

# Wild Bird Habitat Store

November Newsletter - 2019



**South Lincoln**  
In the Alamo Plaza  
56<sup>th</sup> & Hwy 2  
Lincoln, NE 68516  
(402) 420-2553

**North Lincoln**  
4900 Dudley St  
2 Blocks South of Holdrege  
Lincoln, NE 68504  
(402) 464-4055

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

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

**HAPPY THANKSGIVING**  
From the staff at  
**WILD BIRD HABITAT**

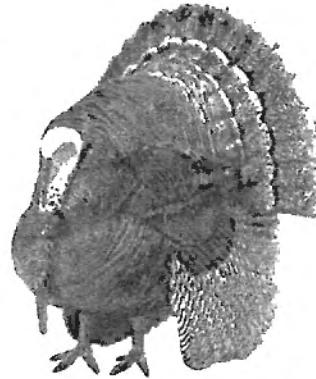
## November News Notes:

- Winter birds will make themselves plentiful around the bird feeders.
- Watch the skies as ducks and geese begin to move south.
- Now is the time to check the bird bath heater and get open, fresh water ready for winter.
- Continue to watch your feeders for new birds either showing up or passing through.
- Goldfinches and Juncos from the north are arriving. Will the Pine Siskins?
- Get ready for the 120th Annual Christmas Bird Count...It's free to participate.
- Now is the time to relocate your bird feeders for easy viewing from indoors.
- This is a great time to expand your bird feeding program with a new style of bird feeder.
- Get a friend or relative feeding birds. Buy them a bird feeder for Christmas.

---

**Don't miss the biggest North American birding event in 2020  
right here in Nebraska  
Details on Page 3**

---



## **America's Turkey**

*Reprinted from 2016 - Happy Thanksgiving*

The wild turkey is our largest upland game bird. The wild variety is slimmer and has a few color differences than its closely related domestic cousin. They all came from the same original wild stock. The domestic Turkey is thought to be among the most stupid of birds. They have been reported to actually stand out in a sleet storm and die of suffocation when their nostrils plug with ice. If this is true, I feel the blame may lie somewhat in the fact that it was not raised by a worldly and wise mother hen Turkey. We know that when quail and pheasants are pen raised and turned out in nature, their survival is not for long. They are easily preyed on by all of the meat eaters of the wilderness and are easy game for most hunters. Parent birds and animals teach their young how to survive in a world that would have them for lunch.

This is especially true of game birds. With their great sense of hearing and sight, they know quickly when danger is near. Truly successful hunters will take trained dogs to search out these various game species. We may feel this is unfair, but it is a fact and the dogs often hunt down wounded game that otherwise might suffer a slow demise.

Adult males stand 48" with an average weight is 18 pounds. Their breast feathers are black-tipped with iridescent hues of blues and reds, a means of identification. Mature males are called Toms, immature males are called Jakes. Adult females are not as tall standing 36" and their average weight is 8 pounds. Their breast feathers are buff-tipped, therefore rusty looking. Females are called Hens. The wild turkeys we have today, with the exception of the Eastern Turkey, are similar to the domestic turkey but more slender. Turkeys are found in open woodlands and woodland edges adjacent to open spaces. They are also found in forests where there are scattered openings.



The flap of skin hanging down the beak is called a Snood. The bumpy skin on the neck are "wattles", and what looks like a beard on a turkey's chest is really a bundle of special long, thin feathers. Adult males and even some females have beards but scientists don't know what, if anything, they're used for. The spurs on the legs of older birds may be over an inch long curving upward. These are used in fighting, but rarely cause any serious injuries.

Males will gobble any time of the year, but it heightens in the spring breeding season. At this time, almost any sharp noise will cause them to gobble. A passing airplane, slamming door, passing train or a clap of the hands will set them off. In his breeding plumage the turkey can turn red, white, and blue. His head can turn shades of blue and his wattle can switch quickly from red to white and back again. His snood can grow from 1 inch to 5 inches and the wattle will fill with blood. He will fluff up his colorful feathers and fan out his wide tail attempting to attract hens. Tom turkeys may have a harem of hens consisting of several birds. He will herd them around keeping them in full sight at all times.

