



BACKYARD nature center News

October/November 2015 • Issue 31

Autumn as I see it



The winds of change surely are upon us. One week it's in the 80's and 90's and the next we're putting on extra blankets because it's getting down in the 50's. It's the last of September and I'm writing my newsletter on the screened porch already missing the

Orioles that left my yard a couple days ago. What will I do with all the jelly I made, Christmas gifts I suppose. The hummingbirds seem to be



lingering a bit longer but I know that they will be leaving soon with the next cool front and I will miss them. Still I keep the nectar out for any stragglers that may need a rest stop.

I love autumn. Maybe conditions will be right for some color. I don't know, but it's fun to look for that first crimson tree and then...it comes, if only briefly before all the leaves cover the pond and I can no longer see the fish begging for food when I walk by, time for them to



slow down and take a nap too. How can I prepare my yard and feeding

stations for the cardinals, chickadees, woodpeckers and Carolina wrens who stay all year and to make welcome the visiting northern juncos (snowbirds) and Rufus sided towhees, white crowned sparrows and the beautiful Harris sparrows all that will be showing up soon. I go to my stash, a metal shelf in the garage, to look for feeders that I can trade out for the jelly and



hummingbird feeders. More nut and sunflower feeders, where are the nut feeders, and maybe another suet feeder. I may have to go to the store to look for something damaged in freight that I can bring home.

There's not much singing this time of year but all birds like to make their presence known, especially the blue jays! I clean out the owl box and sprinkle fresh cedar shavings to make an inviting winter bed for the screech owls or maybe even a flicker or red-bellied woodpecker, I don't care which. I've got to check the bluebird boxes for wasp nests too and freshen them a bit with cedar. Nuthatches, chickadees and Carolina wrens could use some cozy

houses to take refuge in when the nights get bitter, and they will get bitter.

I love it that we can count on the seasons changing here. We've worked pretty hard in the garden and it's time for us to slow down a bit. The wildflowers have bloomed so late this year; butterflies have been all over the coreopsis, gaillardia, black-eyed Susan's and coneflower. I never realized a patch

of wildflowers could bring so much wildlife and so much joy. Oh, by the way, the birds

planted a surprise for us...the now very rare milkweed plant that is so critical to the survival and existence of the Monarch butterfly! I'm sharing its seeds with a local nursery so that they can get it started too and make it available for everyone. Thank you my beloved songbirds!



A Banner Year for Bluebirds



Several years ago, fellow birder and kayaking buddy, Kris Jackson, installed bluebird nest boxes at fence post height along highway 96 walking paths between 13th and 21st streets. A couple times a year Kris does essential “nest checks” to see how the bluebirds are doing and if there have been any problems. Delighted by the tidy construction and the number of eggs she witnessed this summer, one adult bluebird flew off her eggs, sat on a near by branch and watched as Kris inspected the box. The mother seemed to be saying “see Kris...I did a good job this year. Don’t you agree?” It has been a banner year for the bluebirds. It’s amazing to me that the bluebirds do so well with people walking, biking, and jogging right by the houses. Maybe they sense that people love them!

Many Eastern Bluebirds remain in our area all winter long roosting along creeks and streams in old wooded hedge rows, living off cedar berries and insects they find on dead wood. You can invite them to your yard by offering fresh water, live or flash dried mealworms, and suet filled with nuts and berries. Most all birds group together in small family flocks for safety in winter. You could have a half dozen or more on a heated

birdbath! Talk about a cold weather inspiration!



Ways to attract birds during fall and winter

- Provide high-calorie and high-protein foods, such as black oil sunflower seed and whole peanuts.
- Maintain your feeders—clean them thoroughly and clear out any debris.
- Offer a sheltered retreat from the cold by providing roosting boxes.
- Place feeders in sheltered locations out of the wind. Place them within view of a window, so that you can enjoy the colorful show.
- To attract a large number of different birds, maintain a variety of feeders in your yard. Make sure the feeders are well built and sturdy enough to withstand the elements and to last for many seasons
- Birds, like all living creatures, need water year-round. Provide water during the colder months by using a de-icer in your birdbath.
- Fallen leaves are great place for insects to hide in your garden. As they decay, they will produce great organic mulch.
- Leave those last flowers on their stems. Many flowers—such as roses, marigolds, sunflowers, and others—are filled with seeds that bird love.
- Keep those hummingbird feeders clean and filled with fresh nectar. Contrary to popular belief, migrating hummingbirds can still be found in our area well into November.
- Stock up on high-quality suet. When harsh weather arrives, the birds desperately need suet to provide the energy they need to stay warm and to maintain their high metabolisms.



Meet our new employees!

We are so happy to welcome Tammy and Mary to our store as our new employees! They are both very personable, knowledgeable, and love nature! We are sure you will agree when you meet them. I know you’ll be patient and kind as they become accustomed to their surroundings and new faces.



