



# BACKYARD nature center News

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## Birds, Bees & Me



Written by Cathy Clausen, a Master Gardener, Avid Backyard Birdwatcher, and co-owner of the BACKYARD Nature Center"

According to recent surveys, backyard bird watching is the second most popular outdoor hobby, following and maybe even closing the gap on, gardening. The two are so closely related that it is inevitable that more and more people are combining their two favorite outdoor activities to produce bird gardens designed to bring delight to gardeners and birds alike.

Few of us have the opportunity to restore 10,000 acres of woodland to its natural condition, but we can still contribute to recreating healthy habitat. With some attention and care, we can make our little piece of the world a better place for wildlife and for the people that respect and delight in it. Bird gardens do that and more: They also increase your daily exposure to birds and other wildlife, provide a calm center for your yard and create a visual delight for your eyes.

Creating a bird-friendly garden is a fairly simple matter. Feeders, birdbaths, nest boxes, and other garden amenities provide a focal point. You will also want to learn how to select and place bird-friendly plants. There are many good resources that will help you enjoy bird gardening, including the local library, garden clubs, nurseries, and the Internet. Ask yourself how each decision you make contributes to the basic survival needs of songbirds. Does this plant provide a source of food? Is that pond designed so that water is accessible to small birds? Does the yard have plants that provide cover for protection and nesting? Are you choosing plants that are native to your area?

Your bird garden will be a source of satisfaction for years to come. You know the feeling when you see a new bird for the first time? You want to share it with someone who will be as thrilled and impressed as you are. In the same way, when you create a good space for the birds, a yard that provides the essentials in a healthy way or a patio garden that offers a good stopping point for butterflies, you want to share that achievement too. You can even certify your habitat with the National Wildlife Federation. The requirements are simple, and the process will help you understand what you have accomplished to date and what still needs to be done. Don't be intimidated by the scope of the task. The birds and other wildlife won't wait until you're done to make use of your newly renovated habit; they will appreciate each step along the way as a better place to live.

Here are some things to ponder as you begin to create your habitat. Have you ever thought about what your lawn service is spraying on your lovely green lawn and how it may affect you and the other creatures that live there? Don't get me wrong, I'm not against the ease of the service but we can hope the trend of "dowsing" our yards with chemicals becomes a bit greener and environmentally responsible in the near future. It may be that the insect pest you are targeting is a food source for the great number of insect eating birds that frequent our yards at this time of year. House Wrens, Orioles, Carolina Wrens, Grey Catbirds, Purple Martins, Brown Thrashers and Eastern Bluebirds are just a few of the species that are constantly foraging for insects to feed their hungry nestlings and are dependent on the abundance of life in your yard. Even cardinals, who eat almost exclusively seeds, feed their young many insects because they grow faster on the extra protein!

Consider the Honey Bee who's numbers have been in decline for the past 20 years. Much research has been done to try to discover the problem. The answer may be right in front of us. Can you imagine a life without Honey Bees and butterflies? Who would pollinate the flowers and the worldwide food source? We all benefit from their existence. Hopefully, it makes us think twice before spraying pesticides in our flower beds and veggie gardens. Sometimes the best control for "bad bugs" is as simple as a spray of soapy water or there's always the impact of two bricks smashing together. Very scientific!

Be conscious of the time of year you pick to have that giant unsightly dead tree cut down and hauled off or chipped up. Spring and early summer may be good for the tree trimming companies, but not so great for the helpless family of baby chickadees, Tufted Titmice or nuthatches held up in a cozy old woodpecker hole. Perhaps waiting until fall would save the birds and tree trimmers may even give you a better deal.

Habitat is a big word, but it starts with just a little of the right kind of space. It's a very personal word for me as a gardener, homeowner, bird lover and the place where my grandchildren play. I can't imagine doing harm to it. It brings so much joy to my life!



## Summer goldfinch?

### What happened to my goldfinch?

We all have a love affair with goldfinch. They delight us in spring with their molting process, turning themselves into flying daffodils with their beautiful bright plumage. Goldfinch are not migratory; this is their year-round home, as are most all seed eating birds in Kansas. One of the last bird species to nest, goldfinch move away from the city and enjoy country life where natural wild seeds are abundant for nest building as well as a food source. Don't worry...they haven't forgotten your yard.



## Hummer Heaven!

Don't forget to keep your hummingbirds happy all summer long! Change your nectar every two or three days. They may bring their young with them back to the feeder!



