



# BACKYARD nature center News

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## Birds of the Garden

Nothing is more satisfying than getting your hands dirty, digging up good soil in the garden. Feeling the strain on body parts you forgot you had, parts that got lazy over the long winter. Even if you have only the

smallest garden plot with a couple favorite veggies, it doesn't matter, it's like a religion. It's peaceful, grounding, and rewards us with a feeling of who we are and who we used to be with a great connection to the earth.

While digging, we notice things we wouldn't otherwise catch in our busy daily lives like the simple song of a bird, the flit of color past the corner of an eye. You can't resist, you have to pause, if only for a minute, and look. Who was it? A new bird for our yard? Was it a chickadee with his cute little perky personality? Was it a nuthatch, maneu-

vering down the tree, repeating a nasal-toned call, *yank, yank, yank?* The sight of robins pulling worms

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Gardening and birdwatching are now the two largest hobbies in the United States.

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from the freshly turned soil seemingly

with a grateful attitude. While most of us don't keep a list, or go on grand birding trips to exotic places, it's the everyday pleasure of seeing beautiful birds in our yards, as we go about our daily chores, that brings us the most joy!

Gardening and birdwatching are now the two largest hobbies in the United States. Makes a lot of sense,



doesn't it? They conveniently go hand in hand. Nick and I have always been organic home gardeners and we dearly love it. Almost 30 years ago we began really noticing the birds in our yard and that's when we opened the bird store to help people bring a little more nature to their lives and experience the joy of birdwatching in your own backyard!



# Hummingbirds and Orioles Return

When you receive this newsletter, it will probably be time for the return of two of my favorite summer visitors. Around the middle of April, one of our smallest and most interesting nesting species returns to our area. The Ruby-throated Hummingbird is the only hummingbird that nests east of the Rocky Mountains. This little bird nests in all of the states in the Eastern US and in Kansas east to about the middle of the state. It prefers wooded areas that are close to water, so habitat will be a big factor in if you see hummingbirds the first half of the summer. But you could see one any day during this time by using a little patience and putting out a hummingbird feeder with fresh nectar (change at least every other day) in a place that is easy for you to see, on the patio, close to a window or on the deck



where you spend a lot of time relaxing. Hummingbirds are attracted to the color red so even hanging up red ribbons or wearing a red hat may be enough to bring them up to investigate. But if you really want to have the best luck, improve your green thumb and plant as many flowers that bloom throughout the summer. Some suggestions, Trumpet

Honeysuckle, Bee Balm, Columbine, Cardinal Flower, Red Salvia, Impatiens and Butterfly Bush.

Your hummingbird feeders may also attract another nectar loving bird, the Orioles. Both Baltimore and Orchard Orioles return to nest in our area and may try to use your hummingbird feeders

for the nectar in

them. Male Baltimore Orioles are brilliant orange with black on their head and back. The females are a muted yellow orange without the black head. Orchard Orioles are a wine color with black wings and a black hood. The females resemble the Baltimore females.

If that happens, you can put up an

oriole feeder for nectar that is basically a nectar feeder



with bigger perches and bigger openings for the larger beak of the oriole. You can use the same nectar that you put in the hummingbird feeders, 1 part sugar, to 4 parts water. However, in my yard, what really attract the orioles

attention are the jelly feeders! Orioles love grape jelly (sugar and grape juice). Jelly feeders are just hanging bowls in most cases and some have prongs for fruit also. Oranges seem to be the best for attracting orioles, but you can try apples or other fruits too. There have been times in our yard when we have had a dozen orioles in the same tree at the same time waiting to get on the two jelly feeders we try to keep filled. If you keep these feeders clean and filled with fresh nectar and jelly, you can have continued activity all summer

long! Come in and let us help you choose the right feeder to get the absolute best activity!



Jelly Feeders—the super magnet!

**15% OFF all Jelly feeders!**

Ask for my homemade Apple/Grape Jelly recipe. We'll print it off right at the register. This recipe is made from only juice that's fructose corn syrup free!

