



# BACKYARD nature center News

April/May 2017 • Issue 40

## Spring Feeding Problems

Spring brings new birds and with them you can have new problems. In March, Grackles return in flocks and take over feeding stations, running everyone else away. They can become a real pain, but there are ways to minimize their impact. Just spreading your feeders out and not having all of them in the same area will lessen the impact of these big



birds dominating all the area. They will tend to concentrate on the feeders with the most room that are easiest for them to use. Feeders with small perches will limit Grackle usage by not providing enough room to perch. Thistle feeders with small openings for the Goldfinch are almost impossible for the larger birds to use. They can't get their beaks in the tiny openings. Another very effective solution is to use a feeder with a cage around it that keeps the larger birds out and allows finch sized birds access to the seed inside. But it will also keep out Cardinals, so many people switch to safflower seed at this time. The best thing about safflower is that Grackles and squirrels don't seem to like it, but Cardinals and House Finch will eat it. Grackles will pick thru it at first looking for other things and then tend to ignore it, leaving it for your

other birds.

Another problem that occurs this time of year is the accumulation of shells and debris under the feeders. It can be unsightly and uneaten seed can sprout and grow. There is any easy solution: Patio Mix! Our Patio Mix is a combination of sunflower chips, millet and peanuts, all with the shells removed. This is an extremely bird

attractive mixture that leaves no shell mess and the seed is less likely to sprout with the shells removed. The other advantage is that birds that normally don't eat seed because of the shell, like Eastern Bluebirds, or Carolina Wrens, that are insect eaters, can eat the seed when the shell is removed. The cost is a little bit more, but shells make up about 40% of the



bag weight in most mixes. You get all food and no mess and the cost actually figures out to be less per pound when you buy Patio Mix!

The heat of spring also brings with it the return of insects. Ants and bees can become a problem on nectar feeders if you don't prepare for them. Ants are very easy to control with the addition of an ant moat. This is just a



small cup like addition that you hang your hummingbird feeder from. You fill it with water and the ants will not cross the water to get to your feeder, therefore eliminating them. Bees are a little more difficult to control but adding a little salad oil to the area around the opening of the feeder will make it more difficult for them to hang on to. Using saucer shaped feeders make it very difficult to reach the nectar below but the hummingbirds have no problem.

## Tax time is Hummer time!



Ready, set go! Have your hummingbird feeders ready for spring arrivals who will be exhausted and whose weight will be depleted from the long trip from south and Central America. Hummingbird researcher, Nancy Neufeld's studies show some hummers over winter along the coast in



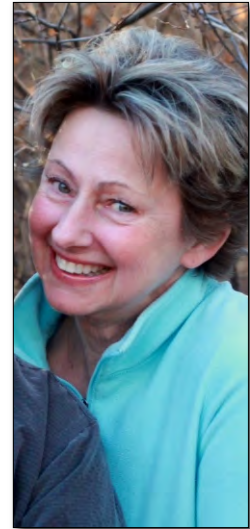
Magnolia Hummingbird Feeder

Louisiana. Ruby-throated Hummingbirds are the only hummer that nests in Kansas but during the early days of spring, you could see some strange sites. Broad Tail, Calliope, and Rufous Hummingbirds are traveling north to their northwest nesting sites. So be sure to take a picture or at the very least, a good long look. You're not seeing things! Use the very best nectar, 4 to 1 water to sugar, with no food coloring. Let your brightly colored feeder do the attracting and skip the nasty food coloring! It's very hard on the bird's reproductive systems and we want as many beautiful hummingbirds as possible in our yards! Change your nectar every two to three days, especially when temps reach 80 to 100 degrees. You don't want the birds to turn up their beaks and go looking somewhere else!



## The luckiest bird store owner in the world!

I work in an industry that is nothing but heavenly! The nation's second largest hobby is birdwatching. I sell products that make people happy and benefit the wildlife just outside our windows. I sell products that are good for the USA, because we're at almost 90% "made in the USA", and now many of those products are made of recycled materials, good for the planet! My days are filled with delightful folks striving to improve the bird activity in their yards and sometimes outside their business offices. Some ask for help setting up a feeding station outside the windows of a loved one living in a nursing home. The end result is uplifting for all. I also get to create a newsletter about the birds we see in our own backyard.



sweetheart jelly feeder

I'm not a big clothes shopper, but I do get to "buy" product for the store and go to fun birding market shows. It's great to see how the vendors and manufacturer's that we've been working with for so long, have stretched their imaginations and created new and better products. It's like I'm spending money but not, if you get my drift. It fills that urge but is much more gratifying. It's like Christmas every day. Our employees feel that way too. Opening big boxes, unwrapping new items, pricing and getting them out on display. It's all just fun! Nothing beats simple fun!

