



BIRD'S-EYE VIEW

Volume 31 Issue 1 | January/February 2024

ALL SEASONS
WILD BIRD
STORE

WHERE BIRDS GO AT NIGHT:

Evening Exit

Int'l. Owl Center
+ Seasonal Notes

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BLOOMINGTON

816 West 98th St.
(Clover Center)
Bloomington, MN 55420
952.884.4103

EAGAN

2143 Cliff Rd.
(Cedar Cliff Shopping Center)
Eagan, MN 55122
651.459.0084

MINNETONKA-RIDGE SQUARE AND WILD BIRD DELIVERS

12981 Ridgedale Dr Ste. 103
(Ridge Square North Shopping Center)
Minnetonka, MN 55305
952.473.4283

MINNETONKA-WESTWIND PLAZA

4759 County Rd. 101
(Westwind Plaza)
Minnetonka, MN 55345
952.935.5892

WHITE BEAR LAKE

2703 East Cty. Hwy. E.
(Cty. Rd. E. and Hwy. 120)
White Bear Lake, MN 55110
651.653.8705

WILDBIRDSTORE.COM

Bird's-Eye View is published to share the joy of backyard birds with All Seasons Wild Bird Store's customers and friends.

FIELD TRIP

By Minnetonka Manager CAROL CHENAULT

International Owl Center

A Minnesota Treasure with an International Impact

The International Owl Center is located in Houston, Minnesota near the Root River trailhead. The center is about 2-½ hours southeast of the Twin Cities.

The mission of The International Owl Center is to make the world a better place for owls through education and research.

Ambassador Owls

The center has several ambassador owls used for education. At the time of this writing, these ambassadors include a Great Horned Owl, Eurasian Eagle Owl, Barn Owl, and an Eastern Screech Owl. Judy Laursen from our Minnetonka–Westwind Plaza store says, “the staff is very friendly and knowledgeable. Stay for the program—lots of great information and some good laughs too!”

Inspiration Awaits Inside

Currently housed in a historic store front on Cedar St, the center has static and interactive displays as well as a gift shop. According to their website, “the goal of the Owl Center is to educate, inspire and empower people. We have

lots of static and interactive displays where people can learn more about these fantastic feathered creatures and what you can do to help them.”



Outdoor Programming

In the fall and winter months, the center hosts a series of *Owl Prowls*—a combination of indoor learning sessions and on-site visits to known owl territories. You must sign up in advance; follow them on Facebook, ([facebook.com/InternationalOwlCenter](https://www.facebook.com/InternationalOwlCenter)), check their website, or sign up to receive *continued on page 2...*

Q: Why am I seeing a drop in Nyjer® consumption lately?

A: You're not alone. Many backyard bird feeding hobbyists and businesses have reported the same trend in recent years. The Wild Bird Feeding Institute (WBFI) recently commissioned a food preference study to determine if the origin of Nyjer® seeds could be an issue. The study found that birds prefer Nyjer® seeds that originate in Ethiopia and are sterilized in the United States.

Why is this important?

All Nyjer® seeds that are imported for bird food are sterilized, but the sterilization process can vary depending on the country of origin. The WBFI study found that the sterilization process used in the United States is more effective at killing noxious weed seeds and preserving the freshness of the Nyjer® seeds.

What is All Seasons Wild Bird Store doing about it?

We have confirmed that our current source of Nyjer® seeds is from Ethiopia and is sterilized in the United States. This means that the Nyjer® seeds we sell are the most preferred by birds and are also the safest option for your backyard bird feeders.

We know that some customers may be disappointed that our Nyjer® seeds are not as black and shiny as some other seeds are. However, we want to assure you that the nutritional value of the seeds is the same. In fact, the birds will actually prefer the slightly browner seeds.

We are committed to providing our customers with the highest quality bird food products available. Thank you for your continued support of All Seasons Wild Bird Store!

All and Dave Netten

Shop.wildbirdstore.com

@allseasonswildbirdstore

Facebook.com/WildBirdStore

bit.ly/3oOKbyT



their newsletter (click the yellow tab at the bottom of any page of their website) for up-to-date information.

