

Wild Bird Habitat Store

September, 2022 Newsletter

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
Lincoln, NE 68504
(402) 464-4055

Omaha

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

www.wildbirdhabitatstore.com



Hummingbirds will be at their highest numbers in September on their way south. Have your nectar feeders ready

September Bird Notes:

- Migration of many of our Neo-tropical summer visitors is in full swing.
- Gold Finch, Waxwings, and Mourning Doves will finish up their nesting.
- Hummingbirds will continue to pass through. Keep the feeders fresh for them.
- Hawks will soon be soaring south forming kettles high in the sky
- September is the time to think about birds preparing for the winter season.
- By months end most birds will have established their winter feeding territories.
- Suet is still an important food source for adult woodpeckers and their young.
- Rough looking birds will soon be finished molting and start to look normal again.
- Make time to take a bird walk. Enjoy the changing seasons.



Ask our staff how to attract hummingbirds

Downy Woodpecker



The Downy Woodpecker is a permanent resident bird. They are well established in older neighborhoods with mature trees and the first of our woodpeckers to show up in a developing neighborhood. It is not only the most common and prevalent woodpecker in this area, but is also the smallest of our North American woodpecker species. Adults are mainly black on the upper parts and wings, with a white back, throat and belly, and white spotting on the wings. There is a white bar above and below the eyes. They have a black tail with white outer feathers that are barred with black. Adult males have a red patch on the back of the head. The male can be distinguished from the female at any age by this red patch. The female Downy is strictly black and white. You probably know by now how easy it is to attract them to suet feeders, and bird feeders stocked with sunflower or peanuts. They are very trusting of humans. One can easily approach them while they are

visiting the feeding stations. They look very much like a distant relative of the Hairy Woodpecker and are virtually identical in plumage pattern, but these two species are not closely related at all.

In fact the Downy Woodpecker is more closely related to the Ladder-back species which is found in the southwest part of the country. The most noticeable difference between the features of the Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers is the Downy is smaller in size by 3", and a beak half the size of their head. The Hairy's beak is as long as its head. It is certainly interesting to note that these two species exploit rather differently-sized foodstuffs and generally do not compete very much ecologically. They may however battle over who has the right to the suet or peanut feeder.

This small woodpecker is pretty much a loner during much of the year. It often travels with other small birds during the winter months in what are called loose flocks. Lone Downys will travel around with Chickadees, nuthatches and Tufted Titmice in winter. These birds established feeding territories in the early fall comprised of both natural foods and supplemental foods provided in bird feeders, and follow each other around in feeding teams exploiting those resources. Then, in late winter, the Downy's interest shifts to his mate or prospective mate and the drumming begins.

Woodpeckers drum for several reasons. One is to announce their territory to other woodpeckers in the area. Once they selected a tree trunk, telephone pole, metal furnace flue on a house, or even gutters where their drumming resonates satisfactorily, they will return frequently to make their territorial announcement. This is also used to lure their mate. The drumming of woodpeckers is also heard as they excavate a new nest cavity, or in search of food, removing dead bark or driving insects to the surface for a tasty meal.



Male Downy Woodpecker

***Wingtip:** Woodpeckers have a tongue that can be up to 6" depending on the species. The tongue is slightly barbed and sticky on the end and is used to extract insects and larvae out of small cracks and crevices. When not in use it coils up much like a spring in the back of their skull.*

By late winter or early spring, the mating urge of the male Downy gets serious and these birds will begin to defend a loose nesting territory. Once a mate has been selected they will begin to look for a nesting site. When a site is located, and if the nesting tree is agreed upon, the defense shifts to a small range with the nest as the focal point. There are times when they don't agree on a nest tree and they simply split up and do not nest together but attempt to find another partner. However, providing all goes well, the male will excavate a new hole, but only in a dead branch or tree trunk. This event takes 5 to 7 days to complete after which the female will then lay 4 to 5 eggs. Incubation will usually start at the completion of the clutch. The pair will trade off on incubation duties, with the male working the night shift. The eggs will hatch in about 12 days, and both parents will brood the young in the nest for about 2 weeks. Again, the male has the overnight watch, but both share in the feeding process. The youngsters fledge about three weeks after hatching and can fly immediately. One feature of interest is if you find an active Downy nest you can tell the age of the young inside. For the first 9 days the adults disappear completely into the nest when feeding. After that and until about the 14th day, you will see the tail of the adult sticking out of the nest hole while transferring food to the chicks. From then on until they fledge the young will meet the adult at the entrance for their food.

