

Wild Bird Habitat Store

April Newsletter - 2019

South Lincoln

In the Alamo Plaza
56th & Hwy 2
Lincoln, NE 68516
(402) 420-2553

North Lincoln

4900 Dudley St
2 BLKS S of Holdrege on N 48th
Lincoln, NE 68504
(402) 464-4055

Omaha

Harrison Village Mall
168th & Harrison
Omaha, NE 68136
(402) 504-4450



wildbirdhabitatstore.com

Nebraska Migratory Bird Month

To celebrate birds in Nebraska in May for International Migratory Bird Day we are organizing Nebraska International Migratory Bird Month (IMBM) during May. If you, your organization, or group have plans, or are planning for any type of birding activity or event in May, we want to know. It can be large or small. As simple as a bird walk, children's birding activity, program or presentation. Contact Lindsay Rogers, lindsay.rogers@nebraska.gov, Wildlife Education Specialist at Nebraska Game and Parks for more information and or to add your birding event to the IMBM website "EVENTS" page.



Visit the Nebraska's IMBM website at nebraskabirdmonth.org. Find out more about IMBM in Nebraska. Check for events in your area. Celebrate birds this May during **Nebraska International Migratory Bird Month**.

ITS SPRING BIRD MIGRATION
Take a walk through a city park, nature center, or wildlife management area. Take along a pair of binoculars and field guide. Enjoy the beautiful birds returning for the summer or moving through to northern nesting grounds. Be careful. Watching birds can be addictive.

FEEDING GOLDFINCH

It's exciting to watch the male goldfinch coming to our Nyjer thistle feeders change from their basic olive drab plumage to their bright canary yellow breeding plumage this time of year. But there is an annual cycle attracting goldfinch to feeders. At one point your feeders are overwhelmed with goldfinch and by early summer the numbers decline. Why is that? Find out what you need to know about attracting goldfinch on page 8.



Baltimore Oriole



There is no doubt one of the birds that attract much attention of many backyard bird lovers is the Baltimore Oriole. This is undoubtedly due to its colorful plumage, enchanting call, and a size which makes spotting this particular bird relatively easy. The male sings a loud flute like whistle that often gives away the bird's location before any sighting can be made.

The Baltimore Oriole received its name from the fact that the male's colors resemble those on the coat-of-arms of Lord Baltimore, an important figure in Maryland's history. The Major League Baseball team, Baltimore Orioles, were named after this bird and it continues to be their mascot. It is also the state bird of Maryland.

Adults Orioles have a pointed bill and white bars on the wings. The male is a beautiful, bright orange on the underparts, shoulder patch and rump, with a distinctive black hood, back, and wings. As with other blackbirds, the female Oriole has a different appearance than the male. The adult female is yellow-brown on the upper parts with darker wings, and dull orange on the breast and belly. These birds are 7 inches long with a wingspan of close to 12 inches and weigh a mere 1 ½ ounces.

Orioles are birds of woodland edges and open woods. They have adapted well to urban parks and suburban landscapes. They can be found in open urban areas with scattered mature trees. The nest is often built in an elm, sycamore, or cottonwood tree.

This Neo-Tropical migrant spends the winter months from Mexico and Central America to northern South America. Here they inhabit lush, tropical forests and feed on nectar, pollen, fruit, and insects. They especially favor coffee and cacao (the plant that chocolate comes from) plantations where these crops are grown in the traditional manner, the coffee and cacao shrubs flourishing under a shady canopy of natural forest trees. While in the tropics pairs of males and females form flocks of about ten individuals, although sometimes as many as 30 or 40 are in a single flock.

They return to their breeding grounds in North America in the spring where they spend most of the summer. They range from Nova Scotia west to British Columbia, south to southern California and Mexico, then east to North Carolina. Their arrival date in the spring varies, but in the Midwest and Central Great Plains we can expect to begin seeing them around the 25th of April. Then by August and September they begin their trip back to the tropics. These birds migrate in flocks to southern Mexico, Central America and northern South America. Peak migrations in Nebraska occur from April 25 to May 15 in spring and during August 15 to September 20 in late summer. Nebraska's Breeding Bird Survey indicates that the oriole breeding population in Nebraska was expanding.

