



BACKYARD nature center News

February/March 2018 • Issue 45

We Love Stump the Bird Store

Bigger than a bread box? Robin or cardinal size? Where'd you see him? Habitat means everything. Open grassy fields or deep woods? Was he eating on a feeder or pulling berries from a bush? Was he hanging upside down or climbing up the bark of a tree, popping secretly in and out from under cover? Behavior is a key factor. What color was he? Did he have any defining field markings? All good questions! Several times a

week, we get the privilege of playing stump the bird store and we love it. I think everybody learns something from it. The thrill of it all is when the "stumper" finds out that he has something really stellar and unusual, or it could be that they have seen these little adorable birds and thought they were just common English House Sparrows, only to discover their



little LBJ's (little brown jobbies) are beautiful native White-throated or White-crowned Sparrows, or even the slightly larger and boldly beautiful Harris sparrow. Sharing the thrill of the "stumper's"

discovery is what it's all about for us and it never gets old.

*When one tugs at a single
thing in nature, he finds it
attached to the rest of the
world.*

John Muir
Naturalist and Conservationist



Bird Feeding Basics

Which feeders shall I choose? What type of feeder will attract which birds? These are common questions we hear here at the BACKYARD Nature Center. We hope to make the answers clearer.

Platform feeders

A feeder placed close to the ground and perhaps has a



screened bottom will be a wonderful gathering place for winter visitors like juncos (snowbirds), mourning doves, beautiful native sparrows like the Harris Sparrow, White-crowned and White-throated Sparrows, Rufus-sided Towhees and everyone's favorite Northern Cardinals! Ground feeding birds enjoy black oiled sunflower and very often white proso millet. If you place the feeder close to bushes, these birds will feel safer if they need to

escape to cover quickly.

Tube feeders

Any elevated tube feeder with or without perches filled with sunflower, in or out of the shell, will be attractive to chickadees, Tufted Titmice, goldfinch, House

Finch, and most all the woodpeckers. These birds have no problem clinging to the tube feeder. Make sure you buy a good feeder with a lexan tube so it will hold up in icy conditions. A nice dome over the feeder will help to keep the weather out and also squirrels!

Hopper feeders

A good beginning bird enthusiast's feeder, made from wood or better yet, a recycled wood and plastic combination, a hopper feeder will normally have at least two sides with a clear plastic window which



allows you to see the seed level and a large landing area for most any species to access. This is a great feeder to fill with a mixed seed, heavy on sunflower seeds, no milo, and perhaps some nutmeats. Remember, however, all birds can access this feeder including some very large birds you may not be trying to attract.

Thistle feeders

Using a feeder with tiny slit openings or an all mesh construction, filled with sunflower bits and perhaps some nyger thistle, will bring the smallest of finches, the goldfinch, pine siskins, and beautiful small house finch. These small birds can cling to a feeder with or even without a perch with no difficulty. Sunflower hearts or bits are my preference for greatest activity with lots of color in spring on one little feeder!



Caged feeders

A caged feeder is a good answer for keeping large intrusive and bullish birds out. Chickadees, titmouse, finch, Carolina Wrens and even small woodpeckers can access a tube



feeder surrounded by a large mesh cage. Caged feeders are also called "select" feeders.

Peanut feeders

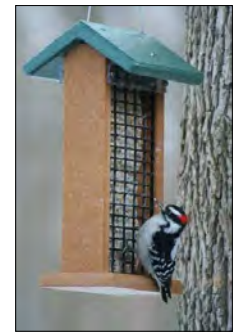
Clinging birds have very strong feet, love peanuts and find them irresistible! Peanuts out of the shell, or peanut splits, make a wonderful addition to your



backyard bird feeding station. Most peanut feeders have a mesh area with ¼ to ½" openings, just enough for the long probing beak of a woodpecker and large enough for a chickadee to chip off a large chunk of nut. Nuts are heavy in good calories for year round feeding. Clinger feeders encourage larger birds like starlings, grackles, pigeons, etc. to feed somewhere else.