Both adults will continue to feed the fledglings for several more weeks until the feeding becomes almost confrontational. It is thought this may trigger the separation of the family.

You may notice the young Downy Woodpeckers are much cleaner than their parents when we get to see them for the first time. This is due to the fact the adults have made several hundred trips per day through the nest hole caring for their young which can soil and damage their feathers. These feathers will be replaced during the fall molt prior to winter. Look for the red spot on the head of the young males. It will be on the top of their head until they molt in late summer. After the molt it will be on the back of their head.

***Wingtip:** Woodpeckers, as with other cavity nesting birds, will use old nest cavities and nest boxes as a winter roost to retreat from the harsh winter weather.*

BLACK OIL SUNFLOWER SEED - Price comparison

- ACE Hardware - 10 pound bag black oil sunflower seed \$15.99
- Tractor Supply - 12 pound bag black oil sunflower seed \$21.99
- Orchlen's - 10 pound bag black oil sunflower seed \$14.99
- Petco - 30 pound bag black oil sunflower seed \$59.99
- Lowe's - 20 pound bag black oil sunflower \$24.98



Wild Bird Habitat Store - 25 pound bag premium grade black oil sunflower seed \$26.95

Dave's September Bird Chatter

Once again it seems as if we were just celebrating the arrival of our summer Neo-Tropical migratory birds, and already we're telling them good-bye till next spring.. The avian calendar is dynamic and always in flux. We began receiving reports of hummingbirds at nectar feeders in late July and reports have kept coming in through August. September is the prime time for attracting hummingbirds, so don't think you've missed them on their trek south. You have plenty of opportunity. Just put up a hummingbird feeder.. This will continue to be the case through most all of September, so again, there is plenty of time to get a hummingbird feeder out and enjoy them as they pass through.



Although it has not been documented, over the years we have had reports of hummingbirds believed to be nesting in the Lincoln area. One report in particular said they had a pair at the nectar feeders all summer, and now seems to have a family draining several feeders. Although they do nest along the Missouri River and eastern Platte River, it is uncommon for them to nest out here on what once was the tall grass prairie. In the spring we see hummingbirds arriving in early May, and some stragglers are still passing through around the second week of June. Those 'early birds' that arrived ahead of those stragglers to their nesting territories to the north have raised their young and are passing back through our area by mid to late July on their way south. This often gives us the impression they've been here all summer.

The molting season will be ending and birds will now be in what is called their 'basic plumage' while others will have bright new feathers that will carry them through the migration period and the upcoming winter season. The bald Cardinals and Blue Jays will again be carrying a "full head of feathers". Their quickness and flying dexterity will have returned. And this time of year you'll be able to identify which recently hatched cardinals are the males or females. When young cardinals leave the nest they are all decked out in the plumage similar to the female cardinal until after the molt to prevent a highly territorial dad chasing them off.

The Warbler migration will pick up in September as they migrate south and you should test yourself at identifying them. Just remember, some fall birds do not look at all like they did in the spring with their bright breeding plumage. It can be a challenge to sort them out. That's why some warblers have inherited the name of "confusing fall warblers". But don't worry. At times it can be a head scratcher for the most experienced birders. This is one of several good reasons to have a good field guide and familiarize yourself with it. You may also want to pick up our store's hand out of **Bird ID APPS** that are free top download from the Cornell Bird Lab on your smartphone or tablet. Warblers also have a set pattern of migration each year, as certain ones seem to leave first, there are several hardy varieties that will still be passing through in October. Sometimes even early November. Occasionally a few hardy souls will winter at a good food source and make it through until spring.



Two of our local nesters, Cedar Waxwings and the American Goldfinches, are late nesters and their young have just recently fledged the nest. These birds wait until there is a plentiful stock of berries and seeds to support their young. Now they will begin their molt into their winter plumage. This means that the male goldfinch will soon return to their basic olive brown color, much like the female, until next spring when they will dress back into their bright canary yellow color.

