



FALL

2009

# BACKYARD BIRD CENTER NEWS

THE NORTHLAND'S LARGEST SELECTION OF FEEDERS, SEED MIXES & BINOCULARS

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**Do you Facebook? Tweet? The Backyard Bird Center is now on Facebook and Twitter. You can become a "fan" and follow along with what folks are seeing in their backyards quickly.**



facebook

twitter

**Don't forget that receiving our monthly e-mails and quarterly newsletter online helps conserve paper, ink and other natural resources. You also get updates on sales and programs much quicker. Join today by visiting [www.backyardbirdcenter.com](http://www.backyardbirdcenter.com). The sign up is on the front page and is easy.**

**Extended Holiday Hours  
 December 1st - 24th  
 Mon - Fri 9:30 - 6:00  
 \*\*Thursdays 9:30 - 7:00  
 Saturdays 9:00 - 5:00  
 \*\*Sundays 1:00 - 5:00**

**December 24th close at 5:00  
 Closed 25th**

## We Really Do Appreciate You!

by Mark McKellar

Melanie and I are extremely lucky. As small business owners, it is getting harder and harder to survive. If it were not for you, our loyal customer base, we surely could not keep our doors open. That is why this year we wanted to do something even more special for our Customer Appreciation Day.

For the people who drive extra distances to get here (passing competitors on the way). And for the people who remember that it saves us money when you pay with cash or check instead of a credit card. And for those who choose not to take their conservation discounts (even though they belong to the groups we support) because they know it is tough enough for the small business owners to stay in business . . . We invite you to come meet some very special guests on Sunday December 6th.

For the 7th year in a row, everything in the store (except 40lb and larger bags of bird seed) will be 15% OFF. Sorry we can't combine with other offers or coupons those days). We will also have the great refreshments, door prizes and drawings for fabulous gifts. The extra added treat will be for those who can come in after 4:00 pm. on Sunday the 5th. Swoop the Eurasian Eagle Owl and Talon the baby Spectacled Owl will be in the store for your enjoyment. These magnificent birds are part of the Wings Of Love bird show. You can visit Yvonne's website [www.wings-of-love.com](http://www.wings-of-love.com) for more information about these and all of her great birds.

**Customer Appreciation Days  
 Sunday & Monday  
 December 6th & 7th  
 Sunday 1 to 6 pm  
 Monday 9:30 to 6 pm**



Red-bellied Woodpecker  
 photo by Fiske Miles

### Bird Seed Prices Drop Just In Time For Feeding Season!

50# Black Oil Sunflower	was \$18.99 . . . now \$15.99
50# Safflower	was \$42.99 . . . now \$33.99
50# Fine Sunflower Chips	was \$49.99 . . . now \$39.99
50# Sunflower Hearts	was \$59.99 . . . now \$52.99
50# Nyjer (thistle)	was \$67.99 . . . now \$49.99
50# Black Tie (finch mix)	was \$59.99 . . . now \$47.99
40# Boardwalk Blend	was \$29.99 . . . now \$23.99



## New "House" Pet Area Opens

After years of requests, we have finally brought in a few "house" pet items for sale. It started with a search for high quality dog food for our own animals and has led to a section of the store dedicated to our furry friends.



Miss Miley's Photo by Morgan McKellar

Earthborn Holistics dog food is a high end dog food that has



really impressed everyone who has tried it.

Our dogs as well as dogs of the first few customers that have reported back in, all say their dogs chose it soundly over their old food. Check

their website: [www.earthbornholisticpetfood.com](http://www.earthbornholisticpetfood.com) for details on all of their ingredients and formulas.

Does your pet spend time outside in the winter months? We now carry the heated dog bowl we've used for the past three winters. It never freezes over.



Dogs and cats need toys to occupy their time. We did some research on pet toys and now carry a few items that came with really high recommendations. Our two dogs are having loads of fun with the Hide-a-Squirrel.



We love our pets and we want them to be healthy and happy. Don't forget them this holiday season.