International Owl Festival

The only full-weekend, all-owl festival in North America, this event draws attendees from around the world! Mark your calendars for March 1-3, 2024 if you're interested in attending live owl programs, pellet dissections, owl nest box building, adults-only and family Owl Prowls, art exhibitions, kid's crafts and more. Register early—many programs sell out or are standing room only.

While You're in Houston

If you have children, make a stop at Houston's Natural Playground. This easy, 5-minute walk from the Owl Center features a full-acre outdoor playground with stone caves for hiding, a tunnel made of Oneota dolomite slabs for exploring, and boulders for climbing—all within an enormous sand play area.

Children can pump water down a sluice, scale a wooden climbing wall, tell time

using their shadow, walk a labyrinth, climb into an oversized nest with a 4-ft-tall owl, or go down a slide set into the side of a hill.

Children and adults alike may also enjoy exploring the Parade of Owls Art Tour, a series of 12 public owl sculptures throughout the city of Houston. Find a map under the "Visit" tab on the International Owl Center website.

How to Visit

International Owl Center
126 E Cedar St.
Houston, MN 55943
(507) 896-OWLS (6957)

The center is typically open Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday from 10am-4pm, with live owl education programs at 11am and 2pm. No reservations are needed. Family-friendly pricing is a big plus: adults: \$7, children 4-17: \$4. Members and children 3 & under are free.

Check their website for any updates on hours and ticket prices: internationalowlcenter.org

STAFF FAVORITE

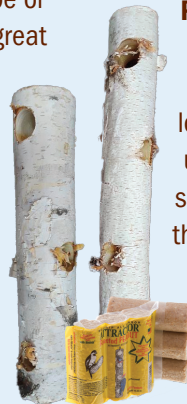
By White Bear Lake Sales Associate MARY DAHL

As winter settles in, it's important to provide high energy food for birds. Suet feeders provide a high fat and protein resource that's quick and easy for birds to consume.

Birch log suet feeders are one of my favorites. They give your landscape or feeding station a great natural look. Each is as unique as the tree from which they came. With two sizes, you can choose the one that's right for you.

The birch bark logs hang by an eye screw.

Pro tip: add an additional eye screw to the bottom of the log, then you can flip it upside down as needed so the birds can access the lower ports more easily.



I am a big fan of **Attractor suet plugs**

for all of my suet feeders. There are four kinds to choose from: **Plain Attractor, Roasted Peanut, Sunflower Hearts** and **No Melt Peanut Butter**. Each kind features the *Bird Nip* secret ingredient by this Minnesota-made product. They are great for year-round feeding as well. One package of 3 plugs also fits nicely in a cage suet feeder. ■

Dusk **DISAPPEARING ACT**

Have you ever noticed that birds vacate feeders—and essentially disappear altogether—just before dusk? Here we'll explore where birds go at night—and why.

A Matter of Safety

It's no coincidence that songbirds become scarce right about the time nocturnal predators, like owls, begin their evening hunts. Songbirds are at a disadvantage against these and other predators in low light; most songbirds' visual acuity decreases as light fades. In contrast, owls have retinas that are extra packed with movement-sensing rods, just one adaptation that gives them an evening edge over songbirds.

So Where do Songbirds Go at Night?

The answer depends partly on how they nest. Birds that nest in cavities tend to also seek out cavities for sheltering through the night. Cavity dwellers include bluebirds, Downy Woodpeckers, nuthatches, and chickadees. You can help cavity dwellers by hanging a roosting box. These boxes not only provide a place to safely wait out the evening hours, they also provide a place where groups of birds can huddle together for both warmth and protection.

Birds that don't nest in cavities seek out other options for nighttime roosting. Dense foliage—including pine trees, shrubs, and vines—provides excellent cover for birds like Northern Cardinals, Blue Jays and some finches. They typically select a perch deep within the foliage, close to the trunk on the down-wind side. The trunk is not only the most difficult place for predators to reach, but also provides a slight amount of infrared radiation for heat.

There's no need to worry about these perching birds falling off the branch when they sleep—their default foot position when bearing weight is to grasp. Perching birds must actively utilize their muscles to release their feet from a branch.

Some birds have developed atypical roosting spots. Common Redpolls and Ruffed Grouse, for example, both insulate themselves from predators and the wind by burrowing under the snow. Chimney Swifts famously roost in tall chimney stacks at night.