Mourning Doves are still raising their young. They nest numerous times from the first day of spring to the last day of summer. This may be the reason their population is somewhat stable as they are a hunted game bird in most states. Raising multiple broods can produce a lot of young when a full clutch is only two eggs.

Although our Neo-Tropical birds will soon be gone until next year, there is plenty of excitement to come. The northern birds will soon be replacing them. Usually our first arrivals from the north are the Juncos with migratory native sparrows right behind them. Pine Siskins could be abundant this fall and winter at the feeders and maybe red and white winged crossbills, Red-breasted Nuthatches, Common Redpolls, or even Purple Finches may grace our snow covered yards. It's hard to predict just how far south these irruptive bird species will travel in search of food.



This is the season to keep the feeders well stocked as our resident and those birds arriving from up north are establishing winter food sources. Birds maintain numerous food plots so if winter snow or ice covers one plot they have alternatives. Birds will identify backyard bird feeders as one of those alternatives if the feeders are filled regularly.

If you enjoy hawk watching, this is the time of year to keep your eyes on the skies. Sometimes we are fortunate enough to see huge flocks of migrating hawks soaring high above us. These often for spiraling "Kettles" with several different species are drifting on the thermals in lazy circles, slowly and effortlessly heading to warmer climates. Although hawk migration can be seen just about anywhere, one of the best places is at the Hitchcock Nature Center in Crescent, IA, just minutes north of Omaha. Hawk Watch runs through October thousands of birds of prey are counted each year. This includes hawk species, eagles, falcons and Ospreys and so many more. Google <Hitchcock Nature Center> for more information or ask us at Wild Bird Habitat.



September is a transitional month for both the weather and the birds,. That is why September can be an exciting month. Our menacing black birds will be flocking together preparing to move south. Shore birds will grace the shallows and mudflats. Hawks and vultures will be on the wing riding thermals anticipating their departures. And the warblers will be flittering in the tree canopies gleaning insects to sustain their journey south. Bird watching! It's always exciting, always changing, and always unpredictable. That is why it is so enjoyable whether you watch birds in your backyard or in the field.



ARNIE'S CORNER

AWARD-WINNING BIOLOGICALLY APPROPRIATE PET FOODS

Champion Pet Foods produces **Biologically Appropriate** dog and cat foods from **Fresh Regional Ingredients**, never out-sourced. And they make pet foods from start to finish in their own **award-winning kitchens**.

Champion Pet Food's mission represents a new standard in pet food designed to nourish your dog and cat in two ways. First, according to your pet's natural evolution to a meat and protein-rich diet. Second, using meats, poultry, eggs and fish that are sustainably ranched, farmed or fished by local suppliers and delivered to our kitchens fresh each day.

We think you'll love ACANA, but as importantly, we think your dogs and cats will too.



5 star nutrition for Your dog or cat

By Champion Pet Foods
Where meat makes up the first 5 ingredients

DOG & CAT FOOD
September special offer

- \$2 OFF Small Bags
- \$4 OFF Medium Bags
- \$7 OFF Large Bags

High in Protein / Low in carbohydrates

Arnie's Pet Food Store
Alamo Plaza / 56th & Hwy 2
A division of Wild Bird Habitat Stores

Yes, September is a transitional month for both the weather and the birds but an exciting month. Our menacing black birds will be flocking together preparing to move south. Shore birds will grace the shallows and mudflats. Hawks and vultures will be on the wing riding thermals anticipating their departures. And the warblers will be flittering in the tree canopies gleaning insects to sustain their journey south. Bird watching! It's always exciting, always changing, and always unpredictable. That is why it is so enjoyable whether you watch birds in your backyard or in the field.

Blue Jays, Guardians of the Backyard

I just love attracting Blue Jays to my yard with peanuts. They are not only intelligent and fun to watch, they alert all the other birds when a predator like a Cooper's Haw appears. A customer sent us this story and I just had to pass it along to everyone.