Once a hen has mated with the tom she will go off to select a nesting sight. These sites are generally in open areas where she has a 360 degree view to detect any predators. Often she will scratch out a nest in a divot or depression in the ground lining it with leaves and feathers. She will lay a clutch of 10 to 12 buff-colored eggs, lightly spotted with brown and black. When the clutch is complete she will incubate them for an average of 28 days. After the young chicks have hatched the female will continue to brood them for several weeks until they can fly short distances and are able to get off the ground to roost in low tree branches. The female turkey teaches her young the basics of survival, and natural instincts do the rest.

Turkeys have excellent flying ability for short distances. They can lift off like a helicopter and once airborne fly forward at speeds up to 55 MPH. But since transporting that much weight in the air takes a lot of energy turkeys run more often than they fly. In short sprints they can reach speeds of 25 MPH, faster than an Olympic runner.



In the winter months turkeys will spend their time in separate flocks. One flock will consist of all toms, the other hens. They work together making certain at least one bird is acting as a lookout to protect the flock from any approaching danger. They will signal to the others if a predator is seen lurking. Turkeys are a fairly common sight anymore often sharing space with humans. But years of hunting may have imprinted a danger in them as they seem to become more elusive when the season opens.

## Fun Turkey Facts

- Mature turkeys have 3,500 or so feathers. The Apache Indians considered the turkey timid and wouldn't eat it or use its feathers on their arrows.
- Turkeys originated in North and Central America, and evidence indicates that they have been around for over 10 million years.
- In Mexico, the turkey was considered a sacrificial bird.
- Only male turkeys (toms) gobble. Females (hens) make a clicking noise. The gobble is a seasonal call during the spring and fall. Hens are attracted for mating when a tom gobbles. Wild toms love to gobble when they hear loud sounds or settle in for the night.
- During the day turkeys forage for acorns, seeds, insects and berries.
- Wild turkeys have excellent vision during the day but not at night.
- Juvenile turkeys are called "jakes".
- Domestic turkeys cannot fly.

**Wingtip:** For more about Wild Turkeys in Nebraska visit "Birds of Nebraska - Online" at [birds.outdoornebraska.gov/wild-turkey/](http://birds.outdoornebraska.gov/wild-turkey/). You can also select information about more than 500 birds of Nebraska on this website.

**The Turkey! Our National Bird?** In 1784, after the end of the Revolutionary War, Benjamin Franklin wrote a famous letter from Paris to his daughter, criticizing the choice and suggesting the Wild Turkey as a better representative of American qualities. He described the Bald Eagle as "a Bird of bad moral character," who, "too lazy to fish for himself" survived by robbing the Osprey of its catch. He also called the Bald Eagle "a rank Coward" who was easily driven from a perch by the much smaller Kingbird. In the letter, Franklin wrote that he favored the Turkey, "a much more respectable Bird," which he described as "a little vain & silly but a Bird of Courage." Despite Franklin's objections, the Bald Eagle remained the emblem of the United States. It can be found on both national seals and on the back of several coins (including the quarter dollar coin until 1999), with its head oriented towards the olive branch. Between 1916 and 1945, the Presidential Flag showed an eagle facing to its left (the viewer's right), which gave rise to the urban legend that the seal is changed to have the eagle face towards the olive branch in peace, and towards the arrows in wartime.

**Turkey Populations at Record Numbers:** In the early 1930s, wild turkeys were on the verge of extinction nationwide due to over harvesting and habitat degradation. Originally the Eastern Turkey was native to Nebraska but was extirpated by 1915. It has since been replaced by the Merriam Turkey from a captive breeding program which began in Nebraska in 1959. Habitat improvement and successive dry years have led to an increase in Nebraska's turkey population statewide in recent years. Many customers living near wooded areas with open grass and mixed vegetation report turkeys foraging under their bird feeders.