## TRY IT FOR FREE



*(Mention this ad for 1 free 1 lb sample bag - Expires 12/31/09)*

Because we are sure that your dogs will love this dog food and will be healthier for eating it, we want you to have a 1 lb sample bag on us. Choose from any of the 5 formulas and don't forget that each bag has a \$3 Off coupon on the back toward your next Earthborn purchase (6lb size and larger)

## THE OLD FARMER'S ALMANAC

*So you've lost faith in weather forecasters all together!*

We have the almanac and planting calendars in stock. They make great holiday gifts



## Winter Finch Montage

Last winter was the best winter finch invasion year we have seen in a long time. Can it happen again? Fill your feeders with finch favorites like Nyjer, Fine Chips, Black Tie, Sunflower and Safflower and keep your eyes open.

How are you at name that bird? While much easier if you go online where the pictures are in color, you should be able to find the following birds (this will be much easier if you view this online at [www.backyardbirdcenter.com](http://www.backyardbirdcenter.com)):



- Male Purple Finch
- Male House Finch
- Female House Finch
- American Goldfinch
- Pine Siskin
- Common Redpoll
- (M) White-winged Crossbill
- (F) Red Crossbill



Photos by:  
Lisa Owen  
Ruth Simmons  
Fiske Miles  
Mark McKellar  
Judy Farris

*Complete answers are posted online and at the store!*



## Have Binos, Will Travel!

The fall birding season is always interesting. It begins in August when shorebirds (generally birds who were unable to find a mate) start moving south. Warblers and other songbirds really pick up in September and hawks filter in with their numbers peaking in December. Most of our true fall birding is concentrated around area lakes. Kansas City is well positioned for waterfowl migration. The numbers of gulls can be impressive as well as the number of different species. Ducks, grebes and loons filter in with each cold front and Ospreys and eagles can be seen with relative ease this time of year.

❖ **The hikes and programs listed below fill on a first come first serve basis.** ❖  
**PLEASE call the store to register (816) 746-1113**



*The white leading wing edges ID this as a Bonaparte's Gull  
 Photo by Annette Talbot*

### Identifying Birds In Your Backyard (in store class)

**Thursday, January 14th 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.**

The winter edition of this popular class. We will cover basic backyard birds of winter but concentrate on the tricky ID challenges like House Finch vs Purple Finch, Downy vs Hairy Woodpecker, Cooper's vs Sharp-shinned Hawk. Join us for an evening of Backyard Bird ID and we will solve some of the most common frustrations that new birders struggle with.

### Birds of San Diego County (in store class)

**Thursday, January 28th 7:00 p.m. to 8:30p.m.**

Have you thought about birding in Southern California? Do you know what county has the highest species count in the United States? If you are curious about these two questions, you may want to attend this class. "The guys" and I took a trip to San Diego a while back and garnered a pretty impressive bird list. If there is enough interest, we may be planning a trip for the store.

### Mid-Winter Birds of NW Missouri

**Sunday, February 7th 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.**

Last winter, Lewis & Clark State Park was loaded with Snow Geese and Bald Eagles. We will search area hotspots for hawks, eagles, Snow Buntings, Lapland Longspurs, Short-eared Owls and any other goodies. Dress warmly and you may want to bring a thermos of something hot.



*"Blue Goose" form of the Snow Goose at Lewis & Clark State Park Photo by Mary Nemecek*

**Meet at the store at 1:00 p.m.**

### Creature Comforters (in store class)

**Thursday, February 25th 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.**

To get prepared for the nesting season, we will be talking about Purple Martins, bluebirds and other species that can be attracted to your yard via a nest box. Come with questions and experiences to share with others who take on the role as bird landlords each year.



*House Wren  
 photo by Mary Nemecek*

### Birding Across State Lines

**Sunday, March 14th 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.**

Birds do not recognize political boundaries and neither should birders. We will spend the afternoon exploring a couple of Kansas lakes that have been known to turn up really good birds in the past. We will start at Wyandotte County Lake then head down to Shawnee Mission Park Lake in search of the elusive "Jayhawk".

**Meet at the store at 1:00 p.m.**

## NIKON'S FIRST TRUE GREEN BINOCULARS

[www.nikonecobins.com](http://www.nikonecobins.com)



Now  
 \$169.99



Have you been looking for a good pair of compact binoculars? The new 10X25 ecobins from Nikon are terrific little glasses made with the highest level of earth friendliness in mind. Even the case is 100% Recycled fibers.



