



**ALL SEASONS
WILD BIRD
STORE**

BIRD'S-EYE VIEW

Volume 30 Issue 4 | July/August 2023

Bird legs

**Mealworm Tips
+
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 Minnetonka Manager CAROL CHENAULT

What is Nyjer®?

Nyjer® (pronounced *nigh-ger*) is the Wild Bird Feeding Institute name for the seed that some retailers call "thistle". The scientific name for this seed is *Guizotia abyssinica*. It is not related to the Canadian thistle plant.

Imported and Non-Germinating

Nyjer® seed is from a yellow flowering plant grown in Ethiopia, India, Myanmar and Nepal. The seed is heat-treated prior to shipping to prevent germination so it will not grow in your yard. Nyjer® is the only major wild bird feed ingredient imported from overseas. It has been marketed as a bird seed for about 40 years.

A Finch Favorite

Nyjer® is favored by finches because of its small size and high oil content of 40%. We carry it both as straight seed and as part of our **Finches' Choice** seed blend and in our **Nyjer® and Chips** mix. Chickadees, juncos, Pine Siskins and House Finches will also eat Nyjer®.

Recommended Nyjer® Feeder

Serve Nyjer® in a mesh or tube feeder with fine seed ports. The **Quick Clean Large Antique Brass Nyjer® feeder** with 10 perches is a staff favorite. The bottom of the feeder comes off with the depression of two buttons for easy cleaning.

It can also be refilled from the bottom! Genius!

Add a **Weather Guard dome** above the feeder to protect it from rain and a tray below to catch shells and provide more feeding area.

Pro Tip for Refilling Nyjer® Feeders

When your feeder is in need of filling, first empty the feeder's existing Nyjer® into a paper bag. Then, refill the lower half of the feeder with fresh seed.

Finally, use the seed in the paper bag to completely fill the feeder. Because goldfinches arriving at the feeder jostle for positions at the top of the feeder, this will ensure that the older seed gets eaten first!



Aspects Quick Clean feeders have an easy to remove base for cleaning

Nyjer® is a registered trademark of the Wild Bird Feeding Institute

A Leg Up

As someone who's often been told by my wife that I have "skinny bird legs", I was very interested in the article you'll find in this issue on bird leg anatomy.

What does it actually mean to have a leg like a bird? My presumptions up to this point have been; skinny, pale, a little hairy, pointy joints, etc. Not super attractive.

But, what if there are some reasons and evolutionary advantages for those characteristics? Maybe I now have some ammo to fire back with next time.

Leave it to our super knowledgeable bird experts to educate us about something many of us don't think about much but is actually a very important anatomical trait for our backyard bird friends. I'm often amazed at how much I still have yet to learn and this was no exception!

We hope you're enjoying your summer and now there's something to add to the conversation when you throw those drumsticks on the grill. ■

~ Dave Netten

Owner, All Seasons Wild Bird Store

Mmmmmmm... Mealworms!

Mealworms are a favorite for many of our backyard birds including:

- Bluebirds
- Cardinals
- Chickadees
- Flycatchers
- Nuthatches
- Orioles
- Phoebe
- Robins
- Swallows
- Thrushes
- Titmice
- Warblers
- Woodpeckers
- Wrens

Contrary to their name, mealworms are not *worms* at all; they are the larvae form of the mealworm beetle also known as the *darkling beetle*.

Mealworms are an excellent source of protein, fat and fiber. Offering live or dried mealworms will entice birds that are not readily attracted to seed alone. Mealworms are an ingredient in many products we sell including:

Mr. Bird

Bugs & Nuts cylinders and cakes

Flaming Hot Feast cylinders and cakes

Pacific Bird Suet

Insect & Hot Pepper Suet

Mealworm & Berry Suet

Pacific Bird

Dried Mealworm Topping (3.5 oz)

Dried Mealworm Bucket (14 oz)

Live mealworms

1000 count

500 count



Photo: Ann McCarthy

Dried mealworms can be fed in a tray feeder, fly-through feeder, or cup feeder designed for orioles or bluebirds. Place live mealworms in a cup feeder with sides that are at least 1"-2" high. Don't fill the feeder completely to the top or the mealworms will crawl out.

Mealworm Tips:

- Live mealworms can be stored in a refrigerator for 6-10 weeks. Refrigeration induces dormancy.
- Sprinkle dried mealworms over grape jelly or add a bit of grape juice to plump them up.
- Feed mealworms if you want to attract and keep orioles and bluebirds. ■



A sample of several types of mealworm feeders at the Eagan All Seasons Wild Bird Store location.

Join the Conversation!

New Facebook address:

Facebook.com/Allseasonswildbirdstore

Instagram: AllSeasonsWildBirdStore

YouTube.com/@allseasonswildbirdstore

Share your photos!

Share your photos for our in-store displays and social media!

