



# BACKYARD nature center News

August/September 2020 • Issue 59

## Change is in the Air

Late summer is a time of change for our beautiful songbirds. Nesting is complete. Full sized babies are still following mom and dad around begging, not ready to be on their own. The one obvious thing that's missing in our yard is SONG, beautiful song! No singing and chatter to attract a mate, no squawking over nest sites, no territorial rapping on trees and downspouts by woodpeckers... just silence. The serenade of spring is no longer.

But wait... there's more! Feeding at nectar feeders increases as hummingbirds and orioles beef up their body weight and reserves to travel thousands of miles to warm winter homes. You'll see some strange sights in late summer as cardinals, jays, grackles and house finch, all seed



eaters; spend less effort in flight due to "molting" feathers. Out with the old and in with the new fluffier and warmer coat for cold weather. Everyone's favorite, the American Goldfinch finishes his nesting in late summer which coincides with natural wild thistle going to seed. The goldfinch uses the thistle as nesting material as well as a food source. That explains a lot as we ask ourselves, what did I do wrong and where are my goldfinches? They are, by nature, very nomadic at best.

Feeding for days and rewarding us with beautiful yellow and black color, hearing their sweet little melodic song. Zweeee! Then they move to someone else's yard and we think we've failed.

Make no mistake, they'll be back. Gone is their bright yellow plumage molting to olive drab in order to blend in with the colors of autumn. The goldfinch is not a migratory bird. He is here year round and will be joined at the thistle or sunflower

hearts with his next of kin, the tiny Pine Siskin. Slightly more petite, with lots of vertical striping, he'll feed along side the goldfinch all winter.

Most insect eating birds will migrate but there are always exceptions. Robins will be here when snow flies and would welcome a feeder full of dried, protein rich, mealworms and a warm heated birdbath to keep plumage fluffy and bodies hydrated. Robins from farther north

visit our area for our practically tropical winters by comparison. Berry gorging Cedar Waxwings will be competition for the wonderful fall production of bright sumptuous fair on chokecherry, cedars, honeysuckle, and woody shrubs like American cranberry. Swooping in for a yummy meal and clearing them out with the sheer number of a flock, staying for a day or possibly two and gone... on to the next bush.

I have a tough time saying goodbye to my summer birds. It's sad to have



*Gone is the insect eating Gray Catbird.*

all the busy activity from hummers and bright colorful, bossy orioles, grey catbirds and brown thrashers who have been popping about in the yard, singing like crazy with a song that sounds like they can't quite get it right so they have to start all over! I love these birds! Never fear, we still have our beautiful cardinals, jays, house finch, tufted titmice, woodpeckers and my all time favorite, the perky little black-capped chickadees who have staked out territory in my yard permanently. I hold my breath, whisper goodbye at the final hummer visit. It won't be long and my joy will be renewed with the first sighting of an eastern towhee or the darling junco's (snowbirds), or an all time favorite, the harris sparrow, who winters only in our area. Change is good, aren't we lucky!



*Returning is the elusive Rufous-sided Towhee*

# It's Time!!!!



No time to sit around and be discouraged! Hummingbirds will be flocking to your feeders now. Babies are out of the nest, following adults to good food sources. All are in need of nutrients and calories to increase body weight for a long trip to South and Central America for the winter. If you didn't see them in spring, August and September are definitely the best time to attract hummingbirds. It's a good time to put up a second feeder. This is not Colorado. We cannot put up an 8 port feeder and hope to get 8 hummingbirds. Ruby-throated hummingbirds are too territorial. By far, the best idea is to put out that second feeder, keep it a few yards away from the first or maybe even around the other side of a bush so they can't see each other. Either way, you'll love the activity. Keep it fresh, inviting and irresistible. I might suggest adding Feeder Fresh Nectar Defender. Bird safe and natural, just a mineral micronutrient that is part of a hummingbird's natural diet. Nectar stays fresh much longer and it helps provide a balanced diet. This is it, what we've waiting for. Enjoy nature's jewelry!



**WILD CARD ~ 15% off**  
**Good on your entire purchase!**

**One time use only and on in stock merchandise only.**

Excludes only optics/binoculars. Cannot be combined with other offers.

Offer good thru September 30. Coupon # C093020.

