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**March Is:  
 5th Anniversary  
 Celebration Month**

It is hard to believe that March 1st is our 5 year anniversary as owners of this wonderful business. Melanie and I have enjoyed every minute of it and we are so thankful to have John, Ruth and Mike working for with us.

Over that past five years we have watched our business grow and made many, many wonderful friends. To celebrate, we would like our loyal customers to take advantage of whichever special best suits your needs.

**Your Choice:**

**\$5 Off our Best Selling Bluebird House MB3B**

or

**\$5 Off a Purple Martin Decoy or Dawn Song CD**

or

**\$5 Off a 20lb of Wild Delight Nut & Berry®**

*(limit 1 coupon per customer during the month of March 07 only)*

**The Amazing "Wild Canary"**

by Mark McKellar

Few birds are as popular with people as the American Goldfinch (*Carduelis tristis*). For a bird that is so well known by bird watchers, surprisingly few know that these birds live a double life.

It continuously surprises customers to find that goldfinches are year round residents to our area. The feeding and breeding needs of these birds make them "nomadic" in nature. When you combine that with two drastic appearance changes, you get a species that easily fools folks.

During the fall and winter months, the mild mannered goldfinch go about their lives in a dull olive grey dress with muted black and white wings. They naturally feed on small seeds of grasses, sunflowers and various other plants, commonly found along weedy field edges and overgrown pastures. At bird feeders they are most famous for eating sunflowers and nyjer seed. While many



*Male American Goldfinch in breeding plumage*  
 Photo courtesy of Pat White  
 Nikon P1 Digiscoping Outfit



*Female American Goldfinch in winter plumage.*  
 Photo courtesy of Rick Jordahl  
 Nikon P1 Digiscoping Outfit

still know this seed as thistle, it is not even related to the plant that most dread to see growing

in their yards. While nyjer does look like thistle seed it will not germinate.

During the spring, the male goldfinches begin to show patches of bright yellow feathers about their body and a distinct black forehead begins to emerge. By late spring, the males have completed a molt that would make the folks at Extreme Makeover jealous. Luckily for us, this is the time of year that goldfinches are generally

most active at feeders. The winter supply of fall's bounty is all used up and spring hasn't been around long enough for plants to produce a new batch.

While other birds are pairing up and territories are limiting the number of certain species at your feeders in the spring, goldfinches remain in flocks into the early summer. Goldfinches wait to nest until mid-summer when their favorite food and nesting materials are available. The soft downy parts of the native thistle seeds make a perfect nest lining and the seeds themselves are a preferred food.

The source of the greatest confusion in the lives of these "double agents" comes in the late summer/early fall when these once common feeder birds disappear from your feeders. It is natural to think that they have migrated and they have in a sense. They dis-

*...continued on page 2, Finches*



## New Arrivals From Birdwatch America

by Mark McKellar

Each January I make a trip to Atlanta for the Birdwatch America trade show. It is my one chance a year to really see the major folks who make and market most everything that I carry in my store. Birdwatch also gives me a chance to meet and exchange ideas with owners of businesses like mine from all over the country.

I felt this was a good year at the show. Like every year I went to this show looking for new innovations in feeders and houses. But this year I also went looking to vastly improve our gift and “garden” section of the store.

While some of the new things have come in already, much of it will arrive over the next month or so. I am really excited about some of the new garden & gift items. Here are some of my favorites.



Some of the exciting new products on the way (clockwise): Brass Garden Lizard from Haw Creek Forge, Red-tailed Hawk pin from Bamboo Jewelry, Bluebird socks from Wheelhouse Designs, Birdhouse Tabletop Raingauge by T.M.Hoff, Open-winged Hummingbird hand-carved statue from Birdhug Studios, Emperor's Gong windchime from Woodstock Chimes, the Natural Bird Guardian from Bird Guardian.

...continued from cover, Finches

perse this time of year to take advantage of natural seed sources which are at their peak. To make matters even more confusing, the males are going through their second complete molt of the year at this time. When they return to feeders in the early winter, the males look completely different. You can't blame them. A bright yellow bird in a bleak winter landscape is an easy target for a predator.

