



# BACKYARD nature center News

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## Get Ready... It's Hummer Time!

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If you didn't see hummingbirds during the middle of summer...get ready to be amazed! Somewhat secretive nesting activity is over and the young will be coming to the feeders, following adults around looking for the freshest food source. You'll want to keep your nectar as fresh as possible during the last hot days of summer. Sugar and water can ferment quickly and become cloudy within a couple days. Even one bad meal may be enough to send them elsewhere. I don't fill my feeders more than half way up because I know I'm going to dump it in a couple days. With a little work and patience, this can be the most exciting action of summer! It amazes me that a bird that tiny can dominate one feeder and run larger birds off. Orioles beware... stay on your own jelly feeder

or pay the price! Putting up a second feeder is really the answer to seeing more birds. They don't share well.

The end of summer is a very busy time for hummingbirds who are working diligently to plump up their body weight by almost 50% before migration therefore frequent trips to your feeders will be the reward for keeping your nectar fresh.

Hummer migration begins in late July and continues well into September. While the Ruby Throated hummingbird is the only hummer to nest east of the Rockies, we can see other species passing through our area. Broad tailed, Rufous, and Caliope have all been documented at feeders in our area.



These tiny visitors follow routes of water and vegetation and will be grateful to spend a little time at your feeders continuing to beef up their body weight in preparation for a long trip south. Hummingbirds are true neotropical migrants, which means they fly to the tropics for the winter. Sounds fun! Let's all go!

# How many ways can you say “grackle”?

Here’s what I’ve encountered so far:

Grapples

Gackles

Gackle Bird

#&\*%!\$@ Grackles

Cracklins

And today’s offering:

Gacks and Gecks!

It’s been fun!

The Common Grackle nests in Kansas. A member of the black bird family, the grackle has a long draping tail, beautiful iridescent

blue black head and a bright yellow eye. Females are mainly brown/black. The Grackle is a native bird to North America so therefore, folks, one cannot shoot them!

Intelligent, they are, large, noisy and bossy too but most of all they are very hungry and can quickly clean out your feeder. This time of year, they are feeding very large fledglings who are constantly begging to for attention. You know the kind of kid?

There are ways to co-exist happily. Use a caged feeder. This will allow smaller birds to eat peacefully, without the competition of the big bullies. A



domed feeder with an adjustable top allows you to minimize the access by bigger birds who cannot duck under. Offering only safflower seed is

a pretty good method to slowing down the big bird activity. Some folks do well offering exclusively safflower seed, not mixed with any other seed. Safflower is accepted by house finch, cardinals and morning doves, but grackles and squirrels find it bitter and will eventually reject it. I must warn, however, safflower takes a while for



your birds to accept it but eventually, you will find cardinals, house finch, doves and an occasional chickadee will be happily feeding there.



## Ahhh...The Birds of Summer

It has been a great spring and even better summer. The yard has been filled with singing wrens, chickadees, cardinals, house finch, brown thrashers, woodpeckers, titmice and robins all singing to attract the perfect mate, someone to build a home with and raise young. Orioles built a beautiful woven bag in the cottonwood over the driveway while chickadees and titmice used the cozy nest boxes in the yard.



The big surprise in our yard has been a 10x20 wildflower bed that we dug and seeded this spring with a mix of coneflower, coreopsis, black-eyed Susan’s, and lots more. To our delight, and a very wet spring, the perennials went nuts. Resisting my urge to tidy things up and begin weeding, I settled for “trenching”, as Nick calls it, around the edge, defining the semi-weedy sunny

patch. The birds even planted butterfly milkweed for me. By mid July, with everything in full bloom, butterflies, honey bees, hummingbirds and even goldfinch are all over my new favorite spot! Who could resist. Biodiversity could be the attraction for summer long goldfinch. Wouldn’t you agree?



