



BACKYARD nature center News

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Here We Go Again!

What happened to our “long winter’s nap”, I wonder? We’re supposed to be resting, re-generating our minds and bodies, relishing amongst the holiday gifts, family togetherness and merriment. The yard may still be covered with snow and temperatures too cold for comfort, but it’s there... lurking... waiting... watching, and



occasionally tempting us with a hint of warmth and sunshine. It’s just enough to remind us of the sweetness of a coming spring. A warm shower, buds swelling, birds singing, purple martin enthusiasts checking the Purple Martin.org website to locate the first movement of their martins from the Amazon basin to Kansas. You can already hear the “excavators”, woodpeckers and chickadees, hollowing out a home from a dead tree.

Nick and I long for temperatures warm enough to sit on the screened porch for more than 10 minutes, dressed in full snow gear, to watch and hear the grateful visitors at the feeders. Natural seed has been depleted and is no longer desirable

due to harsh weather. Night time temps still drop below freezing and it’s no wonder I can hardly keep

cardinals, robins, doves and catbirds must wait a while longer to build open cup nests in trees or dense bushes possibly even without leaves as yet.

Nature is very harsh, but also very wise.

the peanut and sunflower feeders full. All my feathered friends seem to relish in the daily banquet. I hope it makes

Seed catalogues arrive daily to tempt us to start the garden. Nick gets a jump-start on his veggies by creating little greenhouses with rebar for tomato cages wrapped with the big sheets of clean plastic that come on our weekly pallets of birdseed, the perfect recycling project! He’ll have tomatoes in

their nights more comfortable.

Mind and body are eager to get outside, to dig, split and relocate flowers to some new location, to clean up my bird houses early enough for smart little chickadees, nuthatch, titmice and woodpeckers that are able



to begin nesting before everyone else, since they build their nest inside a natural cavity or birdhouse. Nature is very harsh, but also very wise. The poor dear



the ground by March end! The man’s a crazy hard worker. The garden compost bins, with weekly kitchen donations, have been preparing for just this time. Loamy and fertile, even the Caroline wrens and Blue Jays pilfer through to see what yummy treats may dare to wiggle and be eaten.

I guess I’ve rested long enough. Where’s my shovel?



Who is nesting in your yard?

Considering how many birds there are in North America only about 85 nest in cavities (holes in trees). Since cavities are harder to find these days (we tend to chop down snags and rotting trees) we can convince many of these birds to use nest boxes.

Most popular backyard nesters?

Well, the House Wren has to top this list. These tiny guys LOVE to use any hole they find and once they set up housekeeping they are very gregarious neighbors.

Titmice and Chickadee are also apt to use our manmade cavities. They create the softest nests... strew some cat or dog hair around your yard and they will pick it up and line the nests with it!

Bluebirds are very desired in backyards. These birds, described by Thoreau as "having the sky on their backs" or by Disney as the "bluebird of happiness" are wonderful to behold! They prefer open habitat over treed areas.

Sometimes larger birds can be enticed to nest as well. Woodpeckers certainly will although they seem to prefer to "make" their own cavities. Small birds of prey like kestrel and screech owl might also take up residence.

Come in to the Backyard Nature Center and let us know what kind of habitat you have in your yard. We can then steer you to the right house for your backyard friends.



Prepare for Purple Martins!



Some of you had great success with martins last year! The martin house we installed five years ago in the parking lot fledged over 80 young martins in August. Remember, those young first year birds, called sub adults, will be returning some 3 to 6 weeks after the older adult birds, or scouts, which arrive the first couple weeks in March. In other words, my 80 some youngsters, sub adults, will be returning and looking for a good home...your home, not mine. PMCA, Purple Martin Conservation Association, says that sub adults return to the general area where they fledged but will not nest in the same house with mom and dad. Now, there's a good idea.

Have your house cleaned out but keep a close watch on it. Actually, the first arrivals, older adults, will sit on top of the house for up to a week waiting for you to open up a few compartments on their house. Do not allow sparrows or starlings to take over before the martins arrive. Purple Martins nest only once per year while sparrows nest multiple times. They will fight or kill a martin just to have their space. These birds do not cohabitate well and it's not a pretty situation.



Folklore says that you will have good fortune all year long if a wren selects your yard to nest in!

They're Back! Forever Birdbaths!