Just had to share my story with you. I've been watching a drama unfold in my back yard this morning between 6-8 Blue Jays and a hawk (don't know what kind - cream-colored breast, medium brown wings, about the size of a crow). When I first looked out the window, I didn't see a single bird in sight, which usually signifies the presence of a hawk somewhere. At first, I didn't see any movement but, as I kept on watching, I noticed a commotion in the treetops. Sure enough, there was the hawk & the Blue Jays - the only birds with the guts to go up against it (more than a few of them juveniles). They wouldn't attack it outright, they just kept landing on nearby branches and screeching at it until it flew to another branch. I had to leave the window for a few minutes to



answer the phone. When I got back, a few birds were starting to come back to the feeders, mostly the brave Blue Jay soldiers, but others as well. 4 of the 6 Crows who've become regular diners at my feeders also flew in. I found the whole thing fascinating since Blue Jays and Crows are in the same family. But, when the Blue Jays could've really used some "family" size & muscle to back them up, their much larger cousins were nowhere to be found. For all those misinformed people who believe Blue Jays are vicious - I wish they could've witnessed this drama. Not only were the Blue Jays the only ones brave enough to go after the hawk, their screeching played a very important role in warning all the other birds to stay away. I've never seen a Blue Jay attack another bird in all my years of feeding & watching. They're loud & boisterous and they make a blustery appearance when they land at the feeders. Other than possibly scaring the other birds when they fly in for a landing, I've only found them to be protectors, not predators. I love them.

Jenny Witt / Lincoln, NE

Bald Headed Birds

We continue to receive calls from people concerned about bald headed birds at their feeders. There is no need to be alarmed as it is very common this time of year. Feather mites chew the feathers off close to the skin line of some birds. Larger birds such as Cardinals, Blue Jays and blackbirds are most noticeable. It may hurt a bird's ego, but causes them no harm and these mites have no impact on humans. As soon as the molt is complete these birds will return with a full head of new feathers, and a lot less embarrassment.



*Bald Cardinal submitted by
Barb Bennett*

Neighborhoods - Creating Corridors for Birds

Its well documented the number one cause for declining bird populations is loss of habitat. The late Roger Tory Peterson, father of the modern day field guide, once stated that backyards may one day provide some of the last remaining habitats for birds. But if neighborhoods created habitats for birds, and connected to other neighborhoods that created habitats, it would provide a benefit for birds today allowing them to travel through these corridors during migration or in search of reliable food sources. It's a concept the Vintage Heights Neighborhood Association recognized the value of and created wildlife habitat throughout their commons areas, greenspaces, and backyards. It's a project they would like to share



Late Summer Bird Feeding

The last few weeks of summer are upon us and we will begin to see a seasonal change by the end of the month. This is not only an exciting time for feeding birds, but an important time for birds that are preparing for the upcoming winter. The migration of songbirds is underway and many of those birds will stop to visit backyard bird feeders or utilize backyard water features. Watch for new or unusual birds arriving in your yard. Kinglets, warblers, and other migrating insect eaters will be attracted to water features, especially those that provide moving water. Native sparrows, from the white crowned to the white throated sparrow and others, will forage under the feeders. Watch for the Harris' sparrow, which is our largest sparrow, first identified by John Audubon in Council Bluffs and named after Mr. Harris, his close traveling companion. During migration as our summer birds begin to disappear, you'll just never know what you might be treated to as other species from the north move through or show-up to spend the winter.

This is also an important time to keep the bird feeders filled. Although activity at the feeder may slow down as birds take advantage of ripening natural foods, this is the time of year that birds establish food sources for the upcoming winter, including well stocked bird feeders. If you only provide food for birds during the winter months, it is suggested to start your winter bird feeding program now. That way you'll be certain to have a good population of birds when cold weather settles in.

Autumn Wing Tips

- Fall clean-up is just around the corner. This year consider leaving some leaves under the shrubs. This leaf litter harbors insects and larvae that are wintering over. This provides beneficial foraging for birds during the winter and early spring. It will increase the bird activity in your yard and possibly attract some early migrants in the spring.
- When gathering up fallen branches or limbs pruned from trees and shrubs, find a place in the corner of the yard to stack them in a pile. Brush piles make havens for birds to escape predators and provides shelter from cold winds.
- Water is essential for birds during the winter months. Easy access to water will help birds conserve energy in cold weather, and clean feathers provide better insulation. Make plans now for a source of water in your backyard for the birds this winter. Wild Bird Habitat has heated bird baths and a full line of thermostatically controlled bird bath heaters from 60 watt to 500 watt.