## North American Bluebird Society Convention hosted by Bluebirds Across Nebraska

Register now for the biggest North American birding event of 2020. The NABS / BAN Annual Conference and Bluebird Festival this year in Kearney Nebraska in conjunction with the spring arrival of the Sandhill Cranes. Enjoy field trips to view birds, bird related workshops, guest speakers, banquet, and Minnesota humorist Al Batt. Al will make you laugh yourself silly. Conference and festival registrations are open now. Discounted room reservations begin November 15, 2019 at the Kearney Holiday Inn. Sign up early. Seating on the many planned field trips is limited. All the information and registration form can be found online at [bbne.org](http://bbne.org).



Bluebirds Across Nebraska

## Dave's November Bird Chatter

This is a wonderful time of year to get outdoors before the more frigid weather hits. Take a pair of binoculars and enjoy the birds that you can find. Watch for hawks sitting along the roadway. It's great fun just to keep track of the number of birds you can see. Just a short drive down a county road or walk on an urban trail can produce an amazing variety of bird species.

The ducks and geese are really getting restless this month, and soon they will be heading toward their winter territories in the Southern States. Some will remain if they locate open water. Salt Creek, Haines Branch, Oak Creek and Little Salt Creek remain open in places during the winter due to the salinity of the water. Several small tributaries into Salt Creek remain open as well passing through the salt marshes. These saline waters only occur on the west side of Salt Creek. On the east side plenty of fresh water streams form a confluence with Salt Creek. These riparian areas provide an abundance of birds as well. Steven's Creek, Antelope Creek, Dead Man's Run, and Beale's Slough. Several of these creeks have trails, primitive and improved, that run adjacent to them or cross them several times. The Salt Creek watershed of lakes, too many to mention, also support many birds until they freeze up for the winter. But when the ice "comes off" in late February and early March, these lakes attract a large number aquatic birds along with Bald Eagles collecting winter kill fish as the ice breaks up. Nebraska hosts one of the largest number of bird species in the United States, and may very possibly be one of the best birding regions on the North American Continent.

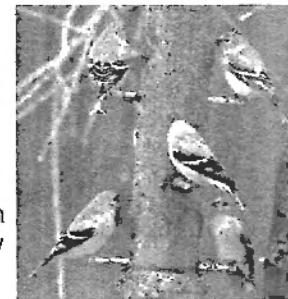


If you have a bird bath that you use a heater in during the winter months, you may want to think about getting it out. Get it cleaned up and make certain it is in working order. Do the freezer test. Place your heater in the freezer for twenty minutes. This will activate the thermostat. Remove it from the freezer and plug it in. It should begin to warm up. The bird bath heaters and de-icers we carry either work or not. If they only warm up a little, then chances are they may need a vinegar bath to remove scale from the previous seasons use. After that they should work fine.



Although many people reported a lack of birds over the past few weeks, they are now beginning to return to the feeders, and many more will join them before long. With all the rains and a fairly mild summer September brought an abundant harvest of natural foods for birds. Birds will take advantage of those food resources knowing it's a limited supply and won't last. They also know where the bird feeders are located if you have been keeping them well stocked. Birds will include them in their daily route of exploiting food sources they have staked out ahead of winter. They will utilize backyard bird feeders as a supplemental food source when storms and colder nights require more energy. So continue to keep those bird feeders filled even during slow periods.

As northern birds return for the winter, and the temperatures continue to slide toward zero, I guarantee the activity at the bird feeders will return. We have been having some reports of Red-breasted Nuthatches, American Goldfinch, and native sparrows showing up at the bird feeders, along with our permanent resident birds. I'm anticipating Dark-eyed Juncos will be appearing at any time now. With the early winter storms to the north, it may drive many more northern finches into our area including the Pine Siskin that can be very abundant some years. Common Red Polls, Red and White-winged Crossbills, and Purple Finch may appear in your yard at any time. No one ever knows what bird may drop by their backyard, so be observant. A bird bath with fresh water during migration may attract birds into your yard that aren't after the seed in the feeders.



