



BIRD'S-EYE VIEW

Volume 29 Issue 1 | January/February 2022

ALL SEASONS
WILD BIRD
STORE

Waxwings

Winter Bird feeding
+ 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.

WINTER BIRD FEEDING

By Guest Contributor MELISSA BLOCK

FEEDING *Winter Finches*

Minnesota has a large population of finches. The word *finch* means a small to medium-sized passerine bird in the family *Fringillidae*, which includes many of our songbirds. Buntings, sparrows, grosbeaks, and cardinals all belong to this family. Like other birds in this family, finches have stout, conical bills that are adapted for eating seeds and nuts.



American Goldfinch in winter plumage

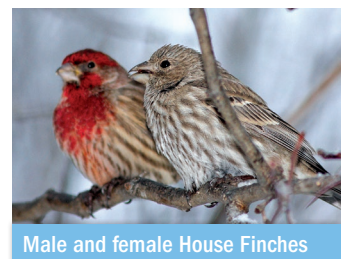
American Goldfinch

Minnesota's most prevalent finch is the American Goldfinch. These birds are here year-round. The bright yellow summer plumage of the male molts to a drabber olive/brown color over winter, like the female's year-round plumage. American Goldfinches are strict vegetarians, with a diet of seeds only—and not any insects—which is rare in the bird world. American Goldfinches don't

nest until July or August to take advantage of the late summer's plentiful seeds. Goldfinches love **Medium Sunflower Chips, Fine Sunflower Chips, Finches' Choice, Nyjer and Sunflower Chips**, and plain **Nyjer**. It's also helpful to use bird feeders specially made for goldfinches with smaller feeding ports. Besides feeders, they like seeds from asters, sunflowers, and certain grasses.

House Finch

House Finches are also common in Minnesota. They are usually the first ones to try out a new feeder



Male and female House Finches

and often help other birds find your feeders too. House Finches, especially the females, look drab all year round with brown streaks on their back, tail and belly. Adult males do have some light rosy-red around their heads and upper breast. The rest is all brown streaks. Both sexes have notched tails and the conical beaks that exemplify finches. House Finches enjoy **Black Oil Sunflower, Medium Sunflower Chips, Finches' Choice, Nyjer and Chips**, and plain **Nyjer**.

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A Notable Anniversary

Roy Shemanek, Bloomington store staffer, reaches 25-year milestone!

We would like to acknowledge one of our most beloved employees, Roy Shemanek, for being a loyal and dedicated member of our Bloomington store staff for the past 25 years.

Roy began his tenure with All Seasons in November of 1996 after he retired from a lauded career in the human resources industry, lastly working for Norwest Bank where he was a past *Employee of the Year* award winner.



Roy (right) with
Bloomington Manager
Steve Endres

After his retirement from Norwest Bank, Roy was looking to do something rewarding that would get him out of the house and landed at the door of our small business. He was becoming more interested in birds at the time, so it seemed like a good fit in his mind.

Needless to say, it's been a great fit! It's hard to imagine retiring from one career and then beginning another, that at this point has lasted another 25+ years.

Our staff and customers have been enjoying Roy's friendly nature for a long time and we're looking forward to that continuing for a few more years.

Roy has been a tremendous asset to our business in so many ways: his strong work ethic, his kindness, his positive attitude and his outstanding backyard birding knowledge that he's gained over the past 25 years. We're extremely proud to be the place that Roy has been calling his second home since he began and are blessed that he wanted to try something new, way back in November 1996.

~Al and Dave Netten

WINTER BIRD FEEDING

(... continued from page 1)



Purple Finch

Purple Finch

Purple Finches are similar looking to House Finches, but the red around their head and breast is closer to a dark reddish-purple color and is more prevalent on their back, breast, and head. They are often confused with male House Finches. To tell them apart, look at their back. The Purple Finch's back has red coloring, while the back of the House Finch has none. They are more common in northern Minnesota. Once in awhile you can see them during the fall and winter months in central and southern Minnesota. Purple Finches love **Black Oil Sunflower** and **Medium Sunflower Chips**.

Pine Siskins

Pine Siskins are one of our winter visitors. You'll often find them mixed in with a group of American Goldfinches. They are small, brownish birds, with a hint of yellow edging on their tails and wings and a sharp pointed bill and notched tail. Male and female Pine Siskins look alike. They will visit feeders, especially when naturally occurring seeds are scarce.



