



# BACKYARD nature center News

October/November 2017 • Issue 43



## The Good Stuff



Customers often ask “What is the difference between your seed and seed found in supermarkets, garden centers, and big box stores? The answer is quality and value.

Most bargain-brand birdseed mixes contain large quantities of ingredients that songbirds do not eat. These inexpensive “filler” seeds add weight to the bag, giving the impression that you are getting a lot for your money. But birds know better. They will sweep their beaks through the mix and dump undesirable seeds to the ground. You’ll find a pile under your feeder that will sit for months until it sprouts. Even ground-feeding birds—doves, juncos, and sparrows—may ignore the spilled seed. If good seed falls to the ground, they will devour it.

Check the list of ingredients on the bag of seed. Ingredients should be listed in the order that they contribute to the total

weight of the bag. Bargain mixes often contain milo as a major ingredient. Some birds of the Southwest do eat milo, most Midwest birds do not. Sometimes



you will see “mixed grains” listed. What are they? Simply put.... fillers.

The major ingredient in our BACKYARD Nature Center mixes is sunflower seed, the birds’

favorite. Seed quality is also important. Our seed is 99% clean by weight. We demand that our vendors sift the seed three times to remove all, or almost all, empty shells, sticks, leaves, and other debris that is found in bargain seed bags. Typically, most commercial seed can have over 2 pounds of inedible material and you are paying for it.

Most bargain-brand seed is sprayed with oil to keep dust down and to make it shiny and attractive to people (not to birds). Seed can also vary in quality—from fresh to stale to sweepings off the mill floor. Mill owners call this “reclaiming.” We call it “unfit for avian consumption.”

You can count on us to keep you well informed and supplied with the best quality seed. We get fresh shipments weekly. BACKYARD Nature Center seed is fresh, 99%-clean, and delicious. At least that’s what the birds seem to think!

---

You can count on us to keep you well informed  
and supplied with the best quality seed.

---



# Flyways and Bye-ways

One of the things from school science classes that still fascinate us is the concept of highways in the sky. The notion that birds, which can fly freely in any direction, actually follow certain routes to get places was puzzling for many reasons. If you can fly easily any which way, why follow a route? Why would you need a place to go when you are free as a bird? How would you know how to get there and that you have finally arrived? Big questions!

## The Flyway Systems

Bird migration is generally thought of as a north-and-south movement, with the lanes of heavier concentration following the coasts, mountain ranges, and principal river valleys. It happens to work out nicely in North America where the coasts, mountain chains, and some of the larger rivers do not depart from a north-and-south alignment.

There are four major North American flyways that have been named the Atlantic, the Mississippi, the Central and the Pacific Flyways. Boundaries are not always sharply defined and there is overlapping. In Panama, parts of all four flyways merge into one.

Our birds belong to one of four groups:

- **Permanent residents**, or just "residents," are non-migrating birds.
- **Summer residents** are migratory birds who arrive in our Northern backyards in the spring, nest during the summer, and return south to wintering grounds in the fall.
- **Winter residents** are migratory birds who have "come south" for the winter to our backyards.
- **Transients** are migratory species who nest farther north than our neighborhoods, but who winter farther south; thus "just passing through."

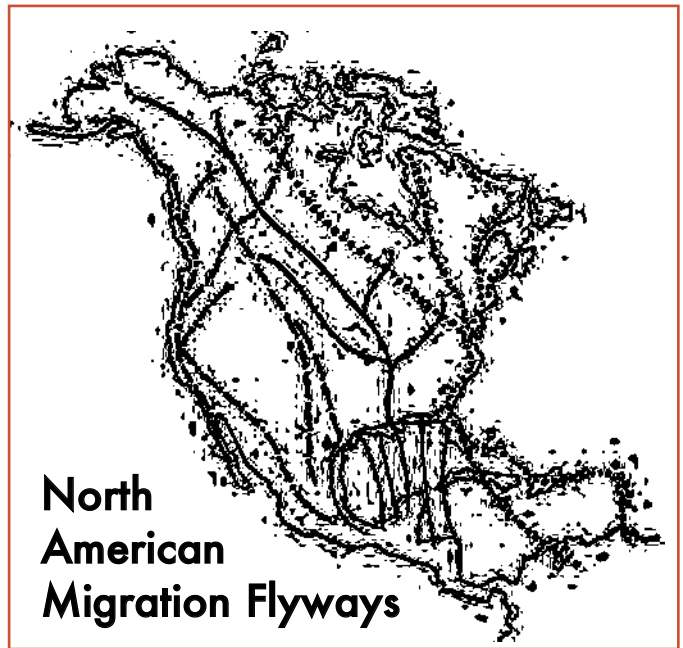
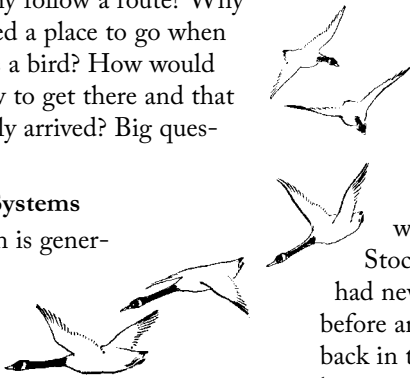
## Migration Navigation

Do you ever wonder how they find their way? What would happen if you transported a bird, and it started its migration in a different place? Would the bird instinctively fly the same course as always, only to end up in the wrong part of the world? An ornithologist named Ronald Lockley designed a series of experiments to answer questions like these. Transported seabirds from Wales that were released in Venice and Stockholm flew over areas they

had never seen before and were back in their nest burrows in 14 days. One bird that was released in Boston, 3,050 miles from home, took only 12.5 days to return to its nest. In another experiment, White-crowned and Golden-crowned Sparrows successfully returned to California from release points in Louisiana and Maryland.