Coming soon!

To my front window. You know I’m always the last retail store to decorate for Christmas! Mr. Mesh Snowman feeder.

Your feathered friends will love feasting from this fun bird-feeder. Great for black oil sunflower or peanut splits. The wire mesh on the back opens up for easy refilling. Doesn’t his face make you want to sing “happy, happy, happy?”



Feeder-of-the-Month

The Squirrel Buster Peanut Feeder Plus

Guaranteed squirrel proof and effective against some large nuisance birds too! Designed with a large tail prop allowing woodpeckers to feed comfortably, using their tails for support and balance just like they do on trees. Mess free. The wire mesh holding the shelled peanuts or wild bird food nuggets is calibrated so that birds cannot simply sweep the food out of the feeder. Very small bits that may fall below the feeder will be eaten by the ground feeding birds or squirrels. Food is not wasted and there is no mess to clean up. It's ideal for decks, condos and apartments.



Peanuts are an incredibly popular food at feeders and will attract a great variety of birds. Nuggets, a high energy suet-based soft wild bird food product, are a favorite of all suet, fruit and insect-eating birds. Both are high in protein, oil, and fat, making them a perfect addition to the foods you offer birds in your backyard. Also attracts Grosbeaks, Blue Jays, Pine Siskin, Redpolls, sparrows, Tufted Titmice, Woodpeckers and Carolina Wrens! You've heard the old Swedish song: "I just go nuts at Christmas," well, there you have it!

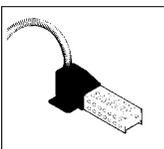


Importance of water in cold weather

Offering water is one of the most enticing and vital components of bird feeding. Ponds and streams may become frozen quickly over night when temperatures drop and it becomes difficult for songbirds to find much needed open water to bath as well as drink. Feather care is critical at this time of year and that includes lots of bathing to remove excess oil to allow feathers to be fluffed up like a nice down jacket. You may think your birdies are just fat when in fact, they are puffing out those wonderful layers of down feathers closest to their tiny bodies.

Adding a heater to your existing birdbath is one good way to keep the birds coming.

Thermostatically controlled, a heater will only bring the water temp up to just above freezing and then it shuts off. Heated birdbaths are quite handy too. Both will need to be plugged in with an outdoor extension chord. Your birds will be grateful for fresh shallow water free of ice!



**\$5 OFF any Birdbath Heater or
\$10 OFF any Heated Birdbath**

C101501; Expires November 30, 2015. Cannot be combined with other offers.

The real facts from Nick

Q. What makes your seed better than what I can get at the big box stores?

A. Our seed is the cleanest seed available in the area. We pay for our seed to go through three cleanings before being bagged especially to our specifications and our weekly order.

Q. Aren't all bird seed mixes alike and generally called "songbird mix"?

A. No. All mixes are not alike. Generic mixes usually contain Milo, wheat and scratch grains that are not song bird attractive and will go uneaten. Our mixes are blended with the most attractive seeds like black oil sunflower, peanuts and mixed nuts and white or red proso millet. Some of our mixes also have dried cranberries and other good fruit, high in nutritional value for quick energy.



Q. Is your no-mess blend more expensive than a mix with the shells on?

A. Patio Mix & Clingers Charms mixes are shelled, of course, and the price per pound is actually comparable with our "in the shell" mixes, making it a great value. Shells can account for 40% of the bag weight. No growth under the feeder! Who doesn't love that?



Q. How can I tell if a bag of seed is the freshest available?

A. Our seed is bagged from the season's most recent harvest. Most bargain birdseed is last year's crop and may have been sitting on the shelf for a long, long time.



DRAWING!

Come in any time during October and drop your name in the pumpkin on the counter (next to Mobi). On Halloween, we will draw the name of one lucky winner to receive a Squirrel Buster Peanut Feeder Plus, a \$60 value! Don't miss this opportunity to foil the squirrels in your yard!



**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



FALL BIRDSEED SALE

Now through October 25th



Nick and Cathy Clausen are the owners of the Backyard Nature Center master gardeners, avid backyard bird-watchers

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

October is time to prepare for the big run on bird activity at your feeders! Most seed eating birds remain in Kansas all winter; in fact, there are many species that come here in cold weather because conditions are more favorable than their nesting grounds in the northern states and Canada. Can you blame them!

All premium wild birdseed, in bulk 20-pound and larger bags are 20% off! Even better... you may deposit a minimum of \$150 on an Early Bird Seed Program and take home only what you need, as you need it, at 20% off until your funds are used up. The seed program applies to any food product, even mealworms, nuts and suet! In 25 years it is our most popular program and you get the freshest bagged seed in town!