A “not so famous quote”  
By me (Cathy)

*Work hard.*

*Love good.*

*Feed your birds.*

*Nurture your plants.*

*Be grateful for a contented life....*

*Life is good!*

## Nest check proves critical!



June 19th, Nick was in the process of doing his weekly count and nest check of the purple martin house in the parking lot. Much to his surprise, he found an adult male martin with his wing stuck in the crescent shaped opening of the house. After gently maneuvering the bird out, it flew across the lot to the top of an adjacent building. In the same compartment, Nick found another adult male and also a female trapped with 4 eggs and they could not get out the house because the opening was blocked by the intruder

martin with one wing stuck in the opening.

The moral of this story is that “nest checks” on martin houses or any nest box for that matter, are very critical. We stood to lose three adults and four babies in just that one compartment! You never know what you may find and if it is just a peaceful little nest with eggs, then great! But don’t be fooled into thinking that birds are safe in their cozy little homes and you just don’t wish to disturb. You may find that a house sparrow has punctured eggs or worse yet, killed young, or that the happy little family of birds has been completely eaten by a snake and the snake is too bulging to exit the house.

Birds have a very poor sense of smell and an intensely good parenting instinct. It is an old wives tale that if you mess with the birds or their nest, they may abandon it. In fact they have so much time and energy invested in building, laying, and feeding young, that they will not leave it unless some tragedy has taken place and they need to start over somewhere else. Go ahead...get involved...be a good landlord. The birds will bless you with song filled days ahead!



## Summer Feeding

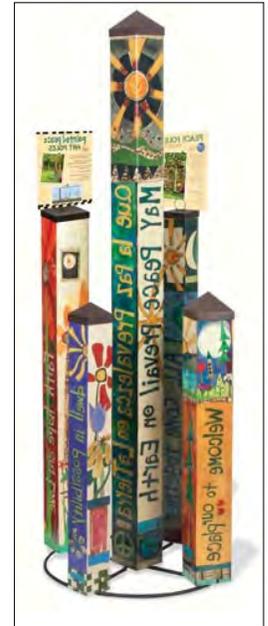


You will notice your summer feeding has increased at all the feeders in your yard with adults bringing young to the feeders to show them the ropes and the good places to eat! It’s an exciting time at the jelly feeders too with lots of strange looking orioles that just don’t seem to fit the pictures in most field guides. Plumage is not fully developed on the young males and they look strangely like a female but with a five o’clock shadow. I love the challenge of trying to identify those odd looking immature birds. Hope they remember my yard for next year. Young cardinals all look like females during their first summer...but look closely...their beaks are black, not red/orange like the adults. There are lots of odd looking young out there. Blue Jay youth have undeveloped crests and look a bit scraggy. Almost all of our seed-eating birds are here year round and even if your activity slows a bit, when plants

reseed themselves in late summer and early fall, these birds will still use your feeders. Being consistent will keep them coming!

## Best Product of the Summer

Best New Product  
Amazing garden Art Poles! A real statement for any garden or flower bed! A state of the art reproduction from the work of artist Stephanie Burgess and laminated into a lightweight PVC pole for fade-resistance and durability.



Measuring from 4 to 6 feet tall, they come with easy mounting hardware. Some Art Poles have a birdhouse built in.

## HELP WANTED!

We are getting up there in years and nearing an age where lots of folks retire completely and move to Florida, right? Well, not us. We have enjoyed the nearly 25 years we have owned this lovely nature and birding business and would love to find a special person that wants to work a few hours a week, and could take over the store for a week here and there! This person would need to be able to lift a minimum of 20 lbs. (we use a cart for anything larger), be able to work a very simple point of sale computer and most of all, love birds! If you feel like you fit the “bill”, no pun intended, call me (Cathy), at the store at 316/683-2121.



**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.

Open Labor Day: 10 a.m.–4 p.m.

PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT:  
WWW.BACKYARDNATURECENTER.COM

Remember to Recycle



# HELP CELEBRATE OUR ANNIVERSARY!

Here we are almost a quarter of a century old and still  
havin' fun after all these years!

We are grateful for your business and want to thank you.

**20% OFF**  
entire purchase

C150701; Offer expires September 30, 2015. Cannot be combined with other offers.  
Excludes optics and seed accounts and special orders One-time use only.



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.