It seems as though it is the casual bird feeder who notices an unusual bird appear in their yard. The main thing is if you do see a bird show up that is not one of the common birds that visit your bird feeder, try to identify it. Keep a field guide and binoculars handy. If you can't identify a specific bird contact the Wild Bird Habitat Store or someone who can help. Most of the really rare birds are found in this manner.

Become a citizen scientist. From December 14, 2019 through January 5, 2020 tens of thousands of volunteers throughout the Americas will take part in an adventure that has become a family tradition among generations. Families and students, birders and scientists, armed with binoculars, bird guides and checklists go out on an annual mission - often before dawn. For over one hundred years, the desire to both make a difference and to experience the beauty of nature has driven dedicated people to leave the comfort of a warm house during the Holiday season. Still other folks may opt to stay in the warmth of their home and count the birds in their backyards. Watch for more information at the Wild Bird Habitat Stores on how to participate in this year's 120<sup>th</sup> Annual Christmas Bird Count No matter if you're counting the birds at your backyard bird feeders or out in the field counting birds you see, every bird counted provides important information to biologists about the health of our wild bird population.

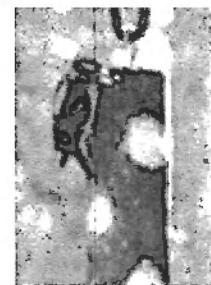
### **CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT 2019 / 2020**

Make plans now to participate in the 120th Christmas Bird Count. No matter where you live in Nebraska, there is an organized count, or you can count the birds in your backyard. For information visit <https://noubirds.org/Activities/CBC.aspx>



**Nebraska Ornithologists' Union**

Winter is fast approaching and it looks like we will have some snow before November's newsletter is out. Keep the suet out as it provides a good source of energy for woodpeckers and nuthatches. More and more Carolina Wrens are reported every year choosing to spend the winter in northern states. This is a wren that traditionally migrated to southeastern states. Although not very winter hardy we receive numerous reports of their presence during the winter months. They will occasionally call during the winter when most birds are silent. This bird has the typical turned up tail as do all wrens but sports a bright white eyebrow making identification fairly easy. But they two will find the suet feeder an attractive source of high energy animal protein along with shelled peanuts.



It is much easier getting your backyard bird feeders and water sources ready for winter now than it is when the temperatures drop below freezing and the snow starts blowing. Get your bird bath ready to go so birds have an available source of fresh water. Remember birds have numerous food sources they have identified and will rely on during the winter months. But water can be a resource which is difficult to locate outdoors in freezing temperatures. In fact in extremely frigid temperatures you can attract more birds with open water than just bird feeders alone. If you have not had water available for birds in the winter, maybe this would be a good year to add it to your bird feeding program.



Bluebirds at an API heated bird bath

Keep the feeders filled. Maybe add a new style of bird feeder this year to attract a larger variety of birds. Keep the binoculars handy and a good field guide close by. If you want to move your bird feeders so they are more visible from inside the house, now is a good time to do it. If you need any hardware, Wild Bird Habitat has a variety of hooks, poles, and hangers and plenty of good information on setting up or improving your backyard bird feeding program. We hope everyone has an enjoyable winter birding season.

# Winter Bird Feeding

Published by the Wild Bird Habitat Stores

Have you ever wondered why when winter comes to Nebraska some birds migrate to warmer climates, many as far south as the tropical forests of South America? Yet other birds choose to remain in the Central Great Plains where the days are short and the nights are long and bitterly cold? Why do some birds such as Dark-eyed Juncos, Pine Siskin, and Redpolls come to Nebraska from their far snowier northern ranges to spend the winter? Do some birds have warmer feathers, more feathers, or are they just confused?