C190401; Expires 5/31/2019. Not to be combined w/ other offers.



## Think you're seeing things?

You didn't just imagine it, there were more hawks near your feeders this past winter!

Reported by Matthew Miller,



director of science communications for The Nature Conservancy, tells us we weren't seeing things this year and that there is a reason for the unusual number of reported sightings of both Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawks. By the mid-20th century, both Cooper's and Sharp-shinned Hawks had declined precipitously as a direct result of persecution and pesticides. After decades of protection the raptor populations have rebound and are reclaiming habitat, Miller reports. Reclaiming in places we may not have imagined. One would have imagined that the hawks would establish and settle in heavily wooded areas for cover and protection but the facts are quite the opposite. They've settled in urban neighborhoods during winter months where trees have shed leaves and prey is easier to hunt. Backyards, parks and golf courses with plenty of space provide opportunity for cover and often, ample food supplies. More than 40 percent of U.S. households feed backyard birds. It has become a hugely popular urban pastime.

Now, I'm not suggesting we cease feeding backyard birds, what I am suggesting is we do what we can for all birds by providing bushes for safety and using covered or caged feeders which become predator-proof havens for our songbirds. Miller cited that studies in urban areas of Chicago and other cities have found that urban hawks are feeding heavily on European starlings, house sparrows and pigeons – all non-native species-so they could actually reduce competition for our beautiful native songbirds. That's a good thing.

## Don't Forget Mom

### Mother's Day is Sunday, May 12

Treat Mom with a gift of nature!

Art Poles that express love of nature and of Mom. Meant for outdoor use, come with a ground socket to stabilize in Kansas winds, are weather resistant and make a beautiful statement in any garden! From 3' to 6'.

*Treat Mom with a gift of nature*

**15% OFF**  
beautiful and sentimental  
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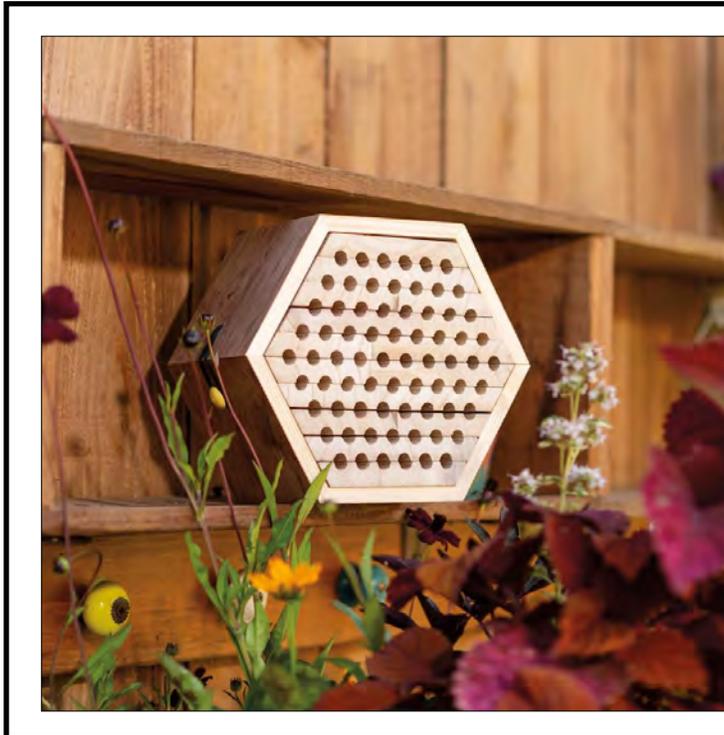


*For people who feed and care for backyard birds*

The Shops at Tallgrass  
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**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.

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



# Beneficial Mason Bees



Small, blue-black Mason Bees are nature’s mild-mannered, peaceful pollinators that bring bountiful harvest to gardens and orchards. They need existing holes to nest in, and since they don’t have a queen to protect, they rarely sting. Their only mission is to pollinate and reproduce. As your population increases, add more lodges and watch your gardens bloom!

