



BACKYARD nature center News

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For the Love of Birds, Gardening and 30 Years Later

There's a reason that I write this article! So often, when I'm talking with a customer, I'll turn to a product and say "I have this one in my yard", so I can attest to it's success. After a while....I'm sure it sounds a little hokey, but it's real. When something is broken or bumped in shipping, and looks like it fell off a truck going 60 mph, it normally comes home with me. I twist it, turn it, pull the dents out add a new tray, touch up the paint or hammer a new roof on it. At any rate.....it's true. I have quite a collection of pieces and parts on the shelves in our garage. It's like the inventory of the unwanted, the rejects! Works for me.

Just for fun, I thought you might enjoy a peak into our bird/human habitat. All the pictures on this page are in a small wooded, one acre of trees, shrubs and perennials, that we've lovingly planted in the 30 years since we built our home. It all started with three little 8' cottonwood trees.

Considering the future, we positioned our house at an angle to fit just right in among the future giants. How time flies and plants grow! They are now

above 60'! We live in a neighborhood

with folks on both sides of us but now the leather leaf viburnums, honeysuckle bushes, red cedars, service berry, London Plain and pine trees have formed a natural fence between us and the yard next door. We learned the benefits of graduated plantings during our fun days as Extension Master Gardeners. We chose seed and berry producing varieties with the wildlife in mind. In front of the trees are bushes, in front of the bushes are rows of daylilies, in front of the daylilies are red salvia, and so on. The birds seem to find their favorite outlook in the varying heights of vegetation and their favorite meal in either the seed & suet feeders or the berry bushes.

With each year, we are able to find a new project to tackle. One year, Nick hand dug, a small pond complete with water fall and plant ledges for growing marginal water plants. Unfortunately, until the water lilies cover the top of the pond, egrets and kingfisher, attempt fishing for bright goldfish and frogs. It's a sight to see but it's not long before everybody has a hiding place. The pond runs 365 days a year, even with freezing temps and the birds bath and drink on the giant flat rocks of the



waterfall. It can be like "Wild America" right out the living room windows.

Sunlight can be a problem with this shady habitat. It's been a challenge keeping a vegetable garden but we've managed. Three years ago we removed more lawn, raked it free of competing grass and randomly seeded with wildflowers in the sunniest spot in the yard. A broken concrete birdbath base holds a sundial and anchors itself regally in the center of the wildflowers. Butterflies and Hummingbirds love the coneflower, black-eyed susans, correopsis, agasstache, gallaradia, bee balm, and butterfly milkweed.

It's not manicured, nor are the bushes perfectly shaped and trimmed. Each year, we have less "lawn" followed by more and more planting areas filled with perennials. We have a decent compost bin in the garden that the raccoons regularly rummage through at night. Living next to the river, we occasionally catch black rat snakes trying to invade a nest box. That might scare some folks, but there seems to be a nice balance, a natural balance. Drinking coffee in the morning or a glass of wine in the evening while sitting on the screened porch, we view our bird/human habitat with wonder and a grateful heart that we are able to plant, dig and, share our lives with the creatures of the garden!



Bringing Up Baby

Parenting is a tough job. You work down to dusk to earn a living and to keep bread on the table, you knock yourself out teaching them life skills, and what thanks do you get? “Mom, I’m hungry. Got any extra bugs?” and “Dad, I’ve gotta stay here for a few more days, just until I get on my feet, OK?” Fledging babies is a tough job, but it has got to be done.

Born featherless and blind, songbird nestlings spend the first few days able to do little more than raise their heads and open their mouths. But that’s enough to encourage mom and (usually) dad to fill those hungry mouths with soft insects about every 20 minutes.

As they grow, nestlings become ever louder and more insistent. You can tell when mom or dad are approaching the nest because the kids all start screeching for attention. “Over here!” “No, no, no, not her; me first this time!” “Me, me, me, ME!” The feeding intervals increase, the size of the bugs increases, and the intensity of hungry cries increases.

When baby songbirds leave the nest—about three weeks after hatching—they are fully feathered and very nearly the size of adults. But parental responsibility doesn’t end when the kids leave home. Since mom may be nesting again, dad will often take the lead in working with the fledglings—teaching them how to hunt, what morsels to eat, and where the good feeders are located.