Consider this. If you are a bird which only eats insects will you survive a Nebraska winter? How many insects will you find as temperatures drop and the snow piles up? None! You better move south where insects will be plentiful. However if you're a bird that eats seeds, berries, and nuts, there is plenty of food available during winter in the natural habitats across Nebraska. This may include your backyard if you plant habitat to provide food, water, and shelter for birds. So the fall migration of birds is primarily based on what the food availability will be during the coming winter.

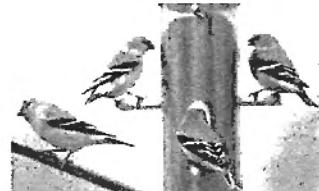
But throughout winter natural foods for those birds remaining behind become buried by snow or destroyed by weather. This increases the competition among wildlife for declining natural food sources and requires more time spent foraging.

So what can you do to help the birds get through the cold winter months in Nebraska? After all, birds only survive the cold nights from the energy provided by the food they consume during the day. So what can you do? Provide extra food for our birds in a backyard bird feeder.

Feeding birds can be as easy as throwing a handful of wild bird feed on the ground. But various bird species have different feeding habits. With bird feeders you can attract a larger variety of birds and enjoy watching them in your backyard as they feed.

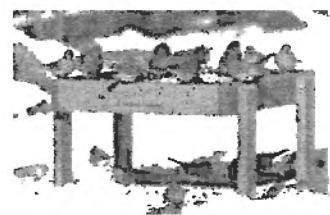
## Thistle Feeders

Nyjer thistle seed feeders are tube type bird feeders with small slits where Goldfinches, House Finches, and Pine Siskin can extract the tiny thistle seeds. Nyjer thistle seed is also high in protein and provides a great source of energy to keep these little finches warm and full of energy.



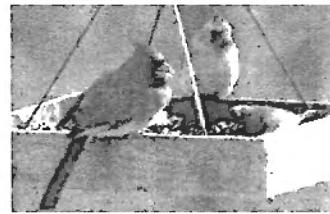
## Ground Feeders

A platform feeder on the ground will attract ground feeding birds such as Mourning Doves, Juncos and native sparrows. White Proso millet and safflower seed work best on ground feeders. These wild bird feeds are the least attractive to squirrels who, given the opportunity, enjoy robbing feed from backyard bird feeders.



## Platform & Hopper Feeders

The bird everyone enjoys viewing in a winter landscape is the bright red male Northern Cardinal. Cardinals, along with Blue Jays, are opportunistic birds that feed at a variety of bird feeders if there is a large perching area to sit and feed. Hanging platform bird feeders stocked with sunflower seeds, peanuts, and NutraSaff safflower seed work well for these larger birds.



## Seed Tube Feeders

A hanging seed tube bird feeder, those having several large open ports with perches, are attractive to smaller birds like Black-capped Chickadees, nuthatches, and finches. These feeders are ideal for feeding black oil sunflower seed and hulled sunflower seeds. Sunflower seeds are high in protein providing an excellent source of energy for birds to keep warm during cold nights.

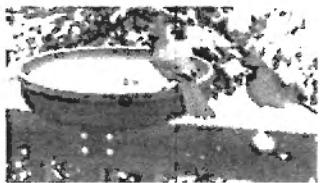


## Peanut & Suet Feeders

For woodpeckers and other birds that forage on the trunks and branches of trees suet provides a source of high energy animal protein. Suet is rendered animal fat which is sold in cakes for feeding birds. The meat department at your local grocery store may offer raw animal fat and beef suet to feed birds at little or no cost. Lard can also be used to create your own suet recipe by mixing in peanuts, fruits pieces and other wild bird feeds. Also shelled peanuts in feeders can provide as much as 48% fat which converts to high energy

## Fresh Water

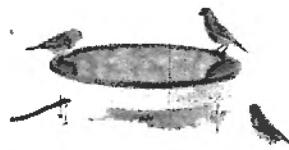
And don't forget to provide fresh water for birds during the winter since most natural water resources are frozen solid. Water is essential for the survival of all living creatures. Fresh water also allows birds to bathe. Clean feathers provide better insulation to stay warm during cold winter nights. You can use a bird bath heater to keep the water from freezing, or supply fresh water in a pan daily. Birds will get use to the timing of that available water source and come for a drink before it freezes over.