Raking leaves destroys the ecosystem. Butterflies, squirrels, songbirds, and many other animals depend on leaf litter for food or protection. Furthermore, fallen leaves cover up root systems, suppress weeds, preserve soil moisture, and act as natural fertilizer and help to keep your lawn healthy.

Changing Season - Tips for Birders



- Some folks had hummingbirds show up the last week of July. Mine, as usual, didn't appear in my yard until August 20th. There is still plenty of time to attract a hummer as they slowly filter through our area. Even the occasional straggler may stop by.



- Grackles will be forming small flocks in preparation to migrate and they may congregate around bird feeders. They will join larger pre-migratory flocks only to join even larger flocks of blackbirds that will soon pass by. It will only be a temporary inconvenience before they are gone for the winter. Be patient.



- Watch for native sparrows passing through. White-crowned and White-throated sparrows, Harris' Sparrow, Tree and Song Sparrows, and others. What's the easiest way to tell if it that little brown bird in your yard is a House Sparrow or a native sparrow? Watch their feeding habits. Native sparrows scratch the ground with their feet to turn up seeds. House Sparrows sweep with their bill.

- Wild Bird Habitat recommends everyone have a field guide for birds. Our staff can help you select one that fits your needs whether your a backyard bird watcher or avid bird enthusiast venturing out to identify as many birds as you can. Many online bird identification websites are available such as at nebraskabirdlibrary.org but nothing can replace a hard copy field guide where you can compare and ponder the birds you see.



- This time of year some folks may experience a slow down of birds visiting the feeders. One reason is that when birds are molting they venture out into open areas less often. Their flying ability is hampered making them more susceptible to predation. The other reason is a natural abundance of food that has matured or gone to seed. Birds will take advantage of that additional food resource. They know where the bird feeders are and we recommend you keep them stocked even if activity at the bird feeder slows down.

- It won't be long before cold nights will lead to iced over bird baths. It is best to check your bird bath heater before to make certain it is in working function. To test your thermostatically controlled bird bath heater put it in the freezer of your refrigerator for 40 minutes. Remove it from the freezer and plug it in. You should feel some warmth in just a few minutes. Remove scaling on the heater soaking it in a solution of vinegar and water then brush good.



- As the grasses and flowers in your gardens go to seed don't be too hasty to nip them off. Make those seed heads available for the birds. Coneflowers are particularly a favorite of Goldfinches and seeds that drop to the ground provide a banquet for the many ground foraging birds that will be passing through over the next couple of months.

SAVE 10%
All non-heated
bird baths
September 1st to 20th



SAVE 10%
All hummingbird
feeders
September 1st to 20th



Featured Bird Feeders for September
The "Magnet" Mesh Nyjer Feeders

Preferred by Goldfinches

10% OFF

September 1st to 20th



FREE

3 lbs. of Nyjer thistle
with the purchase of any
Nyjer Thistle Seed
Tube Feeder
A \$3.60 Value
September 1st to 20th



*Be Ready for bird migration
& enjoy it more with a good
field guide for birds!*

SAVE 10%

All field guides in
September



Roger Tory Peterson

An Affordable Recycled Plastic
Backyard Bird Feeders!

Green-Solutions

BIRDS choice™

September 1st to 20th



10% OFF all Green Solution Bird Feeders

Enjoy that morning coffee
or afternoon tea more while
watching birds with Wild
Bird Habitat's exclusive
nature coffee mugs

SAVE 10%

All cups & mugs in



The Wild Bird Habitat Stores

Things to do: Keep your bird feeders filled. Birds are locating winter food sources. Add a new style feeder to attract different birds. Position your feeders for winter viewing. We have a variety of hardware to help. Consider a heated bird bath for the birds. Now is the time to repair and clean feeders. All these things are easier to do in the fall than when the winter winds begin to blow.