



BACKYARD nature center News

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Do You Hear What I Hear?



Some of the greatest pleasures of the holiday season are familiar sights, smells, and sounds—the cues that tell us that

SANTA IS COMING! Among the true holiday classics is the song, “Do You Hear What I Hear?” recorded by Bing Crosby in November 1963.

Among our greater challenges and rewards is when we must play an ornithological version of “Name that Tune” as a customer or telephone caller wants us to identify a bird on the basis of its remembered call. At times like this, one wonders, do you hear what I hear? Although, an accomplished birder can identify a great many species by both sight and sound, the challenge of making an identification out of these remembered sounds is very difficult for the rest of us. It makes us wonder, why is it so difficult? Is it even possible to do it better? What can we do to improve?

The scholarly literature on auditory memory in the field of learning disabilities is extensive. But what about those who don’t or are just rusty or unfamiliar with the skills of identifying bird calls? Fortunately, the World Wide Web is a great source of tutorials on improving our auditory learning in order to identify birds better. Most powerfully, the internet has the ability to combine visual information, such as photos, with the birdcalls, providing an association that improves recall capability.

One site, www.birding.com, provides an excellent Guide to North American Bird Songs and Sounds. The tool, of course, requires your computer to be equipped with a sound card and speakers in order to take you through a step-by-step process designed to help you learn your bird calls. The learning tool uses sound attributes such as simple, complex, harsh or musical in order to narrow the possibilities. It then asks the user to decide whether the song was one note, two notes, or three or more. Bird calls are then further broken

In addition to these web-based learning tools, we offer several useful resources here at Backyard Nature Center.

down by pitch and speed of repetition. With a little practice, you can learn to identify a cardinal with your eyes closed (birdie...birdie...birdie).

An even better resource is that provided by the Macaulay Library of Bird Sounds at Cornell University. This treasure-trove of information can be accessed either through www.birds.cornell.edu or through www.allaboutbirds.org. Like the other website, this source provides some coaching and a tool to use in order to practice and improve. They offer 5 Tips for Beginners:

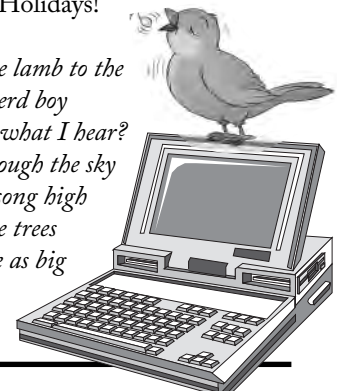
1. Watch and listen (to link auditory and visual cues)
2. Learn from an Expert (nothing beats an experienced birder in the field)
3. Listen to recordings (repetition helps)
4. Say it to yourself (mnemonics are powerful)

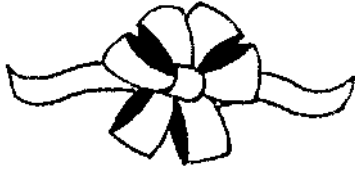
5. Details, details, details (break it down into component elements)
There is also a tool for further exploring each of these components. There are tools for rhythm, pitch, tone and repetition. In addition, there is an innovative tool that presents a spectrogram of each bird call’s pitch and frequency that becomes as easy to read as a sheet of music in the hands of an experienced user.

In addition to these web-based learning tools, we offer several useful resources here at Backyard Nature Center. The recordings of the Macaulay Library are available in a number of forms, most prominently in The Backyard Birdsong Guide by Daniel Kroodsmma, a hybrid book and audio-player that is a favorite for holiday gifts. Other choices include the Birding by Ear series, part of the Peterson Field Guide series, The Songs of Wild Birds by Lang Elliott, a lavish picture book with CD accompaniment and the field guide/audio CD combination for our local birds published by Adventure Publications. For the dedicated learner Backyard Nature Center has Thayer Birding software that covers all the birds of North America.