So many of you came in to see our new granite birdbaths and they were quickly sold out! I believe in these hardy baths. They just make sense. Heavy, won't blow into the next county, shallow for perfect bathing, you can use a heater in them, almost impervious to weather! Natural organic designs look great in all landscapes. We have added a couple of fun new birdbath styles: two turtles sipping from the edge and another with two granite frogs bathing. Also introducing mysterious dark graphite! Come in soon!



10% OFF
any nest box or
nesting accessory
(includes poles)

C021601; Expires 3/31/16. Excludes optics & cannot be combined with any other offer.

Feather Folklore Bluebird

Symbolizes Happiness and Fulfillment

Can I get bluebirds in my yard?

If you have the right habitat you may be able to attract Eastern Bluebirds. Bluebirds are primarily grassland birds that will use a nest box if it is built to the right specifications and if it is located at the right height (fence post height is perfect). The North American Bluebird Society recommends “they be in an open area with scattered trees and sparse ground cover. Avoid underbrush, tall grass, dense woods, farm buildings and areas where pesticides are used. Good choices are mown lawns, fields, meadows, orchards and road sides.” It’s exciting to see some of our beautiful golf courses incorporating native prairie grasses along the edges of the greens conceding that people really enjoy feeling a part of the natural world.

To prepare your nest box, clean it out now, checking for sturdiness and old wasp nests. If you typically have a problem with wasps, you can slather Vaseline along the inside of the roof keeping the wasp from attaching a paper nest with his saliva. Adding a nice bed of clean cedar shavings can also help the nesters get a head start. Bluebirds will often have two to three broods of young. If



possible, get a good house with a door for easy clean out and even for viewing or monitoring the progress. A plexi-glass side panel will hold the nest in place while you peek in to make sure there is not a predator problem and that all is well. Don’t worry...the adults will just sit close by and return to the box when you step back.

Provide a clean water source for the Bluebirds and you will witness a social behavior like none other. Bathing is a very social activity for the whole family. You can offer meal worms, live or flash dried. Who could resist the fast food lane! Don’t place a food source too close to your nest box and definitely not

on the same pole. Nesting is a very quiet, private activity and we don’t want to invite predators close to the baby birds.

Natural cavities are scarce. We, all too quickly, tidy up our yards and get rid of any unsightly or dead trees and limbs. Primary cavity nesting birds, like woodpeckers, can easily excavate a cozy home from old dead wood. If they don't occupy it, the chickadees, titmice, wrens, and nuthatch would gratefully occupy such a site. This group of birds, called secondary cavity nesters, prefer to raise their young in a previously hollowed out hole or a sturdy nest box provided by you.



Color..Color...Color

I need color in my yard. Some green, some pink, some red, some yellow. Yellow, yes yellow in February! Goldfinches are here all winter long but show very little signs of color during cold dreary months. No one wants to be easier for a sharp-shinned hawk to catch. Finally, signs of spring are evident. The goldfinches are molting drab plumage only to reveal spring’s first color! Male goldfinch quickly change to lemon yellow! The contrast of black and white wing bars against a bright yellow body are sure to attract the right kind of gal! Females will



show hints of yellow, but only discreetly. After all, they don’t need to be quite as flashy. The cheery goldfinch is a backyard favorite. If you want to see lots of them on one feeder, try the steel mesh feeders. No perch required. Fill it with fine ground sunflower hearts. Sunflower chips shelled and ground fine will get you 2 to 1 action over nyger thistle. If you are

feeding chips, however, be sure that your feeder is baffled from squirrels. Squirrels don’t like thistle but will love your sunflower chips. Be consistent with your feeding of the chips. Goldfinches are very nomadic and move around a lot. You may have dozens for weeks at a time and then they seem to leave. They will be back. They could be at your neighbors! Don’t let that happen.

FINCH HAVEN!

10 % OFF
all finch feeders
Including all Droll
Yankee and Aspect
Quick Clean styles

C021602; Expires 3/31/16. Excludes optics & cannot be combined with any other offer. One per family please.

**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



Seed Savings Time

February is a busy month at your feeders and with spring right around the corner, feeders will get even busier! You'll get more bird visits per pound on the cleanest quality seed now through the end of February. Save one of two ways:

1. Purchase any number of 20lb or larger bags at the 20% discount and take them with you that day or....
2. Open or add to an **EARLY BIRD SEED ACCOUNT**. Deposit a minimum of \$150 on your account and all your seed (any size bag), suet, and mealworms come off your account at the 20% discount until your funds are used up. It's a win/win for all!

**SAVE
ON
SEED!**

Sale



Tammy, Cathy, Nick
and Mary.
We look forward to
helping you!