The male Baltimore Oriole gives six or seven loud whistles in announcing his territory and a loud, harsh chatter as an alarm call. Orioles are monogamous. In courtship they droop their wings and tails, then fan them while bowing their heads and whistling, finishing by fluttering in the air. It is then that the female Baltimore Oriole selects the site where she will construct the nest. This is usually on a tree branch that hangs over a clearing, often a street or county road. It takes her five to six days to weave a hanging, gourd-shaped nest about 5 inches long. Its outer shell is tightly woven of fibers stripped from weed stalks and inner bark of trees. Synthetic fibers may also be used. When providing nesting materials for these birds, such as string, thread, or yarn, make sure the pieces are cut in 6" to 8" lengths to prevent them from becoming entangled. After the outside of the nest has been finished the female will then enter the interior and bounce in the nest, using her breast to give it shape. As a final touch, the bottom is lined with plant down, grasses, or hair. The shape of the nest may help deter predators from eating the eggs or young because the eggs and young are hidden from view and the entrance to the nest is difficult to access.



Once the nest is finished, the female Oriole will lay 4 to 5 pale grayish-white eggs that are streaked and blotched with dark lines. When the clutch is complete, incubation begins. In 12 to 14 days the eggs will hatch. The new chicks remain in the nest for another 12 to 14 days before they are strong enough to fledge. Orioles have one brood each season, but will re-nest if the first is destroyed. Although the female constructs the nest and incubates the eggs, the male assumes the duties of feeding the young along with the female. They feed insects to their young, at first by regurgitation, then transferring whole insects to them.

Wingtips: Orioles are categorized with the family of blackbirds. Baltimore Orioles occur in Eastern Nebraska. Bullock's Orioles can be found in Western Nebraska and interbreed where territories meet creating hybrids. Orchard Orioles are common throughout the state.

About half the diet of Baltimore Orioles includes gypsy moth larvae, grasshoppers, tent caterpillars, leaf beetles, and spiders making them a desirable bird for insect control. They are also fond of soft fruits and berries. People with fruit trees know it's time to harvest those products when the orioles begin spending their time in the tree. They will also feed on green peas, mountain ash, and the seeds of garden flowers such as hollyhocks and sunflowers, and the nectar of tubular flowers.

All Orioles will often frequent bird feeders that are stocked with berries, grapes, orange slices and over ripened bananas. But grape jelly seems to be most attractive to them. Some will even learn to use hummingbird feeders which inspired the development of nectar feeders designed specifically for orioles. These birds have a special tongue, which resembles a brush, for lapping up nectar. Orange flavored, or fruit flavored suets will also attract them. To attract these beautiful birds to a feeder it is best to have these products ready for them prior to their arrival. Birds migrate at night, and when they arrive they are cold, tired and hungry. The first item on their agenda is to locate a food source. If you are ready for them, it will make attracting them much easier. In Nebraska we recommend having the oriole feeders ready by April 28th or preferably the week before.



Female Oriole

Where to go Bird Watching in Nebraska

- **Nebraska Birding Trails** - www.nebraskabirdingtrails.com
- **Nebraska Flyway** - www.nebraskaflyway.com
- **Nebraska Metro Birding** - www.nebraskametrobirding.com
- **Chicken Dance Trail** - www.chickendancetrail.com
- **Nebraska Ornithology Union** - www.noubirds.org



nebraskabirdlibrary.org



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Receive Wild Bird Habitat's newsletter. Get notifications about special events. Find out about current sales. Add your name to our Email list using the handy form available at our sales counter. If you previously signed up via our website we'd like you to fill out the Email form to receive local Emails. If you signed up and are not receiving Emails from Wild Bird Habitat we ask you resubmit your Email address. We also hope that you will like us on Facebook. Just go to wildbirdhabitatstore.com and click on our Facebook link.