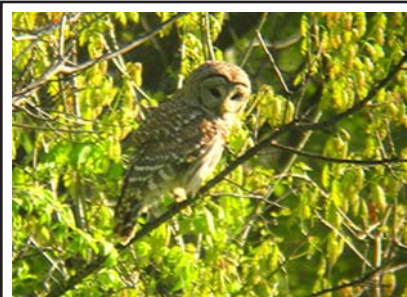
*With Nikon's SLR Adapter you can convert your Nikon Spotting Scope into one massive camera lens! Call for more info.*



## SPECIES PROFILE: Barred Owl

By Mark McKellar

“Could I have a hyena in my backyard at night?” That is a question that I have had to answer more than once in my career. The answer is, of course, not likely but I bet I know what is making that strange sound. The Barred Owl (*Strix varia*) is perhaps our most common owl and can make a variety of calls. It has adapted quite well to urban settings, especially areas with a creek or constant water source.



Barred Owl at Weston Bend State Park  
Photo by Rick Jordahl

Most famously known for its classic call of “Who Cooks For You, Who Cooks For You Aaaalllll”, Barreds will do many variations of this depending on the situation. The hyena or monkey sounding call that people often describe is most often given when adult birds get close to the edge of another adults territory. As with most wild animals, this not permitted by the owls and they will get into a vocal dispute before physical aggression is taken.

Barred Owls are medium sized owls that are named

for the barring pattern on their chest. They are the only owl in our area with dark eyes and no “ear” tufts. They are most likely to be found in wet areas, especially along rivers and streams. They are the kings of the nighttime world in the swamps across the southern states.

Like all owls they prey on small mammals and snakes but their taste for fish and crayfish is quite unique. I had a call a few years ago from a man who had

a Barred Owl eating his Koi at night.

Barred Owls are cavity nesting birds thus they can be attracted to a nesting structure. I have most often found their nests in trees where a large limb has broken off to form a deep crevasse.

For an animal that is nocturnal, I have found them many times during daylight hours. When out hiking in a riparian areas keep an eye out for their unique silhouette perched quietly up in a tree.

## CONSERVATION CORNER:



Having not grown up here, I can remember the first time I saw a Tallgrass Prairie in its full glory. I honestly remember saying “Wow, so that is what a real prairie looks like!” If you haven’t seen a real prairie it isn’t surprising as this one of most endangered ecosystems in our great country. According to MPF, of the more than 15 million acres of tallgrass prairie that once covered Missouri, fewer than 90,000 acres remain.

If it bothers you to think that “the” ecosystem that is unique to this part of the planet is disappearing, you should consider supporting the Missouri Prairie Foundation. MPF has been a key volunteer driven, private group advocating the conservation and management of remaining tracts of original prairie in our state. They have purchased and manage 14 properties of their own as well as assist with prairies owned by state and other private conservation organizations.

For a whole lot of information on this great group, visit their website [www.moprairie.org](http://www.moprairie.org) or you can call them at 1-888-843-6739. Memberships are as little as \$35 and that includes a wonderful magazine (journal) four times per year. They also have regular work-days for those who want to get involved on a hands on level.

## SUET SEASON IS HERE

*Cold weather brings woodpeckers, chickadees, nuthatches and others to suet feeders.*



*Seed Treat Suet Cakes from C & S are now*

**99¢**

*Hot Pepper Suet Cakes are a quick fix for squirrels and raccoons who develop a taste for suet. Birds are not affected.*



*Pure Suet cakes eliminate fillers that take up space for the beef fat that birds are really after.*

*Upside down suet feeders discourage European Starlings.*





## Time To Ask Mark...

### Q. What kind of affect do you think this cool, wet summer will have on the birds?

A. This could take a whole page, but in short I think most birds fared very well this summer. I know most of my bluebird people reported 4 successful nestings where they generally are lucky to raise many young ones in the third attempt. Much like last year, there is a bountiful supply of berries and acorns this year and that also bodes well for many birds this winter. On the negative side, I always worry about ground nesting birds like quail and prairie chickens. It is tough for the little ones to survive when it is so wet.



*White-breasted Nuthatch  
Photo by Mary Nemecek*

### Q. Can I use an extension cord with my bird bath de-icer?

A. Yes. I have been using an extension cord (generally a 50 ft. one) with my de-icers for 15 years and have never had a problem with them. I do have to get a little creative with my lawn chair placement to keep my chew happy Black Lab from getting to it. The most important safety precaution is to make sure it is plugged into a groundfault outlet.