Send your digital files to:

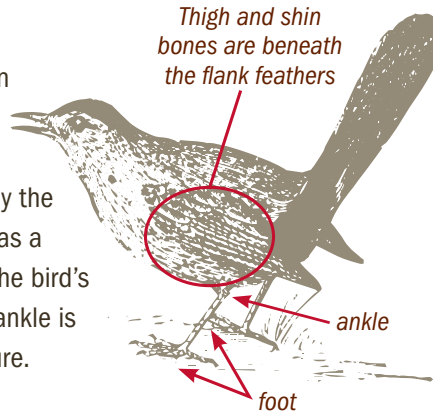
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THE WONDER of bird legs

Like humans, birds have both forelimbs and hindlimbs. Unlike us, their forelimbs have adapted to take on the role of flight, leaving their legs to take on a multitude of roles: scratching/digging, clinging, walking, preening and cleaning, holding prey, swimming, steering, building nests and more. Let's take a closer look at the anatomy of birds' legs.

Leg or Foot?

Much of a bird's leg is hidden beneath the flank feathers. The part that we see—and think of as the *leg*—is actually the *foot*. What we may perceive as a backwards *knee* is actually the bird's *ankle*. Everything below the ankle is part of the bird's foot structure.



called the *tarsometatarsus*. Other tarsal bones of a bird are fused with the shin bone (tibia) to form a *tibiotarsus*.

Walking on Tiptoes

Essentially, most birds walk on their toes—they're called *digitigrade* animals. The illustration below compares how a human might look if we were to walk in a manner similar to that of a bird. Some birds, like the Common Loon, are an exception—they walk on their entire foot.

Common Loons are one of the few birds that walk on the entire foot.



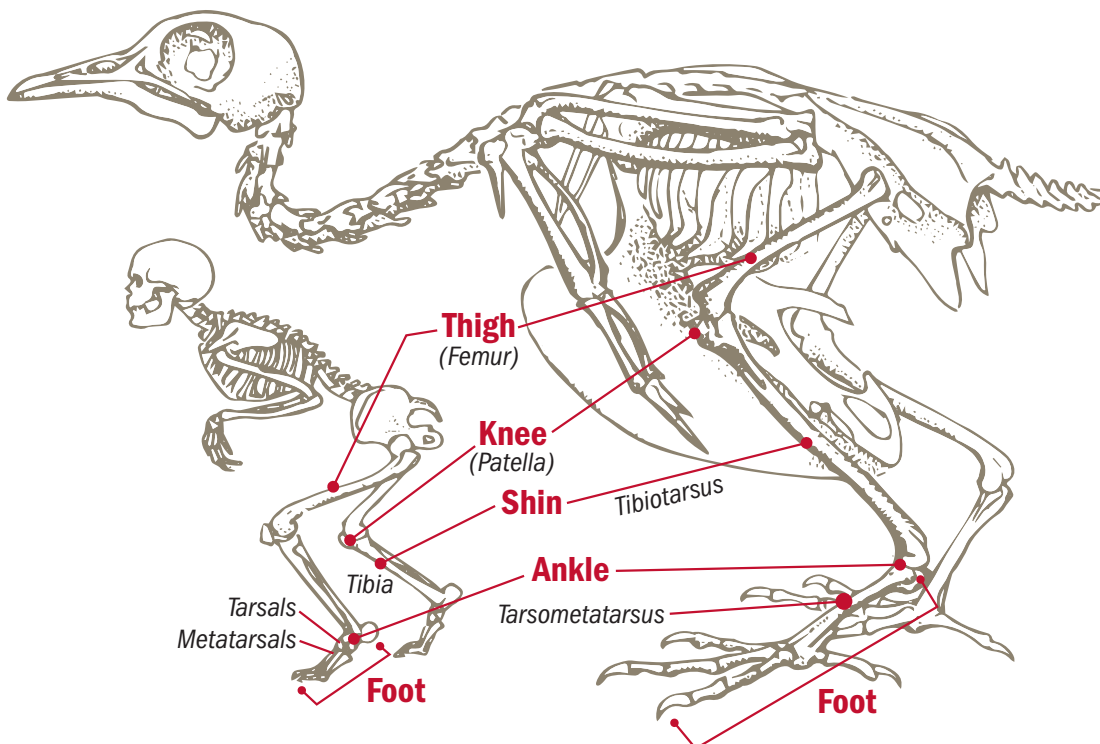
Similar Skeletal Structure

Birds have the same basic skeletal structure as humans, but many of the bones in their feet and legs are fused. For example, while our ankles and feet have separate tarsals and metatarsals bones, some of the metatarsals in a bird are fused to form a single bone

Legs and Flight

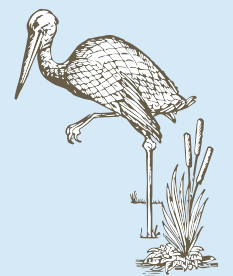
During flight, perching birds draw their legs up close to the body. Birds with longer legs extend their legs behind and tuck them under the tail. Only a few birds let their legs dangle when flying—one example is a woodcock. ■

Human Skeleton in a position similar to that of a pigeon.