Dave's Summer Bird Feeding Recommendations

If anyone were to ask me what my recommendations would be for a good summer backyard bird feeding program it would consist of a caged seed tube bird feeder with hulled sunflower seeds. An Aspects or Droll Yankee seed tube feeder with Nutra Saff safflower seed, a hanging or post mounted platform bird feeder with safflower or Nutra Saff safflower seed. A ground feeder with safflower seed mixed with a little white Proso millet. A Nyger thistle seed feeder. And of course a suet feeder. These would be my primary bird feeders for the summer months attracting my favorite birds while reducing blackbirds at those feeders. I still offer in-shell peanuts on a separate platform bird feeder, a general wild bird mix on another and a peanut feeder for shelled peanuts. At these feeders it is first come first serve but always adds to the excitement in the backyard. Caged peanut bird feeders are great for woodpeckers, Chickadees, nuthatches, and Carolina Wrens.



Carolina Wren on caged peanut feeder

Dave's April Bird Chatter

Although late this year, Snow Geese, Sandhill Cranes and many ducks have passed through on their way to their northern breeding grounds. It was a difficult season viewing the geese and cranes with the weather we've had, but migration is far from over. April is one of the three most exciting migration months of the year. We will once again welcome back many of our summer favorites to the yard; the brown thrasher, catbird, towhees and chipping sparrows to name a few. The Rose Breasted Grosbeak and Orioles are two of the Neo-tropical migrants everyone enjoys welcoming back. But at the same time we will be bidding our winter friends a fond farewell by month's end until we see them return next fall. They have entertained us all during the winter months even as mild as it was.

One of the most exciting events during the spring migration is seeing birds that are just passing through on their way north. About thirty species of warblers move through Nebraska such as the Yellow-rumped Warbler and Palm Warbler just to name a few. Several species of warblers such as the Common Yellow Throat and Yellow Warblers will remain to nest. There is always the opportunity to see warblers that accidentally move through Nebraska such as the Hooded Warbler or Black-throated Blue Warbler, a real sight to see. But these vagrant warbler species don't stay long so keep your eyes open. Many migrating bird species on their way further north will only be stopping off for a short stay before moving on. Swainson Thrushes are commonly seen as are Yellow-headed Blackbirds and dozens of other migratory bird species. Take along a field guide and binoculars with you wherever you go. Even a short drive through the country to grandma's house can produce some exciting bird watching results. And those backyards with a little mature habitat can become a haven for migrating birds.



Black & White
Warbler

At the Wild Bird Habitat Stores we encourage everyone to have a field guide as you never know what bird may appear or when. This will even help you enjoy the spring migration period more as you identify these birds. It is fun to be able to identify these new strangers as they arrive or pass through. And before you realize it you will gain a great deal of knowledge about birds. Many folks call us needing assistance with bird identification. It is helpful if the caller has a guide as they describe the mystery bird. We are pleased to help and soon you will be identifying these birds on your own adding great enjoyment to your birding experience. Many great smartphone APPS for bird identification are available at no cost. Merlin Bird ID Wizard and Merlin Photo Bird ID are two of the best from the Cornell Bird Lab and are easy to use. Just Google them then download to your phone. Ask us for other free smart phone bird identification APPS.



By now you must have noticed the male Goldfinches slowly donning their canary yellow breeding plumage for the summer months after a long winter. It will be May before the northern Goldfinches that have been in our company all winter follow the Dandelion blooms back north, leaving us with our resident Goldfinches for the summer. By late June these resident Goldfinches will move from urbanized feeding grounds into rural country sides to nest. Since they feed their nestlings strictly seed they are late nesters waiting until there is a bountiful supply of seeds for their young. Those living in open rural areas will continue to enjoy flocks of these finches until mid-August when natural seeds like the native prairie thistles and Maximilian sunflowers, a favorite of Goldfinch, ripen.

Bluebirds will get serious about their nesting as the weather warms and the cool winds subside. Some bluebirds will undoubtedly nest in March, but a cool rainy April could create wet nests and cold nestling. This is just one reason if you have bluebirds be sure you monitor the nest boxes. Many a well-meaning person will install a nest box without following-up to insure the birds are successful. A complete instruction manual is available with the purchase of a bluebird box at Wild Bird Habitat. These informative manuals are available for just \$2.00 otherwise and give you all the details to be a successful bluebird landlord. Just ask our staff if you'd like to purchase a copy.



Opening and checking on your tenants will not cause the nest to be abandoned. If you're not sure how to monitor your bluebird nest boxes Wild Bird Habitat can provide you with that information. You can also get additional information on attracting bluebirds at Blue Birds Across Nebraska's website: www.bbne.org.