## Mosquito issues?



Keep your water moving and fresh all summer long. There are two ways to discourage mosquitos from laying their eggs in your lovely birdbath. One is the "water wiggler", approximately 4" in diameter, the wiggler has spinners that keep the water making a reflective and gentle circling motion in the water. The wiggler works on C batteries or solar, you pick. Great for attracting birds and mosquitos cannot lay eggs in moving water. A second good product for handling mosquito larvae is the "mosquito dunk", a small donut made of BT, bacillus thuringiensis, which is perfectly safe for birds, dogs, cats and any other critters except mosquito larvae!

## Havin' trouble with feisty racoons?

Racoons are in almost every neighborhood whether you see them or not. Anyone who says they see an occasional opossum in their yard is likely to have racoons. Racoons, squirrels and opossums are foragers and have very sensitive noses and taste buds. Birds have very few taste buds and a poor sense of smell. Our SMOKIN HOT CHIPS is a shelled sunflower seed that is infused with cayenne pepper and foragers turn up their nose to it! If it works in my yard...it will work in yours. Our yard was used as the field-testing site for this product and my birds didn't skip a beat. They gobbled it up!



## Help Wanted:

Part time. Must be able to do some minor lifting, at least a 20lb bag of seed, the larger bags can be handled with a cart!

Should enjoy being with people who are curious and learning about birds. Stop by to get an application. We will call you!

# Step back, do the right thing!



Resist the urge to help the helpless. It's so hard to not want to do something when we find a young bird that has maybe fallen out of its nest or worse yet, has been drug out of his nest. Take a good

look at the baby. If it has short downy feathers, he may have jumped out of the nest which is the safe and natural sequence of events for all young birds. That little guy hides in the brush, waits to hear the call of the mother bird and squawks to be fed. A nest is a target for snakes, blue jays, and other predators who feed on the helpless. It's a good thing that those babies jump out and the smart ones hide and wait for mom. So many good people want to rescue so they bring the baby in the house and proceed to try to "save" the youngster. In fact, it's like kid-napping that little guy. Mom can no longer find him to respond to his needs. If you do come upon a baby bird, evaluate him. Is he naked? If so, he likely will not survive the night. If he has a short tail and fluffy short feathers, just move him slightly to the closest bush, tell him to "sit" and walk away. Don't look back. You've done him and the mother a favor.

**" Unless I'm hurt, please don't take me home"!**



**Father's Day Coupon**  
Help Dad defeat the squirrels!  
Brome squirrel proof feeders  
15% off, while supply lasts

(expires July 31, 2010)

# Remember Dad's Special Day

Sunday, June 20

Give him "Stumpy", a 25" tall, handmade copper frog perched on a stump waiting to catch a fish for dinner! To be displayed indoors or outdoors, he will only get better with age as he continues to age as copper does. Unique and one of a kind, Dad will treasure this fella relaxing by the stream like in the "old days"!



We also have a copper "golfer", standing ready to Tee-off!

## Sound Of Music



Give Dad "the Sound of Music" in his yard. Corinthian Bell windchimes are hand tuned, anodized aluminum and carry a 5-year warranty. The sound so mellow, you'll think you're in the Swiss Alps!

The Backyard Nature Center is your local resource for "birder favorite", Vortex binoculars. We know our optics and can fit you up!



**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**

Monday–Saturday: 9 a.m.–5 p.m.  
Sunday: Closed

PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT:  
[WWW.BACKYARDNATURECENTER.COM](http://WWW.BACKYARDNATURECENTER.COM)



from left to right  
Tammy, Cathy, Nick & Mary

## Customer “snippets” (We love them!)



Spring 2021 was a very good year for Bald Eagles in Kansas! A friend and longtime customer shared that she had the million-dollar view from across the small lake behind her house. A mature pair of eagles set up house high in a hedgerow of cottonwoods. With a spotting scope set up, she had the birds-eye view of each day’s activities! (Some might call this stalking, lol!)

Mom and Dad constantly fed and nurtured their pair of eaglets. With winds howling to some 40 mph and mom sitting protectively on the young, dad proceeded to build up the sides of the giant nest around his family. The young birds now growing at an enormous rate, the adults had to hunt more to satisfy the ravenous appetites leaving the kids alone and unprotected. It occurred to my friend that the parents had actually constructed a “play pen”! Some human parents could benefit from such wisdom!