



**ALL SEASONS
WILD BIRD
STORE**

BIRD'S-EYE VIEW

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House Wrens

Small Space 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.

BIRD FEEDING TIPS

By Minnetonka–Westwind Plaza Manager CAROL CHENAULT

Small Space Feeding Solutions

Birds aren't fussy about the size of your yard, garden or patio. They are more impressed by available food, water, shelter and cover than by acreage. With a little planning, you can have a very successful birding watching experience in a small space.

Seed Choice

Using seed that won't leave a mess is a must in small spaces so as not to walk shells into your house. Our no-shell, no-mess, no-waste options are **Kracker Jax** and **#1 Select Sunflower Hearts**. Kracker Jax is a great mix of sunflower out of the shell, hulled millet, cracked corn and peanut pick-outs. Our #1 Select Sunflower Hearts are premium, whole sunflower out of the shell.

No Pole System Needed

Serve seed in a window feeder like a window tray or the **Observer Window Feeder**. These feeders use suction cups to attach right to the window for great close-up views of the birds. A **window-mounted suet feeder** will draw in woodpeckers, chickadees and nuthatches. Hummingbirds will also come right up to the window to sip from a **nectar feeder**. Use a **window-mounted hanger** to hang a cup feeder for mealworms or jelly to



Photo by Holly Atta

Observer Window Feeder, window-mounted hangers with mealworm dish feeder and Hummerfest feeder, Squirrel Buster Mini feeder.

attract orioles.

Hang a either a Squirrel Buster Mini or small Nyjer feeder from an overhang or eaves. The **Squirrel Buster Mini** is lightweight squirrel-resistant feeder. A squirrel's weight pulls down the shroud, (continued on page 2 ...)

Health Benefits of Birds

Recently our Minnetonka Manager, Carol Chenault, attended a webinar sponsored by our industry's trade association, the Wild Bird Feeding Institute (WBFI). The title of the webinar was *The Health Benefits of Feeding Birds*.

We've always known that feeding wild birds is a beneficial activity, but now there's been some science put behind it. Here are some of the ways that bird feeding and bird watching can benefit our health, especially our mental health:

- **Birds offer a gateway to more experiences in nature**, promoting further physical activity.
- **Bird watching helped to alleviate feelings of loneliness and isolation** during the pandemic by allowing us to make a connection with nature while at home.
- **Taking time to be fully present while watching the birds helps to break negative thinking**, redirects our emotions and mental energy and activates different areas of the brain—resulting in increased productivity and creativity.
- **Bird watching reduces our cortisol level**, which reduces stress and anxiety, making it a heart-healthy activity.
- **Listening to bird songs causes a dopamine release and boosts people's overall sense of wellbeing.** Listen for the *fee bee* call of the chickadee—one of the earliest signs that spring will return.

~Al and Dave Netten

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BIRD FEEDING TIPS (continued from page 1)

closing off feeding ports. Fill the Mini with Kracker Jax or #1 Select Sunflower Hearts.



Out-of-the-shell seed mixes like Kracker Jax are a no-mess solution for small spaces.

Or, consider hanging a **Nyjer feeder**. Squirrels generally aren't interested in Nyjer, making it a natural squirrel deterrent.

Hanging and Mounting Systems

A clamp-on deck bracket is another option to explore. There are brackets to clamp to the flat top rail of the deck or onto the vertical metal baluster posts. A squirrel-resistant feeder would be a good pairing with these brackets.

Other Considerations

Make your small space more inviting and provide some cover for the birds by using potted plants and hanging pots. Place a **Garden Stake Hummingbird Feeder** in a hanging plant like a fuchsia to attract hummingbirds. Container gardening is a

great way to add visual interest to your small space, for you and the birds!

A pedestal birdbath, one that clamps onto the deck railing or a ground level or tabletop-style birdbath will provide water for drinking or bathing. Use **Bird Bath Protector** to keep the bath clean. Water will attract birds who generally don't come to seed feeders, like American Robins, Cedar Waxwings and Eastern Bluebirds. Add a **Water Wiggler** to the bath. Moving water attracts more birds and prevents mosquitoes from laying their eggs on the surface of the water.

To provide shelter, hang a bird house at the edge of your space or around the corner of your abode from the feeders. That way the adults won't spend all their time trying to defend the house from the birds that are trying to feed. Start with an easy-to-clean chickadee or wren house as these are the birds most likely to use a house/nest box.

Be Patient

After selecting and installing your small space birding items, be patient and give birds about six weeks to get comfortable with your new habitat. Watch as your small space becomes a great bird habitat and your window to nature! ■

Photo: Audrey Manka



Some small space solutions. Shown (clockwise from left): Bird Bath Protector enzyme solution, American Goldfinch enjoying a birdbath, Water Wiggler, Garden Stake Hummingbird Feeder (hanging in a patio plant), Bird's Choice recycled wren nest box.

House Wrens

Many of us look forward to the return of spring and with it some of our favorite birds including the House Wren. The male House Wren sings from dawn 'til dusk in his best Barry White or George Strait crooner want-to-be vocals: "Ladies! Ladies! Look at the nest I have readied for you!"

There are several species of wrens found in Minnesota, with the House Wren as the most common. The House Wren is a small, brown, compact bird with short wings, an erect tail and a curved beak. It typically flies in short bursts in search of insects.

Nesting Behavior

The male typically constructs a nest in a cavity, crevice or nest box, often in dense shrubs. The House Wren will readily use a nest box and has even been known to nest in flowerpots, hats, teapots and even in gardening boots. The male establishes more than one nesting site by piling small twigs in multiple nesting cavities. Once he has secured a mate, the female completes the cup-shaped nest and lines it with soft animal hair, plant material and spider egg sacs.