Pine Siskin

They enjoy smaller seeds, especially those without tough shells, like **Sunflower Chips**, **Finches' Choice**, **Nyjer and Chips**, and plain **Nyjer**.

Common Redpolls

Common Redpolls are another winter visitor to Minnesota. Common Redpolls are one of the easier finches to spot. They are heavily streaked on their sides, with a small red patch on their forehead and yellow bills. Male Common Redpolls have a very pale red vest on the chest. Redpolls tend to travel in large flocks, moving fast, often



Common Redpoll

chattering while they fly. They will come to finch feeders filled with **Nyjer**, **Nyjer and Sunflower Chips**, **Finches' Choice**, and **Fine Sunflower Chips**. ■

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Masked mauraders: WAXWINGS

Minnesota hosts two of the three species of waxwings that exist worldwide: Cedar Waxwings and Bohemian Waxwings*. Get to know these masked and crested social birds with an appetite for berries.



Arrows mark notable differences to help identify the two species.

Cedar Waxwings

These birds are common residents in the summer in the Twin Cities area, and may visit throughout winter. Although crested like a Northern Cardinal, they're about 1.5 inches smaller—closer in size to a House Finch.

Primarily brown with a black mask, Cedar Waxwings have a yellow glow on their bellies and blunt tail feathers that appear to have been dipped in yellow wax. Adults may also have waxy-looking red tips on their secondary wing feathers.

Bohemian Waxwings

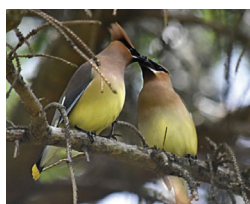
These birds are regular winter visitors and migrants to northern Minnesota and the Lake Superior area. It's rare to see these birds as far south as the Twin Cities.

Larger than Cedar Waxwings by about an inch, Bohemian Waxwings are also grayer and lack the yellow coloration on the belly. They have a subtle peach blush around the face and a rusty undertail area. Prominent white bands on the wings—which Cedars lack—are a clear indicator of Bohemians.

Behavior

Both species of waxwings are highly social, traveling in flocks from one food source to the next. They're known to strip trees and bushes of fruits before moving on.

Breeding areas vary from season to season, with members of the flock forming clusters of nests. During courtship, waxwing males may hop to and away from a female, then touch beaks. Males and females



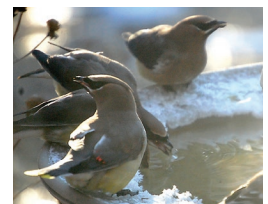
A waxwing pair passes a berry as a courtship ritual.

may also pass a berry back and forth a number of times, before the female eats it.

Waxwings adjust their diet by season, eating buds and flowers in the spring, fresh fruit and flying insects (caught in midair) in the summer, and dried fruits in the winter.

Tips for Viewing and Attracting Waxwings

- **LISTEN** for a high-pitched zeee (Cedars) or a rougher zree (Bohemians) sound that indicates waxwings are near. The sound can be quite noticeable to those of us fortunate to be able hear high pitches. (Side note: studies show that we lose our ability to hear high pitches as we age, with males having a faster rate of loss of high pitches than women. Don't be surprised if you can hear them and your birding companion can't, or vice versa.)
- **LOOK UP**—they're frequently jumping around in the canopy of a fruiting or flowering tree. Note: until you see their masks, you may mistake Cedar Waxwings for American Goldfinches at first, as their yellow bellies are prominent when looking up from below.
- **STAY ALERT**—ornamental berry-producing trees like crabapples are common in urban landscaping, so you may be surprised to find a flock feasting among the trees lining a mall parking lot!
- **UP YOUR ODDS**—Bohemian Waxwings may sometimes visit platform feeders in their ranges. Serve our Berry Nutty mix on a platform feeder to increase your odds of attracting them Up North.
- **PROVIDE WATER YEAR-ROUND.** Cedar Waxwings typically do not visit feeders, but will visit birdbaths to drink and bathe. Keep a heated birdbath going in the winter for a chance to attract foraging flocks.
- **PLANT TO ATTRACT WAXWINGS.** Some waxwing favorites are: cedars, mountain ash trees, crab apples, black cherry trees, serviceberries, redosier dogwoods, northern bayberries, and American highbush cranberries. (See our *Birdscaping Basics* flyer, available for free in stores). ■



A flock of Cedar Waxwings visits a heated birdbath.