You’ll recognize juvenile birds by their juvenile behavior. A young

songbird—fully as large as an adult—will perch on a limb or sit on the ground, wings spread and quivering, trying to catch the attention of a passing adult. “I can’t possibly be expected to fly. What am I supposed to do with these huge feet? They’re going to get in the way, you know. And hey, I’m hungry!” The kids do look pitiful and starved, even though they are quite capable of feeding themselves. The need for help is gone, but the behavior persists.

Juveniles tend to screech and to shove their wide-open mouths in the path of any passing adult. This ploy is apparently successful often enough that some young keep at it for a while after leaving the nest.

Young birds also begin to learn their species calls and songs about this time.

They will begin to imitate the sounds of the parent, albeit with cracking, wobbly voices. With practice, the contact notes and alarm calls become clearer, until they actually become useful to the youngsters as communication tools.

Social behaviors are also learned early in a bird’s life. Pecking order (pun intended!) is important in the avian world, and babies learn, sometimes a bit rudely, what their status is at the feeder. Reprimands generally elicit more juvenile behavior, such as open-mouthed wing quivering, an



action seemingly designed to deflect parental scolding while triggering parental instincts to fill gaping maws. Like parents of many animal species, adult birds put up with juvenile behavior long enough to ensure their kids will grow up to be strong, capable, desirable survivors—adults who can carry on the family name (or at least the family genes). And, like kids everywhere, the youngsters push the envelope of decorum and good taste. Next time you see a screaming, feathered kid at your feeder, enjoy the



satisfaction of helping busy parents feed their kids. Who knows . . . your efforts may lead to an avian, parental “sigh” of relief!

FUN NEW PRODUCTS!

Magic & Whimsy!

Add a Solar kinetic hummingbird spinner to your garden decor! Approximately 18" wide, two hummers gracefully spin around the illuminated solar powered globe as if they are drawn to the flower likebee to honey.



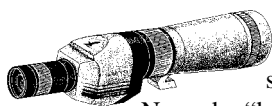
A Beautiful Bug Catcher

Wasps a problem around your sitting area? Hang our beautiful Ombre Red seed glass wasp catcher. By adding sugar water to the top,



wasps seek out the yummy nectar, enter a 1" hole in the bottom, have a good drink and can't figure out how to escape.

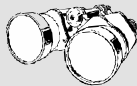
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The BACKYARD nature center is your local resource for binoculars. We offer expert advice while providing you with quality optics.



BIRD PROFILE: Tufted Titmouse

- Tufted Titmouse Most Tufted Titmouse live their entire life within a few kilometers of their birthplace. In Cherokee legend, they are regarded as messengers.

- The Tufted Titmouse will collect fur or hair directly from live animals to build their nests. They've been known to land on small mammals, dogs, and even people and pull hair right out.

- The Tufted Titmouse is an acrobatic forager that tends to be a bit slower and more methodical than chickadees. They often flock with chickadees, nuthatches and woodpeckers, and are regular visitors to feeders where they are assertive over smaller birds.

- Tufted Titmouse build their nests in cavities, so putting up nest boxes is a good way to attract breeding titmouse to your yard.

- You'll often hear the high, whistled peter-peter-peter song well before you spot a Tufted Titmouse and they tend to show up in a quiet walk through, wooded area, flitting through the outer branches of tree canopies in deciduous woods, parks, and backyards.



Clausen's Family Oriole Jelly Recipe

Oriole Jelly (High Fructose Corn Syrup FREE!)

3 cups Grape Juice
4 Cups Apple Juice
1 Cup Water
2 Boxes Sure Gel
12 Cups Sugar

Mix the grape and apple juice with the water and divide in two pans. Put on to heat. Add one box of Sure Gel to each and stir until dissolved. Bring to rolling boil and add 6 cups sugar to each pan. Stir until dissolved. When rolling boil starts, cook at low heat for 1 minutes. Remove from heat and cool slightly. Remove scum and pour into glass jars. Refrigerate. Makes 8 pints.

Enjoy.....They will be here until mid-September!!!



**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



Father's Day, Sunday June 18

DAD battling the squirrels? Give him the upper hand in the battle. Make him KING of his own backyard again!



The Wild Bills feeder offers squirrels a mild shock and they do a double back flip!

The Droll Yankee Flipper feeder spins squirrels off when they get close to the feed port!

Brome Squirrel Buster feeders simply close access to the feed ports when the weight of the squirrel drops the surrounding cage down!

Win the battle again!

20% OFF
any
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