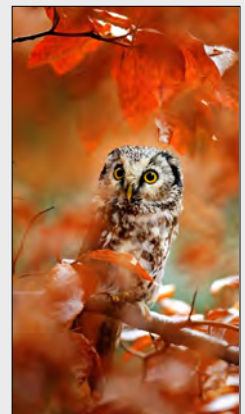
## How do they know?

Clearly, birds do not journey forth "on a wing and a prayer." They take clues from geographic landmarks, sunlight, stars, environmental sounds, and even wind direction. Most birds are capable of using more than one navigational system, and they almost always reach their intended destinations. When you begin to miss the migrants that have left your area to travel south, be consoled in knowing that you can trust their navigational prowess. You can look forward to seeing them again next spring.



Love 'em or hate 'em, our furry friends remind us that you make their lives a little bit easier when you keep your feeders filled with nuts and sunflower!

Don't forget to put fresh mulch in nest boxes to invite chickadees, Carolina Wrens, tufted titmice, all our woodpeckers, and screech owls to your yard. They'll love a cozy place to roost on those cold fall nights!



# How do birds find their food?

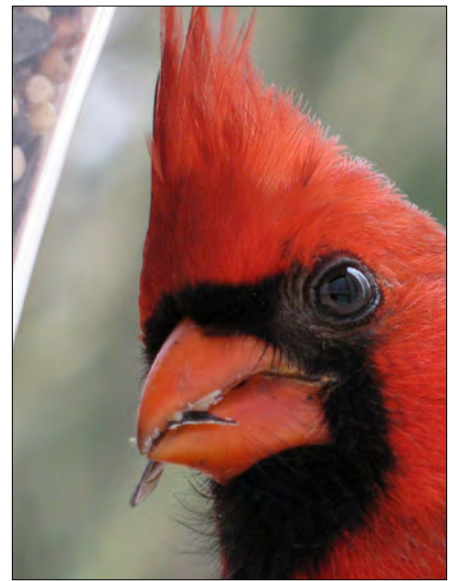
Well let's start off by saying "thank goodness we are not Turkey Vultures"! They are one of the few species of birds that uses its sense of smell for finding food. You can imagine why this would work well for a species who lives off of decaying flesh... but we won't go there!

Most other birds rely more on their eye sight, and because of this, no other animal can compete with birds and their visual acuity. Their eyes look deceptively small, but when you look beyond the overlapping protecting bone, you discover that their eyes are really quite large! They really need to have this great vision because of the way they find food. Most birds find their food while on the wing. Imagine the vision needed by a hawk searching for a mouse while flying over a field, a kingfisher spotting a fish from above, or a chickadee looking for a coneflower.

If you look closely at birds you will notice that there is a difference among different birds on where their eyes are placed. For hawks and other birds of prey, binocular vision is absolutely necessary. This means that their eyes are placed forward on their heads. To see around themselves, they must turn their heads to the side. (Owls do this too, of course, but contrary to folklore they can only go about 270 degrees.)

Most other bird's eyes are placed on the sides of their heads. This allows them to see what is coming from behind as well as to find the insects and seed they need to live on.

For your backyard feeder friends, make sure your feeders are placed where they are easily seen... but do remember to make things a little safer by having some sort of protection close by that they can duck into when they spot that hawk sneaking up from behind!

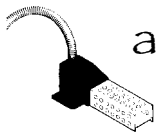


## The Elixir of Life

The most essential element of survival during winter is water! More birds will die of dehydration than starvation in winter. Ponds will freeze over along with rivers, streams and birdbaths! As dry as the summer season has been, there is less natural water available for our songbirds. Birds prefer shallow water, not a big lake, unless they are waterfowl of course. Birdbaths will need a birdbath heater to keep them from becoming a solid sheet of ice. Yes, you will need an extension and an outdoor electrical outlet to keep it going. The heaters and heated baths that we carry are thermostatically controlled and only come on when the water temp drops below 32 degrees. Folks often ask about solar powered heaters. Seems like a great idea but by morning your bath would be a frozen popsicle! Treat your birdies to a spa. They will be grateful!

*Create a bird spa*

**\$5 OFF**  
any birdbath heater



C171001; Expires November 15, 2017.  
Cannot be combined with other offers.

*Give your birdies a spa!*

**15% OFF**  
any heated birdbath



C171002; Expires November 15, 2017.  
Cannot be combined with other offers.

**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](http://WWW.BACKYARDNATURECENTER.COM)

Remember to Recycle



# FALL BIRDSEED SALE

**Now through October 31st**

It's here, our best value of the year. The finest quality birdseed, at the best price! 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, for example the beautiful Harris Sparrow, that come here in cold weather because conditions are more favorable than their nesting grounds in the northern states and Canada. We agree, our winters are becoming very comfortable.

All premium wild birdseed, in bulk 20-pound or larger are **20% off!** Purchase as many bags as you can carry home, or join the folks who've seen the value of our Early Bird Seed Program. Deposit a minimum of \$150 on your seed account and take home only what you need, as you need it, at the 20% discount until your funds are used up. The seed program applies to any food product, including mealworms, nuts, suet, in any size bag, even the 5-pound bags! We are going on 26 years with this program. We believe It's a win/win for all!