**The third species, Japanese Waxwings, resides in the East Palearctic region: Russia east of the Ural Mountains, Mongolia, China, Tibet, Korea and Japan.*

Seasonal Notes and Tips

By Minnetonka Manager CAROL CHENAULT

January: WEEK BY WEEK

Week 1	2nd Week	3rd Week	4th Week
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Jan 1st sees 8hrs 51min of daylight. We've gained 4 minutes of daylight since the winter solstice. ✓ January is generally our coldest month with average max temp of 23.6°F and average min low temp of 8.8°F ✓ The silence of winter is broken by the calls of the Northern Cardinal, Black-capped Chickadee and the drumming of woodpeckers. The "fee-bee" call of the chickadee is interpreted as "Spring-Soon" by some bird watchers. ✓ Listen for Great Horned Owls hooting to declare their territories. ✓ Watch for vagrants like the Varied Thrush at the feeders and heated birdbath. ✓ Put dried mealworms and Berry Nutty in a ground feeder or under pine trees to help over-wintering American Robins through the winter. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Look for animal tracks in the snow! ✓ Prevent wasteful bill sweeping behavior and keep deer from licking seed onto the ground by using a hanging seed cylinder feeder. It holds a compressed seed cylinder and has a dome to protect the seed. An added plus—Northern Cardinals love these feeders! ✓ Deter ravenous squirrels with Flaming Hot Feast-Squirrels' Defeat loose seed, seed cakes or cylinders, hot pepper suet cakes or plugs or by adding Fire Hot powder mix to seed. ✓ Blue Jays liven the air with their pump handle call. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Birds must refuel quickly during cold weather. Feeders filled with a combination of dried mealworms, peanut pick outs and Songbird Delight attract cardinals, chickadees, nuthatches and woodpeckers galore! ✓ To survive the cold, Black-capped Chickadees shiver to convert muscle energy into heat. Chickadees eat their body weight in food daily during the winter to maintain their body temperature of 108°F. ✓ Some winters we see Snowy Owls near the Mpls/St. Paul airport. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Red oaks begin to lose their leaves—a first sign of the coming spring. ✓ Plan your garden with our Birdscaping Basics flyer. Pick up a free copy at your local store. ✓ Keep an eye out for our earliest returning migrants—Horned Larks. ✓ Watch for pairs of Red Foxes. They're normally solitary creatures outside of mating season. Coyotes also begin their mating season. ✓ The bills of European Starlings begin to turn yellow as the breeding season approaches.



February: WEEK BY WEEK

Week 1	2nd Week	3rd Week	4th Week
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ February is our third snowiest month with an average of 9.5 inches. ✓ Wintering-over Eastern Bluebirds are attracted to heated birdbaths and mealworms. ✓ Provide foods loaded with fat and protein like mealworms, suet, peanuts and sunflower out of the shell to help birds refuel quickly during cold weather. Add dried mealworms to Berry Nutty or Kracker Jax for a full buffet. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ American Goldfinches begin to molt into their bright yellow feathers. It's a sure sign of returning spring—eventually! ✓ Great Horned Owls have eggs in the nest. ✓ Greenhouses report plants coming out of dormancy and starting to grow! ✓ House Finches' singing, Mourning Doves' cooing and Red-bellied Woodpeckers' "wicker" calls are signs of the coming spring. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ All Minnesota species of tree squirrels begin their mating season including flying, fox, gray and red squirrels. ✓ Trumpeter Swans gather on the Mississippi near Monticello in the open water created by the power plant. Visit this web page for info: monticellocci.com/pages/swans ✓ Bald Eagle nesting season has begun. Watch nesting on the DNR site: bit.ly/3m6PlyV. ✓ Raccoons are more active and Eastern Chipmunks may be venturing out of their burrows. ✓ Migrating Red-tailed Hawks arrive to claim nesting territory. ✓ Participate in the Great Backyard Bird Count. See gbbc.birdcount.org for more information. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Common Mergansers, with their pointed and serrated bills, fish in streams that have open water throughout the winter. ✓ The American Crow "rattle calls" are another sign of spring. ✓ Some winter visitors begin their northward retreat but many Dark-eyed Juncos remain until early spring. They love Finches' Choice sprinkled on the ground or served in a Nyjer tube or mesh feeder. ✓ First migrating Red-winged Blackbirds, American Robins and Common Grackles are returning. Watch for returning Wood Ducks and Canada Geese as well. ✓ Courting male pheasants make a double squawk call.