Not Necessarily Sleeping at Night

Although birds are less active at night, they are not necessarily sleeping. In fact, most birds nap off and on throughout the day. Many birds remain partly awake even when nodding off—half of their brains stay active enough to alert them to predators.

Waterfowl are particularly good at utilizing this state, called *unihemispheric slow-wave sleep*, to catch some sleep in the middle of the day when predators—including people—are nearby. This half-sleep state is also employed by birds that travel long distances, such as Magnificent Frigatebirds, to nap while in flight.

Some birds—like chickadees—may enter into a state of torpor during the coldest evening temperatures to conserve energy, since this is a time when they are not actively feeding. *Torpor* is more like hibernation than sleep. In this physiological state, the bird conserves energy by lowering its heart rate, breathing, and body temperature.

Help Birds Make it Through the Night

First, you can help them build up their fuel reserves during the day by offering high-fat suet, suet pellets, peanut pick-outs, and seed mixes or seed cylinders that include nuts.

Second, you can provide cavities in the form of roosting boxes or natural cavities in *snags*—dead trees left in the yard.

Third, you can plant trees and shrubs with dense foliage around your yard to offer shelter. ■

Clockwise from top left: Berry Nutty, peanut butter suet, peanut pick-outs, suet nuggets, roosting box



January & February



Brighten the winter for your loved ones. Call the Minnetonka—Ridge Square store to arrange **Feed and Fill service** for those who are not able to fill their own feeders: 952-473-4283.

You can help birds to refuel quickly during cold weather. Feeders filled with a combination of **dried mealworms, peanut pick-outs, Select Sunflower Hearts** and **suet nuggets** allow birds

to eat without expending energy to shell their food.

The Finch Forecast for this winter

indicates a poor crop of white spruce cones and birch tree seeds in the northern boreal forests. The metro could see a strong flight of southward-moving Pine Siskins and Common Redpolls joining goldfinches at the feeders. Keep feeders with **Nyjer®** and **Nyjer®** mixes full of fresh seed. Replace seed in feeders that have been out in the weather for 6 weeks. Empty their contents onto the ground for juncos and native sparrows.



Photo: Ray Marshall

Red-breasted nuthatches, permanent residents in the northeast and northcentral regions, will visit **suet, peanut** and **seed feeders** in central and eastern Minnesota during the winter.



Pileated Woodpeckers use the **recycled double suet feeder**. The extended tail prop provides space to prop their stiff tail feathers and allows them better leverage for pecking at the suet cakes. Plus, it's easy to fill and to clean.

Assist overwintering American Robins by placing **dried mealworms** and **Berry Nutty** in a ground feeder or under pine trees to provide food through the winter. Robins are frequent visitors to heated birdbaths.



Use a Mr. Bird compressed seed cylinder for fewer trips to refill feeders this winter. Northern Cardinals love these feeders! To deter squirrels, use **Flaming Hot Feast cylinders**. Birds have few taste buds and are not bothered by the hot pepper added to the seed.

Provide a clean water source with a **heated birdbath**. Use **Bird Bath Protector** in it to keep the bath clean and fresh. Refill your heated birdbath with cold water to reduce evaporation.

Red-bellied Woodpeckers and Blue Jays readily pull **in-shell peanuts** from a **wreath peanut feeder**. Great winter entertainment!



Wreath peanut feeder

Watch for the male American Goldfinches to begin changing into their bright yellow plumage. A most welcome sign!

Will this be the year we see an influx of Great Gray Owls?

Minnesota's largest owl stands 2-ft tall and has a wing span of 5 ft. They are most often seen within 100 miles of the Canadian border, but are seen some winters down into southern Minnesota. Watch for the owls to plunge from a low perch into the snow. They can hear rodents moving under the snow!

The Great Backyard Bird Count collects information about bird populations in the winter. You can participate at gbbc.birdcount.org

Send your bird photos to info@wildbirdstore.net

"Birds enjoy eating worms and insects during the spring and summer—food sources that are unavailable during the winter. I provide dried mealworms for the birds throughout the winter. The dried mealworms get incorporated with my seed mixes for my fly-through, tray feeders and seed tubes. A few get sprinkled on the ground for those lovely Dark-eyed Juncos."

MARY DAHL,
White Bear Lake Sales Associate



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.