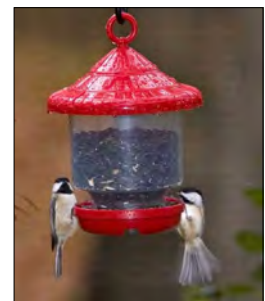
Suet feeders

Suet feeders will be especially welcome during cold weather. Suet is rendered beef fat, highest in caloric value and very quickly turned to energy. Presented in a cage to hold the suet cakes, sometimes hung close to a tree trunk, clinging species will be delighted!



Clinger feeders

Clinger only feeders have a very small area to hang on when accessing sunflower chips. Clinging birds include those with



strong feet that make it easy for them to run up and down a tree trunk or to grasp onto a small surface to retrieve an insect or gnat. These include titmouse, chickadees, goldfinch and woodpeckers. Many people refer to these birds as the "polite" birds as they often take one seed at a time, fly off and eat or store it, and then come back for another. Encourages larger birds like starlings, grackles, pigeons, etc. to feed somewhere else.



Garden Bluebirds

Bluebird Alert!

Don't miss out, February is the month for prospective pairs to be formed, nest sites to be located and territories to be claimed. Ready your nest boxes for all cavity nesters. Clean them out with a brush or rag, no water or cleaners necessary, and add a layer of soft mulch or cedar shavings. If it's still deadly cold, the birds will roost for the night. Chickadees, titmice, Carolina wrens, woodpeckers, bluebirds, ("be still my

heart!"), and nuthatch, are all cavity nesters and begin these activities very early. It makes perfect sense, they can get in out of the cold weather. Any ample house with a 1.25 to 1.5" opening will be looked at by these nesters. It's a little early for the house wren who requires only an entrance hole of 1" or the size of a quarter.

Put out dried mealworms in a nearby feeder to show goodwill and to entice the beloved cavity nesters to the area. Not too close though, you don't want to draw predators in. Hang in there, spring is on the way!



Great healthy tip!

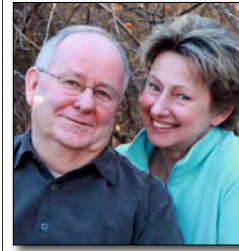
Help stop the spread of house finch conjunctivitis! Customer Pam says she brings a Clorox wipe with her when she goes out to refill her feeders. She swipes off the feed ports where the finch reaches in for their food, virtually eliminating any bad bacteria that may infect the next house finch. The eye infection passes from one house finch to the next and is usually species specific. The Clorox evaporates quickly and will not harm the beautiful little birds. Thanks Pam, for the great tip!



Join in the fun with Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Great Backyard Bird Count!

February 16-19th

Go to: gbbc.birdcount.org to sign in, register and become a contributing part of the Great Backyard Bird Count. The information that you enter about the birds you see in your yard and at your feeders will help biologists learn more about the health, activity and mobility of our beloved songbirds. You'll enjoy this website and learn so much!



Nick and Cathy Clausen are master gardeners, avid birdwatchers and owners of the BACKYARD Nature Center.

Best product of the year!



Wire retro-cages in three sizes to fit most all tube feeders and suet feeders. With spring coming soon, grackles return in big numbers to nest and raise their young. They can dominate the feeders and deplete seed faster than you can fill them up. The sturdy cages install easily and will keep out squirrels, grackles, starlings and other large birds while allowing chickadees, titmice, finch and downy woodpeckers to pop inside easily. The retro-cage comes in three sizes, is very reasonably priced and will save your seed for only the birds you want. Oh...and the red-bellied woodpecker has strong feet, a long beak and tongue and will still be able to access his food!

RECYCLING, Always a good thing!



Interesting fact: Our seed bags are made of # 4 poly recyclables and can be deposited at stores like Dillon's and Walmart.

In the landfill, they could last billions of years but recycled, they could become your next bird feeder! Our planet depends on us!

**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.

PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT:
WWW.BACKYARDNATURECENTER.COM

Remember to Recycle 



Twice a year we have our Big Sale!

SEED SALE

February 1–28

All large 20 to 50 lb. bags of premium bird seed is **20% off**, take it with you that day, or . . .

Join the penny-wise and open or add to an EARLY BIRD SEED ACCOUNT with a minimum of \$150. You can deposit as much as you like to your personal seed account and take any size bag of seed, suet, peanuts, mealworms from your seed as you need and at the 20% discount until your funds are used up. Ask us to check to see how much you used last year. We're glad to check for you.

20% OFF!