The female lays and tends to 3-10 pinkish-white, speckled eggs. The female incubates the eggs while the male stands guard. The incubation period is 10-13 days and fledging occurs 12-15 days after hatching. Wrens feed their young grasshoppers, crickets, caterpillars and spiders. They may also supplement with suet, mealworms and hulled sunflower. The pair typically has two broods per year.



A House Wren demonstrating a typical upright tail pose.

Attract Wrens with a Nest Box

Attracting a House Wren to your backyard habitat is not difficult. There are many wren house variations on the market including those made from recycled plastic or wood. When selecting a wren house—or any bird house—make sure it has a hinged back, side or top panel for easy cleaning. Ventilation is also important.

There are pros and cons to all bird houses. Cedar is relatively resistant to rot and insects. Moreover, wood provides good insulation. Avoid bird houses constructed of 100% metal, as they become mini ovens. Ideally, a wren house is smaller in size, which facilitates nest building.

The house should be placed in a way that the male cannot readily view the nesting sites of other birds, including the Black-capped Chickadee, Eastern Bluebird and even members of the finch family. The House Wren is not a good neighbor. It is known to destroy the nests of other birds and even peck holes in their eggs.

Remember to clean all bird houses at the end of the nesting season each autumn. ■

STAFF FAVORITES

Nest Box Selections

As a family, we look forward to the cheerful songs of the male House Wren as a harbinger of spring each year. One of our wren houses has been consistently occupied for over 25 years!

I especially like the **Nature's Way** and **Woodlink** houses (pictured). They are constructed of wood with a 1-¹/₈ inch entry hole and offer excellent ventilation. Each bird house is easy to clean as well.

Mount the house to a pole approximately five feet above ground or hang it from a tree. Ideally, place the house near a shrub or bush.

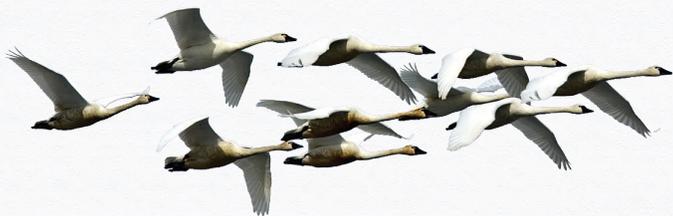
Any additional houses should be placed 100 feet away from another. Avoid houses with perches, as they can lure predators.

Far right: Woodlink Wren House.

Below: Nature's Way Cedar Traditional Wren House.



March & April



Watch for early March signs of spring's approach:

- ✓ Migrating flocks of Tundra Swans and Snow Geese high overhead.
- ✓ Returning migrant male American Robins, Red-winged Blackbirds, Canada Geese, Wood Ducks, Golden-crowned and Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Eastern Phoebes and Yellow-rumped Warblers.
- ✓ Spring sounds abound! Listen for Northern Cardinals whistling loud and long, Mourning Doves cooing and the “fee-bee” and “chickadee-dee-dee” of the Black-capped Chickadees.
- ✓ Canada Geese pairs reclaim nesting sites but egg laying won't begin until open water is close by.



Red-winged Blackbird

Spring clean-up tip: Wear a mask when raking up bird seed shells. Dispose of debris in the trash. For less clean-up time, use our no-shell **Select Sunflower Hearts** or **Kracker Jax** in the feeders.

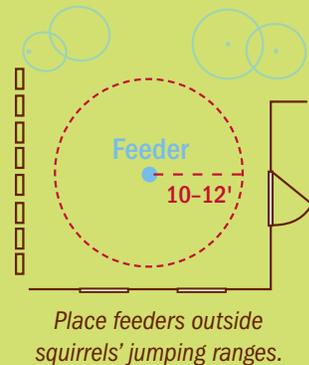
Apply new Window Alerts™ to patio doors and windows to prevent window strikes by migrating birds.

Provide nesting material with **The Best Nest Builder**.



Mount a Wood Duck house on a pole secured with an 18-in. twister ground anchor and install a baffle to prevent predation by raccoons and squirrels.

Install a squirrel-resistant pole system. Place your pole system within a 12-ft. radius from trees, fences and structures. Install a squirrel baffle for squirrel-resistant bird feeding. See our **Discouraging Squirrels** handout (or on our website under: *Resources > Troubleshooting > Squirrels*) for more advice. Call the Minnetonka—Ridge Square store at 952-473-4283 to have our expert staff install a pole system for you (fees apply).



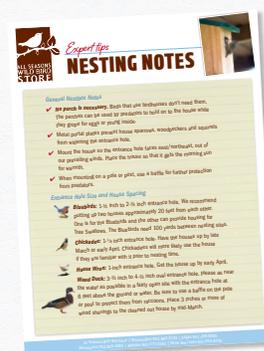
Add a deck rail mounted birdbath or a free-standing birdbath to attract more birds to your yard.



Put out hummingbird and oriole feeders the last week of April! Here they come! Orioles love mealworms, grape jelly, oranges and nectar.

Bring feeders to your neighborhood store for cleaning (fees apply).

Prevent an ant invasion by placing an ant moat above feeders or by applying **Nectar Fortress Natural Ant Repellent** on the hanger or feeder pole. Ants won't cross the gel.



Clean out bird houses/ nest boxes. Replace cracked or damaged houses. See our **Nesting Notes** for more information on house placement. (Chickadees pick nest sites in March but House Wrens usually return the third week of April to our area.)

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