No matter if they are bright yellow or drab olive, the American Goldfinch is a terrific little bird. The next time you hear its distinctive “po-ta-toe-chip” flight call from overhead, just think of it as nature’s double agent.

## Bird Islands

by Mark McKellar

We know that habitat loss is the single greatest threat to bird populations. There have been lots of studies involving habitat fragmentation and its effect on breeding bird populations and all of them show that for many species large patches of good quality habitat are far more beneficial to birds. Does this mean we should just give up on all small patches of habitat?

In Urban settings, small patches of quality habitat are generally found only in parks and waterways that have been spared from development. How important are they? Do birds use these areas in migration? How about for nesting? Most of you know Ruth is working on her Masters Degree in Biology but few know the details of her study. Ruth is studying bird utilization of remaining quality patches of habitat along the Blue River Parkway.

With one full year of research information under her belt, Ruth is about to start work on year two of data collection. Each April, May and June, Ruth records all birds she sees and hears during six 10 minute count periods along preset routes.

During year one she recorded 109 species in the study area including several birds that birders long to see each year. Mourning & Prothonotary Warbler, Scarlet & Summer Tanagers, Yellow-crowned Night-Herons and Broad-winged Hawks have all made appearances.



Cerulean Warbler Photo by Steve Dillinger

What will show up this spring? Would you like to be part of the fun? Come to Ruth's class on Wednesday March 21<sup>st</sup> (see the page 3) to learn more about the study and gather information on how you can lend a hand.



## Have Binos, Will Travel!

The fall birding season was a mixed bag. There were surprising few flocks of Cedar Waxwings but other fall migrants did show. We had a handful of Common Loons and a Bald Eagle on our Smithville Lake Trip but it was the close flyby of an Osprey that gave us the biggest thrill. On our annual trip to Squaw Creek we counted only about 25 Bald Eagles but the refuge was loaded with ducks and geese of many species. I have to assume that the mild weather patterns were the major contributing factors to the low number of eagles.



**The hikes and programs listed below are available to our store customers**  
(not organized groups, they can be arranged separately)

**and fill on a first come first serve basis.**

**PLEASE call the store for more information and to register (816) 746-1113**

### So You Want To Attract Bluebirds (in store class)

**Wednesday, March 7<sup>th</sup> 7:00p.m. to 8:30p.m.**

Bluebirds hold a special place in many people's hearts, especially Missourians. Surprisingly few people see bluebirds on a regular basis in our area. I would like to help with that situation. Join us as we learn about these beautiful birds and a few tricks that may greatly increase your chances of attracting these birds to your yard.

### Timberdoodles and Hooters

**Friday, March 9<sup>th</sup> 6:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.**

If you have never experienced the mating "flight" of the American Woodcock, this outing is for you. We will visit an excellent location very close to the store and take a peek into the "Secret Lives of Woodcocks". Don't worry this hike is rated "G" for all ages. Before heading home we will try calling in a couple of owls.

### Setting Up A Feeder Station (Martha Lafite Class)

**Saturday, March 10<sup>th</sup> 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon**

This class will be held at the Martha Lafite Thompson Nature Sanctuary in Liberty. We will learn the ins and outs of setting up a successful bird feeding station. This will include choosing feeders, seed, water features and perhaps most critical, placement. **(Fee Applies)**

**Please Call MLTNS at 781-8598 for Reservations**

### K.C. Bird Islands (in store class)

**Wednesday, March 21<sup>st</sup>**

**7:00p.m. to 8:30p.m.**

Did you read the accompanying article on Page 2? Come to this class and learn more details about Ruth's study of birds along the Blue River Parkway. How does this information translate to other parts of our city? How about you own backyard?



*Louisiana Waterthrushes*  
Photo by Linda Williams.

### Parkville Nature Sanctuary's Early Spring Birds

**Thursday, April 12<sup>th</sup> 9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.**

This is the time of year you really want to be out. Spring migration should be going well by now. Meet us at the store at 9:00am or at the Sanctuary parking lot at 9:15.