### Q. Will my birds freeze to something metal if they bathe in the winter?

A. In the 25 years of working with birds on a professional and personal level, I have never seen or even read any documentation of a bird becoming stuck to any surface because of water on its feet freezing. If you look at a bird's feet closely, you will notice they are covered in scales which shed water very rapidly. Birds must bathe, even in winter, to maintain healthy feathers.

### Q. My dad is convinced the cheap bag of bird seed he gets at the grocery store is perfectly fine for his birds. He is on a limited budget, what can I tell him?

A. Plain and simple, it really is expectations. The "cheap" birdseed blends are filled with fillers like milo, cracked corn, wheat, sticks, stems, rocks and who knows what else. If he is OK with feeding hordes of House Sparrows, grackle and Mourning Doves then the cheap mixes are probably fine. If he wants to attract cardinals, chickadees, flickers and other beautiful birds then he will do far better with quality seed. A 50lb bag of Black Oil Sunflower (the favorite seed of more birds than any other) is \$15.99. I can't imagine a bag of the "cheep" seed costing much less. If he does want to feed the sparrows and doves, he is better just buying a bag of White Proso Millet (\$13.99 for 50 lb) and spreading in on the ground and leaving the feeders for the sunflower and better birds. The proof is in the results. Give this a try and see what happens.



*Northern Cardinals love  
sunflower and safflower seeds.  
Photo by Pat White*

## PRETTY AND PRACTICALS



*Beautiful Pewter  
Ornaments from  
Amos Pewter*



*Nature-themed  
Jewelry from Fine  
Enamels*



*Everyone (including  
Teachers) wear socks,  
and these are very  
"cool" socks.*



*Windchimes,  
windchimes,  
windchimes.*



*Unique, beautiful  
and environmentally  
friendly, Zulugrass  
jewelry is hand-  
crafted by the  
Maasai people of  
Africa.*



## \$5 OFF a 35lb Bag of Cardinal Food®

Wild Delight's Cardinal Food® is a high quality blend of sunflower, safflower, peanuts, raisins and cherries. There are no filler seeds and Wild Delight triple cleans and vitamin enhances their seed.



*Save paper, just mention this ad for your  
\$5 OFF. Expires 12/31/09*

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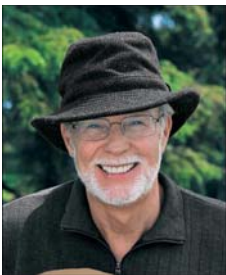
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## A GREAT WAY TO PROTECT THE SCOUT IN YOUR LIFE

Do you have someone in your family that is involved with Boy Scouts? If you do, they probably spend a whole lot of time out in the sun. This summer, my son and I wore our Tilley hats to Bear Cub Day Camp at Camp Naish and boy was I glad we did. With intense sun and temperatures pushing 100, I got asked by lots of dads where we got our hats. It doesn't hurt that the Olive LTM6 Tilley hat (pictured) matches the Boy Scout uniform perfectly.



*How many uses can you think of for the Outhouse Birdhouse?.*



Winter Tilley hats are nearly as popular as their classic Tilleys. With fold down ear flaps and forehead warmers, they are a far more stylish way to keep your head warm than a stocking cap. They too have the lifetime warranty and the endorsement for skin cancer protection from the Mayo Clinic. We also have the new color Herringbone Brown in stock.

## PROJECT FEEDER WATCH



*Project FeederWatch helped scientists document last winter's invasion of Pine Siskins in our area.  
Photo by Jeff Janney*

Join us for the 23<sup>rd</sup> season of Project FeederWatch. Last year 115,000 Checklists from Citizen Scientists across the U.S. and Canada were submitted to Cornell. It's not too late to get involved. Counts go from November through April. If you only want to count once a month or you can't feed birds at your house, consider volunteering at the Martha Lafite Thompson Nature Sanctuary in Liberty (816-781-8598). For more information on Project FeederWatch visit [www.birds.cornell.edu/pfw](http://www.birds.cornell.edu/pfw) or call 800-843-BIRD (2473). There is a \$15.00 fee to pay for materials.