From our "bird of the month" article you are aware that Orioles will be arriving by month's end. Just another reminder to make sure you have your Oriole feeders ready by April 15. Just freshen the oranges, nectars, and jellies once in a while until they arrive. This is also a good time to be thinking about hummingbirds which will be arriving the first week or so of May. Attracting these two Neo-Tropical migrants to a feeder is all about timing. If you are ready for them before they arrive you have a better chance of attracting them. That is not to say putting Oriole and hummingbird feeders out past that date will be unsuccessful. Orioles begin arriving April 16 and will do so until June 5 with the half arriving between May 1 to 10. These records are documented by Dr. Paul Johnsgard, Professor Emeritus School of Biological Sciences, UNL. For Ruby-throated Hummingbirds the earliest reported sighting was April 7 continuing their migration through until early June. The median arrival date however is May 5 to 17. Are they becoming accustomed to nesting in the Lincoln area? Several reports in recent years indicate folks feeding hummingbirds all summer long and bringing juveniles to the feeder. These are riparian creek areas the reports come in from. The Ruby-throat does nest along the Missouri River, Eastern Platte River and Eastern Nemaha Rivers. But on their return after nesting to the north the earliest arrival date July 16 which may lead some folks to think those hummers have been here all summer long.



In spring we turn our attention to planting spring flowers and installing new landscape plants. Select those that will encourage birds and other wildlife to visit your yard. Carroll Henderson's publication, "Landscaping for Wildlife" is designed for creating a wildlife habitat in our area. There are a number of UNL Extension NebGuides at ianrpubs.unl.edu/ to guide you and inform you about planting for wildlife. Also check out the Nebraska State Arboretum at www.arboretum.unl.edu/. They have some great information as well as selling many plant materials. Don't just landscape your yard, "birdscape" it.



The spring migration of birds is an incredible phenomenon that is unequalled by any wildlife on the planet. From the short distant migrants to those long range migrants, generations of bird species will return to their same breeding ground, often within a few hundred yards, year after year. Many male birds arrive first and wait for their monogamous mate to show up, sometimes several weeks later. Others perform exotic displays to attract a new mate for the season. Using stars, landmarks, and electro-magnetic fields, they imprint these exact routes, which are from a few hundred miles up to more than ten thousand miles, on their young. In fact it is the Arctic Tern that migrates the farthest from the Sub-Arctic to the Antarctic and back, a round trip in excess of 25,000 miles. It has occurred year after year for thousands, if not millions of years. In the spring they don their bright breeding plumage and perform courtship rituals that are choreographed to perfection. Don't miss the opportunity to witness this incredible springtime event. Keep a good eye on your backyard for new arrivals, but take the time to venture out to the many birding sites in your area. Remember to see to look and look to see. Nebraska is one of the premier migratory locations on the continent.

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Binoculars &
Spotting Scopes**



**Unlimited
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Warranty**

**Available at
Wild Bird Habitat**

NEONICS - THE NEW DDT?

ON A SUNNY JUNE DAY in 2013, the bodies of dead bumble bees suddenly began to rain down on a shopping center parking lot in Wilsonville, Oregon. That morning, pest control operators had sprayed 55 blooming linden trees with dinotefuran, one of seven insecticides known collectively as neonicotinoids, or **neonics** for short. By the end of the week, some 50,000 bumble bees had died—one of the largest native bee kills ever recorded.

An unprecedented study confirms neonic pesticides endanger bees, birds, butterflies and earthworms. European nations have banned it and Canada will soon follow. Yet in the U.S. as of 2013 neonicotinoids have been used on about 95 percent of **corn** and **canola** crops, the majority of **cotton**, **sorghum**, and **sugar beets** and about half of all **soybeans** and soon wheat will be added to those crops. Neonicotinoids are injected into trees to control insects.

