



BACKYARD nature center News

June 2022/July 2022 • Issue 70

Feeding Frenzy

A dozen doves gather under the feeders, milling about and picking up stray seed. Blackbirds wander through the high grass, looking for grubs in the warm summer soil. A jay screeches into the hopper feeder, scattering the congregated finches. Woodpeckers resolutely make their way down the tree trunk, grabbing a bit of suet to hold them over until the kids have been fed. Chickadees and titmice dart in for a snack in the midst of their busy day, and goldfinches hang from every available finch feeder.

Why all this activity when leaves are green and bugs are abundant? Is it just my imagination, or are there more birds feeding now than in winter?

It's not just your imagination. Scientific tests have shown that many more birds visit feeders in summer. Most of the birds that visit our feeders are seedeaters, and natural harvests of seeds don't mature until fall. These birds have been eating last season's crop all winter, and the pickings are getting slim. Even when they feed insects to their young, these birds will continue to fill up on seed wherever they can

find it. An individual food source could easily be wiped out. So as a matter of survival, birds diversify their base. Within an established feeding range, birds forage in as many places as they can, taking whichever food offers the greatest calorie return on their energy invest-



ment. Chickadees and titmice will eat insects for quick protein boosts in summer, so keep those dried mealworms handy. They spend more time hunting than gathering, unlike finches and doves, who hang out waiting for the field to go to seed. Like typical parents, they seem to remember and routinely visit a consistently stocked feeder. Another factor that contributes to the summer feeding frenzy is the increase in sheer numbers of birds

around. Baby birds grow quickly, and for some species in the warmer areas, kids from the first brood of the season are already at the feeders in June.

As the hours of daylight have increased, so do the numbers of birds at our feeders, and they provide regular summer evening entertainment. A glass of wine, a pair of good binoculars and comfy seat in the screened porch, life is good! Nothing quite compares to watching a young bird, fully the size of the parent but a lot goofier looking, make one of its first visits to your feeder. You will recognize it by the random puffs of downy feathers and

on-going begging behavior. Watch for young cardinals. They look just like a female but have a black beak, setting them apart from mom and dad and their striking orange beak.

The birds of summer enliven our yards, and their energy encourages us to enjoy our extra daylight hours. We may even find ourselves joining them outside for dinner!

Where did my Goldfinch Go?

All spring the goldfinch pack feeders filled with sunflower and sunflower hearts. Especially the mesh feeders where as many as a dozen can feast there together! It's a visual delight. What a success we are that we can accommodate that much color in our yards. Then.... come mid- summer and folks are calling the store asking "what happened to my goldfinch?" Was it a hawk? No. Is something wrong with my seed? No. Do they no longer like the feeder I bought just for them? No. The answer is easy. Goldfinch are one of our year-round residents who waits until wildflowers like native thistle, go to seed. Then they move out to wild areas, away from our backyards, to nest. We will see them at summer's end. Some will no longer have their bright mating plumage but you'll know them and they'll remember you because the feeder is fresh and full and dependable.



Protect your birdbath from Mosquitos!

Mosquitos cannot lay their eggs in moving water.

A "Water Wiggler" seems just too easy but it works and the motion is an instant bird attractor.

Two tiny feet whirling about moving the water in a circular motion. Two batteries keep it going all season long. Also comes in a solar version.

A second solution is a Mosquito Dunk, which looks like a small donut. Float a tiny piece of the donut in the bath and it safely eliminates mosquito larvae.



Words to Live By

Life is short.
Forgive quickly.
Love truly.
Laugh often.
Listen fully.
Be courageous.
Be true.
Be sincere.
Be you.



The Cornell Lab
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Having trouble identifying that bird?

I highly recommend downloading to your phone or computer, the Merlin Bird ID. It's an interactive tool from Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Merlin can help you identify over 6,000 bird species including photos, bird calls and range maps. You don't need to be "techy". It's very easy to use and now you can even use your phone to identify a bird call in your own yard or out birding around the country.

Go to your App store and download Merlin Bird ID, or connect with the App on our website at:

Backyardnaturecenter.com

**BACKYARD
nature center**

For people who feed and care for backyard birds
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STORE HOURS

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

PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT:
WWW.BACKYARDNATURECENTER.COM



from left to right
Tammy, Trudy, Cathy & Nick

Celebrate Dad on His Day Sunday, June 19



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