### Little Bean Marsh Conservation Area

**Sunday, April 22<sup>th</sup> 8:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.**

We will head north a little ways for a morning of waterbirds and more. Depending on the amount of rain we get this spring, we could find lots of shorebirds and more. If conditions are dry, we will concentrate on the woodland areas for spring migrants

**Meet at the store at 8:00 a.m.**



*Green Heron*

Photo by Paul Ruehle

### Dunn Ranch Birding Tour

**Sunday, April 29<sup>th</sup> 6:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.**

This is a special place that you just have to see to truly appreciate. Limited to 10 people, we will rent a van for the day so that we can all enjoy the prairie together. This should be wonderful timing to witness this 3,000+ acre prairie coming to life after a cold hard winter. Birds and wildflowers alike should be truly entertaining.

**Transportation (van & fuel) and box lunch - \$30 each**

## ITS ALL ABOUT THE OPTICS

**Good - Nikon Action**

**8X40 - \$89.99**

**Better - Nikon Monarch**

**8X42 - \$309.99**

**Best - Nikon Premier LX**

**8X42 - \$1299.99**



**Nikon Premier**  
**LX 8X42**



## SPECIES PROFILE: Hooded Mergansers

by Rick Jordahl

Whenever we spot ducks with white plumage visible, we naturally wish to take a closer look. Winter ducks make for great sightings, especially those that stand out from the crowd, such as the Hooded Merganser (*Lophodytes cucullatus*).

This small, active diver is often seen on winter outings, and is a favorite for many of us. They feed by diving and catching small fish, tadpoles, crustaceans and insects in active underwater pursuits. Merganser's bills are unique in that they have serrated edges for holding onto slippery fish.

Both male and female sport distinct crests on the back of their heads. At times of excitement or agitation the males exhibit their full, fan-shaped white crest, bordered in black, so memorable each time it is seen. Females are duller with a bushy brown crest.



Male & Female Hooded Mergansers.  
Photo Courtesy of Rick Jordahl

Hoodies are one of our few cavity nesting ducks, thus their breeding habitat includes small wooded ponds and swamps in northern U.S and southern Canada.

The 'hoodie's' bright yellow eye, distinct hood, and slender pointed bill are unmistakable field marks. And when startled, the Hooded Merganser

is one of our fastest flying ducks. Often seen in pairs or small groups of up to a dozen, they are commonly seen with other species such as Common Goldeneyes.

Even while resting they retain an alert posture, ready for a feeding opportunity or any new challenge. Watch for winter Hooded Mergansers in small wooded ponds, rivers or estuaries. Once identified, you will never mistake a Hooded Merganser and they will likely become one of your favorites.

## CONSERVATION CORNER:

### *Reduce, Reuse and Recycle*

When we bought this business 5 years ago, the first line I brought in was the Rubicon feeders made from recycled milk jugs. Like so many of you I care deeply about our environment and love to see items made from recycled materials. It does my heart good to know the 100+ milk jugs a year that I take to recycling are being used again.

Today we have several companies that are making feeders and houses from recycled plastics. They are easy to clean and are guaranteed for life against cracking, fading, squirrel damage, etc.

We are going to jump further into the "recycle" market. Everyone loves our handle bags and we are now going to make it worth your while to reuse them. We will give you 10 cents off your order for every handle bag you bring back in for reuse.

### Don't Forget Your Conservation Discount

We give 10% discounts to those who show proof of current membership in the following conservation groups:

- The Nature Conservancy* ([www.nature.org](http://www.nature.org))
- National Audubon Society* ([www.audubon.org](http://www.audubon.org))  
(including state and/or local chapters)
- American Bird Conservancy* ([www.abcbirds.org](http://www.abcbirds.org))
- Martha Lafite Thompson Nature Sanctuary*  
([www.naturesanctuary.com](http://www.naturesanctuary.com))

Discount applies to regular price and clearance merchandise but can not be combined with other specials or coupons.