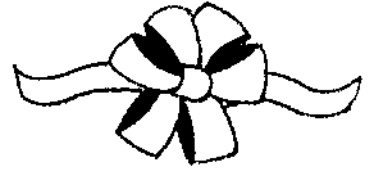
Any of them would make a great gift! Happy Holidays!

*Said the little lamb to the shepherd boy
Do you hear what I hear?
Ringing through the sky
A song, a song high above the trees
With a voice as big as the sea*





Top Holiday Picks



Books make the nicest gifts!
Here's review of 2 of our best choices:



Remember “Tea with Lady Sapphire,” the book for sharing the love of birds with your grandchildren, well it’s back! If you haven’t looked through this amazing picture book please stop by and do yourself a favor. They say that many of today’s children are suffering from “nature deficit disorder”. Tea with Lady Sapphire is the most beautifully illustrated little book about a grandmother sharing her love of birds, along with hot cocoa and a cup of tea, with her grandchildren. There’s even a

bird watching yellow cat, like Mobi the store cat, who sits in the sun on a window seat. Share your love of birds with a child. The paperback is rich.

“Save The Last Dance: A story of North American Grassland Grouse” is a 204-page hardbound book that captures the dazzling beauty of North American grassland grouse whose populations are diminishing across the prairies and plains of America.

Award-winning photographer Noppadol Paothong spent over a decade chronicling the species’ stunning mating rituals and habits.

The book shows the world what is stands to lose if these species are allowed to disappear forever.



A fun, new product—Wild Woolies

Charming "Wild Woolies" Bird Ornaments and Bird houses are made of 100% naturally water repellent wool felt. Educational, decorative and entertaining for both avid birders and everyday admirers of nature's most amazing creatures...wild birds! To be used inside or out and carefully handcrafted by Fair Trade artisans in Nepal,

Binoculars as a gift....



Do you know someone who would like to get a “better view” of the birds outside their window? We can make this real easy for you. We carry ALPEN. Some are waterproof, no questions lifetime warranty, fully armored, multi coated optics in an affordable binocular. Rated a best buy from Outdoor Life Magazine, these binoculars are a great buy for any level of bird watching and nature viewing. Let us guide you to the best fit for the user with a 7, 8 or 10 power magnification, roof or porro configuration, 24 to 50 mm objective lens, compact or standard, It doesn’t have to be this mind boggling. Let Nick and I assist you. We know our optics. We love our ALPENS!

Got Seed?

Is the seed you are feeding to the birds worthy? “Bargain” seed mixes may not be the best for attracting songbirds to your yard. Often, they are full of filler seeds to add bulk to the bag. Crops such as milo, wheat, flax seed and rape seed are engineered to be bird resistant in the field and your songbirds will likely leave it in search of some good, high nutrition seed. We carry only mixes with the most bird attractive seeds in them. Black oil sunflower, safflower, nyger, nutmeats and millet have a high oil content and are better for delivering the calories needed to maintain body temperatures during the cold weather. Ask us about our famous “patio” mix. It’s hulled for no mess and will not sprout come spring. The most important thing about your bird feeder is what you put in it!



<p>\$10 OFF any squirrel-proof feeder (over \$50)</p> <p><small>C121201; Expires 12/24/2012. Not to be combined w/ other offers.</small></p>	<p>10% OFF Corinthian Bells windchimes, priced from \$50-\$200</p> <p><small>C121202; Expires 12/24/2012. Not to be combined w/ other offers.</small></p>	<p>\$5 OFF the amazing book “The Last Dance”</p> <p><small>C120402; Expires 5/31/2012. Not to be combined w/ other offers.</small></p>
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Welcome to Wichita Backyards

by Cathy Clausen, Master Gardener and Avid Backyard Birdwatcher



The temperatures have dropped, natural seed is depleted and beaten down by weather. Precious water is frozen and hard to find making it tough for our darling backyard birds. The birds have flocked together for warmth and protection. It's not impossible to see countless numbers of Cedar Waxwings at your heated birdbath or on the bushes gorging on leftover berries. Chickadees, Tufted Titmice, Carolina Wrens, Red and White-breasted Nuthatches frequent feeders filled with their favorite peanut splits, hanging upside down to get the freshest bite.

