a small number of released birds, they are highly inbred and therefore lack genetic diversity. According to ornithologists at Cornell University, this may make this population more susceptible to an eye disease called *Mycoplasmal conjunctivitis*, or *House Finch Eye Disease*. While the dramatic spread of this disease that occurred several years ago has stabilized, it's important to deter the spread of disease by following a basic cleaning regimen for your feeders (ask us about our feeder cleaning service) and to rake underneath feeders to remove old seed and bird droppings. For more information, visit [feederwatch.org/learn/house-finch-eye-disease/](http://feederwatch.org/learn/house-finch-eye-disease/). ■

### "HOLLYWOOD FINCHES" TAKE THE EAST

An excerpt from *Chicago Tribune Environment*  
Writer Peter Kendall (March 29, 1997)

"In the 1940s, bird dealers roamed the West Coast, where House Finches naturally live, capturing the birds and shipping them over the Rocky Mountains to pet stores back East. There, the birds were labeled 'Hollywood finches' and only sang their musical warble from cages. It so happened that this trade violated the [International] Migratory Bird Treaty Act. According to the oft-told tale of the House Finch, the feds were gearing up to raid some Long Island pet stores when the shop owners caught wind of the plan and simply opened the doors of all their Hollywood finch cages. Ever since, the bird has been slowly spreading, first south, then west, until it ran into the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains."





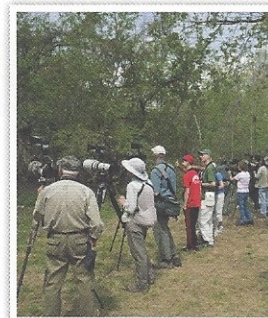


**8. See more birds by providing a source of clean drinking water and a place to bathe.** Use Bird Bath Protector to keep the water clean and clear. Birds that do not eat at seed feeders like warblers, robins and Cedar Waxwings will visit the backyard to use a birdbath.

**9. Keep birdseed fresh** by purchasing an amount what will be consumed in six weeks or less. Seed can be purchased in our stores in 3#, 5# or 10# bags as well as in our 30# bags.

## 10. Plan a bird watching field trip.

Local Audubon chapters offer free or low-cost guided bird walks, as do many local parks and state parks. Visit the National Eagle Center in Wabasha, MN. If it's just too cold outside, visit the Raptor Center or the Tropics exhibit at the MN Zoo. Keep a field guide and binoculars in the car and enjoy the birds wherever you travel. ■



## THE BIG GAME

By Guest Contributor MELISSA BLOCK

# With the Big Game Coming to Minnesota, We Couldn't Help But Get Into the Spirit!

## If Only Football Helmets Were Built Like Woodpecker Skulls

The problem of player concussions is getting a lot of attention within the National Football League (NFL). Sports organizations have started to recognize the danger of repeated concussions from blows to the head.

Repeated blows to the head are daily occurrences for woodpeckers. The average woodpecker hits its beak against a tree at an estimated 15 miles an hour, 20 times per second, about 12,000 times a day. A woodpecker can withstand 1,200g (G-Force). Yet, the birds do not suffer any head injuries or brain trauma. In comparison, the average NFL hit has two players colliding with one each other at 100-150g.

There are several features that protect the woodpecker's brain from trauma that do not exist in humans. The brain of the bird fills the space of the skull and cannot slosh around. The human brain is more like an eggshell with an egg yolk inside.



There is also the comparative size of the human and bird brain. The woodpecker brain is so small the surface area-to-weight ratio distributes the impact over the entire region. This is not the case for human brains, which experience trauma from different angles and while in motion and rotation. There's also a specific bone that exists in both birds and humans, but serves very different purposes. The hyoid bone in humans is located near the middle of the neck, and functions in tongue movement and swallowing.

In contrast, the hyoid bone in woodpeckers wraps all the way around the skull, and acts as a protective seatbelt for the brain.

There are studies that are looking into the viability of applying woodpecker anatomical features, such as how the brain of the woodpecker is packed tightly into dense bone, to the development of safer helmets. ■

*Shouldn't they name a team after woodpeckers?*

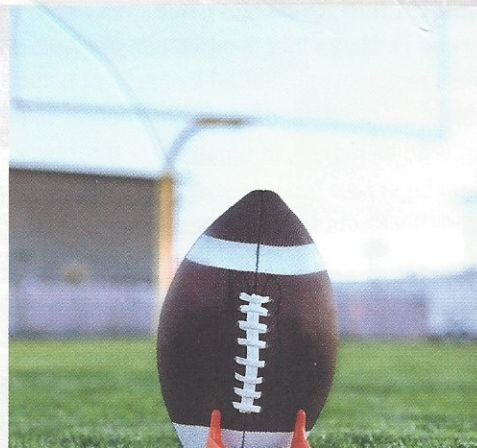


## Football/Bird Trivia

**Q.** How many NFL teams are named after birds?

**A.** There are five NFL teams named after birds:

1. Philadelphia Eagles
2. Arizona Cardinals
3. Atlanta Falcons
4. Baltimore Ravens
5. Seattle Seahawks.



**Have an idea for a future issue of *Birds-Eye View*?** Photos and articles may be submitted by email to [info@wildbirdstore.net](mailto:info@wildbirdstore.net). Sign up for our weekly e-newsletter at [WildBirdStore.com](http://WildBirdStore.com) to receive information about backyard birding, store events and exclusive discounts.