Neonicotinoids are a group of insecticides that are used widely on farms, as well as around our homes, schools, and city landscapes. Used to protect against sap-sucking and leaf-chewing insects, neonicotinoids are systemic, which means they are absorbed by the plant tissues all parts of the plant toxic to insects, including the nectar and pollen. Unfortunately, bees, butterflies, hummingbirds and other flower-visitors are harmed by the residues. Extremely concerning is the prolific inclusion of these insecticides in home garden products. Home garden products containing neonicotinoids can legally be applied in far greater concentrations in gardens than they can be on farms which increases the risk to pollinators. Neonic pesticides from crops has leached into ground water and native pollinating plants outside the crop zone. It has spread into wetlands leading to concerns it will impact aquatic insects further affecting birds and other wildlife that rely on those ecosystems.

Agricultural and garden seeds can also be coated with a neonic pesticide. If a bird were to consume a treated seed that bird will die. But when a treated seed germinates and grows it becomes a living toxic plant to insects. Not only is it disseminating our pollinators, but the reduction of insects impacts birds nesting successfully. An adult bird will make several hundreds of trips daily with insects to feed their young. Less insects, less birds. Plus many of the insects they do collect may be toxic having a high likelihood of neonic pesticide contamination which can cause higher bird fatalities.

Booth Lowes and Home Depot are working to eliminate selling plants treated with neomic pesticides. Yet many other outlets continue to sell treated garden plants. Ask the vendor or read the labels. Wild Bird Habitat has a brochure to help identify products containing neomic pesticide for garden use.

So are neonicotinoids the next DDT? Neomic pesticide residue has been found in food served at the U.S. Congressional cafeteria. It wasn't suppose to get in our food and water, but it has. Neonicotinoids have moved up to the top of food chain in a relatively short period of time killing off bees, butterflies, birds and other wildlife on the way up. Essential participants in the survival of our natural environment.

Wild Bird Habitat's Bird Bath, Bird House, Bird Feeder Cleaners & Protectors

Ensures a healthy bird and brood habitat. Cleans away parasites, bird droppings, and organic contamination. Effective on all birdhouses and feeders. Non-Toxic all natural Enzymes. Birdhouses are a major breeding ground for deadly parasites. Fleas, mites and spiders attack baby birds, robbing their bodies of vital nutrients and in some cases killing the very young. Adult birds are also held captive to these deadly parasites. Birdhouse and Feeder Cleaner was developed to clear bird houses and bird feeders of all parasites, ultimately providing a clean and natural habitat for birds and their young.



You will enjoy the beauty of your birdbath or fountain with confidence, knowing that our feathered friends are enjoying it too. And safely! All of MICROBE-LIFT's birdbath & fountain cleaning products are all-natural and earth friendly, so you do not need to worry about harming animals or the environment.

Plenty of Time Left to Install Purple Martins House

Have you ever thought about becoming a Purple Martin Landlord? There is still plenty of time to install a Purple Martin house this year and attract a new colony. The Martins that are arriving now which some refer to as scouts are simply adult birds with prior nesting experience, the majority of which have established colonies. It is the sub-adults, those Martins hatched last year, that will form new colonies. These first year birds won't begin arriving until the second week of April and will continue to do so until early May. Wild Bird Habitat installs about 20 Purple Martin houses every spring for customers mostly in mid to late April. About 80% of those newly installed houses attract a nesting colony the first year. Not every homeowner has the habitat required to attract Purple Martins. *(the minimum requirements are open spaces 40ft to 60ft from any tall trees or structures and within 100ft to 150ft of an occupied dwelling.)* Want to know more? Just ask us at the Wild Bird Habitat Stores. If your not absolutely certain you have the right habitat we will be happy to inspect your property.



Nest Boxes / Bird Houses

Many birds nest in tree cavities, so a nest box is essentially providing them that same nesting habitat. That's why placing a nest box on a tree trunk is often an effective way to mount a box. At the store we also have poles for mounting boxes right where you want them. Species that use nest boxes include: Wood Duck, American Kestrel, Eastern Screech-Owl, Woodpeckers (Red-headed, Red-bellied, Downy, Hairy and Flicker), Purple Martin (colony nesters), Tree Swallow, Black-capped Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, Carolina Wren, House Wren, Eastern Bluebird and House Finch.