## We need your input

All the "techy" folks we talk to say that we should be emailing our newsletter instead of snail mail. They tell us that it would be less expensive and reach multitudes of people. Call me old fashioned, but I like creating a paper newsletter and the process that it involves, right down to selecting paper that feels good in your hands and makes you want to pick it up and read it. I also love that finally, after 25 years we are

able to produce it in full color. That's a big deal for us. I have a high-tech phone, sure, but often I will check my email and delete 20 to 30 emails in an instant. We don't want to be just another intrusion. We'd love to hear your thoughts. It means a lot to us. Thank you.



Remember to say thanks to mother nature by celebrating Earth Day on April 22.

# COOLEST PRODUCT FOR SPRING!

## The World's Coolest Rain Gauge

If you want a rain gauge that you can read from across the yard, is both beautiful and functional, this is a rain gauge for you! Wondering how long to run your sprinkler? Not sure how much rain fell last night?

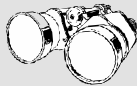
Determining if your plants and flowers have gotten enough water doesn't have to involve guesswork. In fact, it can be a work of art.

A clever tool that measures how much your garden gets, is a functional instrument, plus it adds a fun, sculptural element to your outdoor space, using water displacement to measure. A copper flute collects the water, and a blue polycarbonate tube with a foam insert and large white



numbers floats up to indicate inches of water collected. What a COOL tool!

The BACKYARD nature center is your local resource for binoculars. We offer expert advice while providing you with quality optics.



# Seeing Orange and Black in Your Yard?

Orioles arriving soon! Look for this delightful avian visitor toward the end of April. They're big, bright, bossy and really dominating at the jelly feeders. Unmistakably vocal, the male Baltimore looks like any WSU Shocker fan with his yellow and black attire. The female is brownish/olive in color and a good



8" tip to tail. Also, nesting in our area is the Orchard oriole. Deep chestnut brown with black and white on his back, the female is olive drab above and yellowish below. Both Orioles weave a pouch which hangs from high branches of very



mature trees like cottonwoods. Young are hatched from deep and cozy inside the pouch and follow the adults around for a couple weeks learning the good spots to find fruit and nectar. Trumpet honeysuckle is a terrific vine for feeding both orioles and hummingbirds. It's not an invasive honeysuckle, stays put and the top spreads. It dies down in winter, and comes back strong and attractive with bloom time almost coordinating simultaneously at the first arrival of Orioles! Way to go mother nature!



## "Co-Workers?"

Busy professional, "Diane", had asked her high school age neighbor to care for her birds while she vacationed. Diane led her to the garage where the seed storage cans were located, then outside to the bird feeders to show her what seed goes in what feeders. The girl seemed perplexed but continued with her instructions. Don't forget the feeder on the window of the home office, she explained. The young girl rushed home and told her mom, "they aren't even her birds!" I guess she expected parrots in cages inside the house. Spending hours at a time in her home office, Diane told me how much the birds that come to the window feeder mean to her. How they brightened her day, kept her on task and made working at home so much more pleasant. "They aren't just birds.....they're CO-Workers!"

We love hearing your stories!

**20% OFF**  
one item  
(excludes binoculars)

C170401; Expires 5/31/17. Cannot be combined w/ any other offer.  
Excludes binoculars. Item must be in stock; no special orders.

**FREE**  
bird jelly w/purchase of  
any jelly feeder  
valued at \$25 or more

C170402; Expires 5/31/17.  
Cannot be combined w/ any other offer. One time use only.

**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–Friday: 10 a.m.–6 p.m.

Saturday: 10 a.m.–5 p.m.

Sunday: 12 noon–4 p.m.

Closed Easter Sunday

PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT:  
WWW.BACKYARDNATURECENTER.COM

Remember to Recycle



# Mother's Day, Sunday May 12



Doesn't Mom deserve a big rock for Mother's Day. New beautiful forever" granite and sandstone Freeform birdbaths are in! Their elegant, natural shape will enhance any landscape for years to come! Add a dripper, or water wiggler to any bath to keep the water moving and fresh. Mom will appreciate your thoughtfulness!