# The longer I live...the more beautiful life becomes".

Frank Lloyd Wright



As I sit on my screened porch enjoying my morning iced tea, I look around at all the mature foliage on our little one acre of bird and human habitat. I'm astounded at what has matured and filled in over the years since we built our home up north by the river. Cedars, pine trees, currant's, honeysuckles, viburnums, bald cypress, river birch and

cottonwoods (yes, the messy native ones, burr oaks that tower over the house and keep it so cool in the summer time. Amazed at all nature has accomplished in that amount of time. Nick reminds me that he planted almost every one of those trees and bushes and that when we built the house, there were only three little 15' cottonwoods on the lot and we intentionally positioned the house to "snuggle" in amongst the trees at an angle. Only Nick would have thought of that! What a good man.

Have I lost my mind, or is it just old age creeping up on me? Now I start to recall that while Nick was planting, I was busy with our three young daughters, school activities and all that involves. Oh, how easily we forget and how time flies when you're having fun!

In hindsight, what we have built and nurtured, over the years, is a perfectly lovely place to observe nature and invite all the beautiful songbirds you could want to see in Kansas. We're not much for counting, but Nick says our "yard list" is approximately 150 different species. Counting birds is for

the serious "birder" who travels far and wide to add to their list. We are what you call serious "backyard birdwatchers" who revel in what we see at our feeders. There is a difference but the fact is that we all just love watching birds!

Since we opened our little bird watching/nature store, we have learned from naturalists, biologists, and professional, well-traveled birders, who have written the best field guides available. We studied under the late Dr. Aelred Geis, biologists and ornithologist for the Department of Fish and Wildlife in Washington, DC, who's field research was used to create bird feeding preference guides used by everyone in the industry. All this knowledge and influences have brought us to realize that the best birding is what you can bring to your own backyard! With all the stay at home orders, that's a good idea!

I couldn't agree more, Mr. Wright, life does get more beautiful the longer I live!

Cathy Clausen  
Birdwatcher

## The Truth About Bats

In days gone by, advertising on the sides of purple martin houses, would claim that purple martins will clear your yard of mosquitos, "buy this house and you'll be saved!" This misinformation couldn't be further from the truth. The purple martin is an 8" bird from beak to tail and eats a much larger meal. Dragonflies, damselflies, beetles, moths, butterflies, hoverflies and mayflies are much more satisfying to the nutritional needs of such a sizeable bird. In fact, biologists have found that the mosquito supplies only 3% of a martin's diet. Since purple martins are roosting just before dusk, and bats come out to hunt just after dusk, it's easy to understand the logic of how things really work. A bat can eat up to 1,000 mosquitos in a day! In other words, if you want to control mosquitos, you need a bat house in your yard.



The Vintage Single Chamber Bat House. A great Bachelor Pad!

Information from K State, tells us that we have 15 species of beneficial bats in our area. Some hibernate and some migrate. One of the most common is the Little Brown Bat, which is not much bigger than a mouse. Some of the area bats are tree roosting that may use a house for breeding, some may use a house for roosting in large groups. Single chamber bat houses will accommodate only male bats who will group together, thus the name, "bachelor pad"! Multiple chamber bat houses may become nurseries to females.

Ask for a copy of the K-State information and we will be happy to copy it for you, or you can go their website. Did I mention that we have some very cool steel sculpture of bats in the store? Really cool if you need something just "hanging around" your house!!



**BACKYARD**  
nature center

*For people who feed and care for backyard birds*  
The Shops at Tallgrass  
8336 E. 21st Street, #500 • Wichita, KS 67206  
www.backyardnaturecenter.com  
**316-683-2121**

## STORE HOURS

**OPEN 7 DAYS WEEK**

Monday–Saturday: 9 a.m.–5 p.m.

Sunday: Closed

PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT:  
[WWW.BACKYARDNATURECENTER.COM](http://WWW.BACKYARDNATURECENTER.COM)



## Voices for the Earth By Stephanie Burgess



### *Art Poles with a message about our earth!*

A special new collection of Art Poles was designed to celebrate the many gifts the earth provides. Each pole features state-of-the-art reproductions of artist Stephanie Burgess' hand-painted, wood-burned designs, as well as inspiring quotes from nature's greatest advocates. We hope this line can raise awareness and appreciation for the world around us, and make us all more mindful of Mother Nature.

“The earth has music  
for those who listen”

-George Santayana