There's a lot you can do in your own yard to make it a favorite haven for your feathered friends. After all, they provide hours of entertainment and enjoyment right outside your window. Every fall, I go around to all my bird-houses, the ones with the largest openings, say the bluebird opening of 1.5", clean out the old nests and stuff the bottom of the house with fresh

cedar shavings. Actually, I buy gerbil bedding in a little bundle from the pet food section of the grocery store. The cedar shavings provide a warm dry roost box for cold winter nights when natural cavities are hard to find. The birds cozy up together for a warm night's rest.

Snowbirds, or Northern Juncos, with their pinkish beaks and white under bellies, are abundant at ground feeders with a combination of millet and black oil sunflower seeds. The Harris Sparrow, a songbird that only winters in Kansas, will be a

pleasant surprise too. Just when you look out and think all you have at your feeders are

"house sparrows", look more closely, slightly larger and showing a slight crest of dark feathers on

his head, the Harris Sparrow is one of most beautiful and regal winter visitors. You'll find him dodging in and out from under cover to grab a seed and run back. The greatest feeder in your yard may be a composite or wood screened ground feeder sitting at 4" above the ground on short steady legs. The screen helps keep the seed dry allowing rain and snow to fall through. Seed that sits directly on the ground begins to deteriorate quickly



and then becomes very unhealthy for the birds, causing upper respiratory problems. Elusive Rufous-sided Towhees may stop by for a surprise visit!

Wichita has every kind of woodpecker that you could want to see. At my "suet sandwich" feeder I regularly see Downy, Hairy and Red-bellied Woodpeckers. They are equipped with the perfect feet to cling to the suet sandwich and stick their long tongue in for a bite of yummy insect and peanut packed suet. Yum! Carolina Wrens and nuthatch will gratefully frequent the suet feeder too.

Most insect-eating species have moved to warmer climates but a few stay. Eastern Bluebirds will often stay in an area with good shelter like a hedge row with lots of cedar trees. You can understand why. Like a bed and breakfast, it's cozy and has breakfast berries

too! In your yard, you can actually keep your bluebirds happy with mealworms. Offer fresh or flash dried (full of protein/guts) in cup or even a

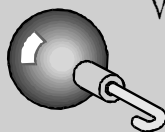
heated meal worm feeder to keep them wiggling! Who could resist that?

Keep fresh water for bathing and drinking, keep feeders filled with high-calorie sunflower and nutmeats, keep your binoculars close to the window and your coffee within arms reach, sip slowly and breathe...the birds are happy and all is well in the world.

Happy Holidays from your grateful birds!

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BACKYARD Nature Center of Wichita, KS
8336 E. 21st Street, Wichita, KS 67206
www.backyardnaturecenter.com
(316) 683-2121
Nick and Cathy Clausen, Owners

Warmest Holiday Wishes,
from all of us here at the
BACKYARD Nature Center.



We appreciate your
21 years of
continued support!





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

Return Service Requested

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



The 113th Christmas Bird Count: Citizen Science in Action

Join area bird counts! It's important. Wichita Audubon Society's local Christmas Bird Count is fun and helpful. Make it an annual part of your holiday! Great way to de-stress. Get outside and count beautiful birds!

These annual events are all-day efforts to census all birds with pre-established 15-mile diameter circles. The results are reported to the National Audubon Society and Kansas Ornithological Society.

Remember to dress for the weather and expect to do a fair amount of walking. A \$5 fee is due from each participant on most counts to defray data entry costs for the National Audubon Society. Most counts have a compilation at the end of the day.

Wichita Christmas Bird Count—Saturday, December 15; 7:30 a.m.

Meet at the Lawrence-Dumont Stadium parking lot. Compilation: 5:30 p.m. at the Great Plains Nature Center. Chili and beverages will be provided. A \$5 fee is required for the National Audubon Society.

Compiler: Kevin Groeneweg, 706-9116