Providing supplemental food for birds in your backyard during the winter months, or year round, is beneficial for the birds and a great way to enjoy nature right in your own backyard.



## Wild Bird Habitat Store Bird Bath Heaters & De-Icers and Heated Bird Baths



## Squirrel Baffles That Work. Guaranteed!

*Squirrels getting the best of you ?  
Are they consuming all your wild  
bird seed?*



- Squirrel baffles for 4 X 4 posts.
- Hanging baffles squirrels cannot maneuver.
- Squirrel baffles for 1/2" to 2" poles.
- Squirrel baffles for **any** Shepherds Hook
- Wrap around squirrel baffles, easy to install.

**Ask our staff how to outwit squirrels**

## Black Oil Sunflower Seed

*quality premium grade  
Pesticide Free - NON GMO*



Black oil sunflower seed sold at the Wild Bird Habitat Stores is of food grade quality, the same grade used to produce human grade sunflower oil. Economy packagers purchase black oil sunflower seeds that are called "seconds" meaning it may not be mature, was affected by frost, may have been diseased or infested by insects prior to harvest. Low grade black oil sunflower seeds harvested are ground up for the livestock feed or sent to economy wild bird feed packagers and sold off at a discount.

## House Finch

The House Finch was a bird found west of the Rocky Mountains. In 1940 a large number of House Finch were trapped in California and taken east to New York to be sold in the pet trade. House Finch are native federally protected birds. When it was discovered that US Fish & Wildlife were on to the plot the perpetrators released the birds which over time populated and the House Finch now has become a common bird throughout the United



## Field Guides

- Peterson
- Sibley
- Stokes
- And more*



Field guides of birds for all levels of birding experience from the backyard to the field, from the beginner to the novice



Quality binoculars  
at an affordable  
price!



Vortex Optics  
available at  
Lincoln's  
Wild Bird Habitat  
Store



Lifetime  
**UNLIMITED**  
Warranty

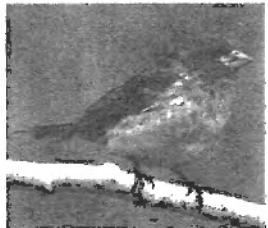
- Binoculars
- Spotting scopes

## House Finch or Purple Finch

It can be quite common that folks mistake the House Finch for the Purple Finch. They have somewhat the same colorings and are similar in size.

But first off the House Finch, traditionally a western bird species, has become common across the United States. The Purple Finch on the other hand nests in Canada's Boreal Forest into the northeastern U.S., Great Lakes Region and along the Pacific. So you will not see them in the interior of the U.S. and south during summer. In winter Purple Finch are uncommon visitors in the eastern half of the U.S. where a few may drift south looking for food resources at times irrupting in larger numbers.

Most often when you see a small brown bird with a red chest and head, the male House Finch, or brown with narrow darker streaks, the female House Finch, its just that, a House Finch. But keep alert during the winter months as you never know when a group of Purple Finch just might appear in your yard or at your feeders.



House Finch	Purple Finch
Slender	Stocky, Big Head
Red or Red-Orange	Rosy Red or Pink Red, More Overall Color
Blurry Streaking, Streaked Under-tail Coverts	Sharper Streaks (Females), White Under-tail Coverts
White Wing Bars, Short Primary Projection	Rosy Wing Bars, Long Primary Projection
Tail Long With a Shallow Notch	Tail Shorter With a Deep Notch
Beak Small, Bulbous, Curved on Upper Mandible	Beak Larger, Less Curved
Year-Round in Continental U.S.	Boreal Canada in Summer, East and Central U.S. in Winter, Year-Round on Pacific Coast, Great Lakes, & Northeast
Rising "Chirp"	Soft "Pik"