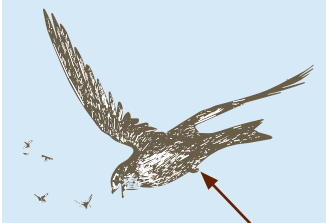


Leg Fun Facts

Long-legged birds stand on one leg to reduce heat loss to the water.



Swifts have virtually no legs—just toes for clinging.



July & August

Goldfinches are our latest nesting songbird, nesting in July and fledging young in August. Attract more goldfinches with **Best Nest Builder** nesting material.



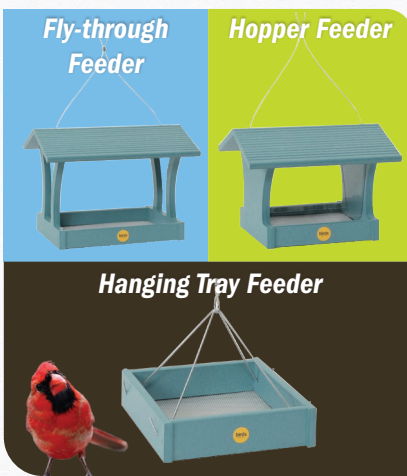
Goldfinch young hatch around the time that Canadian thistle plants release their seeds on fine white filament. Goldfinches feed their young a slurry of partially digested seed. Therefore, they're particularly attracted to **Nyjer**®, **Nyjer**® & **Chips** and **Finches' Choice** seed during nesting season. Keep your feeders full of fresh seed and watch the show!

Our Feed and Fill service will care for your birds while you are on vacation. Call our Minnetonka—Ridge Square store at 952-473-4283 for more details.

Bluebirds may nest 2–3 times in the same nest box. Check bluebird boxes and remove the old nest and debris between nestings.

House Wrens still have 5–8 young in the nest box in July.

Orioles feed caterpillars and larvae to their young. Attract orioles to your yard by offering **live mealworms** or **dried mealworms** soaked in nectar. Orioles visit backyard feeders through the first week of September for mealworms, nectar, grape jelly, and oranges.



Cardinals prefer feeders that allow them to perch directly facing their food. These include **hopper feeders**, **open hanging trays**, **fly-through feeders**, the **Quick Clean Big Tube feeder** with U-shaped perches, or tube feeders with an attached tray at the bottom.

Avoid mess and seed germination in your garden and patio areas by using

Kracker Jax or **Select Sunflower Hearts** (whole sunflower out of the shell). Both work great in window feeders as well.

By mid-July, bird song decreases dramatically because nesting season is complete for many species. Some birds have two or more broods, such as House Wrens and Eastern Bluebirds, and they are still very vocal.

Additional birdbaths will help birds beat the heat in your backyard. Use the battery-operated **Water Wiggler** in your bath; moving water attracts more birds and prevents mosquitoes from laying eggs in stagnant water. Clean baths with 9 parts water to 1 part bleach; rinse well; then add **Bird Bath Protector** to keep the bath clean.

Hummingbirds are active at nectar feeders and flowers into October, with females and juveniles staying the latest. Try a **Nectar Dot feeder** to feed hummingbirds by hand!



Nectar Dot Feeders

Apply mint extract or Hummingbird Bee Repellent on nectar ports to repel bees, wasps and bald-faced hornets. Hang the feeder from an **ant trap** or apply **Nectar Fortress gel** to the pole to prevent ants from reaching the nectar.

Bird migration season begins in the the third week of July as several shorebird species such as Lesser Yellowlegs and sandpipers begin migrating. Many species of shorebirds nest in the tundra and migrate through Minnesota to places as far south as Argentina.

Divert squirrels from bird feeders with the **Deluxe Squeegie**—a bungee jumper for squirrels. Fill it with cob corn or **Nut & Sweet Corn logs**. Use **Mr. Bird Flaming Hot Feast** loose seed or seed cylinders in your feeders to deter them. Birds have few taste buds and are not bothered by the spice.



In mid-August, some warblers such as the Nashville and Yellow Warblers begin migrating. Common Nighthawks migrate through in the afternoons and early evenings while eating insects on the wing. Chimney Swifts, Franklin's Gulls and various shorebirds are also in migration.

In Late August, migrating monarchs fly south one by one, at heights 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 Minnesota.

As birds gather in pre-migration flocks, avoid large numbers of grackles and starlings at feeders by filling feeders with **golden safflower** or **white safflower**. Use **Bye, Bye Starling** to provide a sunflower mix but still discourage European Starlings. **Mr. Bird seed cylinders** prevent seed loss by the starlings', House Sparrows' and Blue Jays' bill-sweeping behavior.

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.