Wild Bird Habitat has nest boxes that are the size appropriate for each species. They are made of natural cedar, Cyprus, or durable recycled composite plastic. These houses have thick walls to insulate from heat and cold. Drainage holes allow moisture to drain through and ventilation slots provide for air flow. They also have an easy way to swing the door open for cleaning. We also have do-it-yourself kits and many decorative style houses in a variety of artistic shapes, colors and sizes. Another unique option is our Window View Nest Box that mounts to a window, allowing you to view the nesting birds.

Nesting accessories include portal protectors, metal rings that can be attached to the nest box opening that will prevent larger birds from entering or pecking a bigger hole and keep predators from gnawing into the box. Nesting materials that consist of five natural-colored materials preferred by birds: feathers, string, cotton, hemp and aspen fiber. This mixture will attract many more birds than cotton only. *(Avoid dryer lint as it retains moisture in the nest.)* Nest material can be presented to the birds with our hanging Songbird Essentials Nesting Wreath and Birdie Bell. This material will benefit all nesting birds.



At the Wild Bird Habitat Store we have a variety of natural nesting materials preferred by nesting birds. From the popular Birdie Bell to the Bird Wreath. Wild Bird Habitat has all your bird nesting needs.



Monthly Bird Field Trip, April 20th

Saturday, April 20, 8:00 a.m. – FREE. Field trip to Osage Wildlife Management Area, near Tecumseh. Meet on south side of Capitol, 15th & M St., Saturday, April 20, at 8:00 a.m., to carpool or caravan 55 miles to the WMA. Hiking hilly trails will require physical ability and sturdy footwear. Bring water bottle and binoculars if you have them. Public is welcome. Information: John, 402-475-7275.



ATTRACTING GOLDFINCH

First and foremost you want to be certain your Nyjer thistle seed is fresh. Goldfinch will reject Nyjer thistle seed that is old. Wild Bird Habitat's Nyjer thistle seed is triple cleaned to remove immature seeds and debris and is guaranteed fresh. None-the-less, Nyjer thistle seed is good for about 4 to 5 months.



March and April is considered goldfinch season. Our resident goldfinch, many which drifted south for the winter, have returned to our area to nest. They have joined the northern goldfinch that moved into our area to spend the winter. So for a couple of months goldfinch are very numerous at the feeders.

By months end many of the northern goldfinch we have enjoyed during the winter will be moving back north to their nesting ranges leaving us with our resident goldfinch that nest across the Central Plains.

Goldfinch are late nesters and by mid-June they will move into rural areas joining their country cousins where they nest. They do not nest in dense urbanized areas. So in the city during the summer you may only see an occasional goldfinch that are most likely non-breeding birds. However in rural areas you'll enjoy goldfinch at the feeders until late August before the prairie thistle, sunflowers, and related foods become abundant.

By late October after the molt they will once again appear at feeders in urbanized areas as they prepare for winter with some of our summer goldfinch drifting south as we greet the northern population ahead of winter. And the cycle begins once again.

WINGTIP: Goldfinch will readily feed on Nutra Safflower almost as much as on Nyjer thistle seed. They also feed on hulled sunflower and black oil sunflower seeds.

HOUSE FINCH

During the summer if you live in dense urbanized areas House Finch commonly replace the Goldfinch at your bird feeders when the Goldfinch move to rural locations to nest. The male House Finch sports a red head and upper chest, the female is heavily stripped on the chest and lacks the red coloration. House Finch can be found nesting in our backyards.



House Finch readily feed on Nyjer thistle seed, Nutra safflower and white safflower seed as well as hulled sunflower and black oil sunflower seeds. They are a joy to have around.

WINGTIP: Purple Finch are a northern bird that occasionally visits us during the winter. House Finch are often mistaken as Purple Finch

Prairie Chicken Viewing in Nebraska

Nebraska has the largest numbers of Greater Prairie Chicken in the Great Plains. Inviting all nature lovers, bird enthusiast, and nature photographers to enjoy the Prairie Chickens and Sharp-tailed Grouse performing their ritual mating dances at:

Big Blue Ranch & Lodge
Burchard, Nebraska
bigblueranch.com
(402) 730-3643

Prairie Chicken Dance Tours
McCook, Nebraska
prairiechickendancetours.com
(308) 345.1200

Calamus Outfitters
Burwell, Nebraska
calamusoutfitters.com
(308) 346-4697



Greater Prairie Chicken
on booming grounds
called leks