## BUILT FOR A LIFETIME OF FEEDING Recycled Materials



### Lots of Choices

- Birdschoice Large Covered Hopper* - \$129.99
- Birdschoice Oriole Feeder* - \$39.99
- Stonewood Mfg. Mini Magnet* - \$79.99  
(one of our best sellers)



## Time To Ask Mark...

**Q. Ever since the cold weather settled in, the starlings are driving me crazy. What can I do?**

**A.** Starlings really settle in when the weather gets harsh then tend to move out when it gets mild again. The combination I have found successful is nyjer seed for my finches, safflower in my feeders that starlings can get to and cage feeders for my sunflower based products. As for their favorite food, suet, I've found that the upside down suet feeders really slow them down.

**Q. I had a raccoon get into my bluebird house last year. What can I do to protect them?**

**A.** I have always said the nature doesn't provide predator guards for birds, but it is also true that we may artificially attract more predators to nest with our human scent. Either you can provide protection with the pole or the house itself. If you have you box mounted on a pole, an ERVA SB4 Raccoon Baffle is the absolutely best option. If you have your box attached to a tree or building, the best option is to place an extension guard on the hole. We have them made of wire and a new one made of molded plastic to look like a broken limb. It looks great and won Best New Product of the Year at this year's Birdwatch America Tradeshow.



**Q. When do I stop feeding suet?**

**A.** There really isn't any reason to stop feeding suet. We have two basic formulas which come in many different flavors. During winter, most customers feed the "Treat" formulas that are higher in fat. Around mid-April it is time to switch to the "Delight" formulas that are lower in fat thus they have a much higher melting point.

**Q. Is it too late to put out a heated bird bath?**

**A.** Absolutely not. Water is the most critical of resources for our birds. This January and February have been proof of that. We have had record numbers of people reporting bluebirds at their bird baths this winter and it may very well have made the difference in the survival rate of these birds this year.

**Q. When will the Birding Software you sell be available for my Apple?**

**A.** Good news for the Mac people out there. Thayers birding software is finally releasing a Mac version of their mega popular program. We should have it here in March. Give us a call and we will reserve you a copy!



## TWO GREAT SPECIALS FOR NEWSLETTER FAITHFULS

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## LOTS OF NEW TILLEYS



It is no secret that we all love our Tilley hats. They have a UPF rating of 50 (the highest rating given) and are the only hat endorsed by the Mayo Clinic for skin cancer prevention. They are guaranteed for LIFE not to wear out, washable, water resistant and have a 2 Year Loss/Stolen 50% replacement warranty. In March we will be adding new styles and new colors to our selection.

*The TM10 & TM11 have full mesh sides yet maintain their UPF50 rating.*

*The TH8 is a great looking hard-working Beach/Resort style hat with all of the Tilley features and guarantees.*



## LOVE YOUR BLUEBIRDS, BUT . . .



Just can't bring yourself to keep live mealworms in your refrigerator? You're in luck. We now have dried mealworms from Unipeck. You can offer bluebirds, wrens, chickadees and others the insects they love without the added mess. Feed them by themselves or mix them with live worms, a bag of your favorite seed or peanut butter and cornmeal, the birds will love them.

*Unipeck Dried Mealworms  
Pack of 2800 for \$9.99*



*Female Eastern Bluebird  
Photo courtesy of Pat White*



*Get more enjoyment than ever from your nesting birds. Add a Birdhouse Spy Cam and watch the entire nesting cycle on your TV or computer. Night Owl Camera and 100ft of cable is only \$79.99*

## UPCOMING IMPORTANT BIRD DATES

- February 21st or so - Clean Out & Place Bluebird Boxes
- March 1st - Open 1 Martin House Door
- March 10th - Average Arrival Date For Adult Male Martins (females and young males will filter in through April)
- April 1st - Clean out all nest boxes (wrens, chickadees, titmouse)
- April 5th - Hang Hummingbird Feeders (with small amount of nectar)
- April 15th - Place Oriole Feeders
- Late April - Male House Wrens arrive and set up territories