



BACKYARD BIRD CENTER News

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Slowing Down?

I knew the day was coming sooner or later but it still find it hard to accept. My friend and colleague John Burwell is finally “retiring” from his retirement job here at the Backyard Bird Center.

John actually precedes me as an official employee as he worked for John Phillips before Melanie and I purchased the store.

He promises to help out from time to time but he and Linda are going to finally take full advantage of both of them being retired! See why I have a question mark after “Slowing Down”!

Melanie and I want to thank John for his years of service and countless contributions to our store and its successful growth. I can’t look at our “deck” without thinking of he and Walt’s excellent construction job.



Happy Birding My Friend!

How To Attract a Mate (Avian Style)

by Mark McKellar (reprint from Spring 2004)

What was your secret for attracting members of the opposite sex? Perhaps you have/had a favorite cologne or perfume that just drives the “ladies or gents” crazy. Could it have been a “can’t miss” pick up line? Maybe it was a new suit or dress that brought out the blue in your eyes? I know, I know, it was the way you sang your love’s favorite songs.

In the bird world, there are many methods of attracting a mate. Since the sense of smell is poorly refined in birds, perfumes (or pheromones) are not used by birds. Life in the bird world is oriented around sight and sound.

Let’s start with visual attraction. A fresh, bright set of new feathers is in order for the mate attraction season. Nowhere is this more evident than with the American goldfinch. A bright yellow bird in a dull winter landscape is easy pickings for a hawk or house cat, but in the colorful spring and summer, bright yellow is not only attractive, it blends in with the vegetation.

Why aren’t the females bright and colorful? Don’t they have to attract a mate as well? Unlike the human world, females are faced with the very dangerous task of sitting exposed on a nest of eggs for a couple of weeks. If she were brightly colored, she would attract attention, thus danger to herself and her young.

Ever wonder why the birds start singing so early in the morning? Song is



Field Sparrow Photo by Rick Jordahl

another important trait for attracting a mate. Singing is just not good enough for woodpeckers. While they belt out their own songs with the other birds, they will find a nice hollow log that resonates sound very well when they drum. Down spouts on houses make great loud sounds for them, especially at 6 a.m.

While I was never much of a dancer, members of the grouse group, especially the greater prairie chicken certainly are. Much like the disco era, male prairie chickens gather on open, short grass areas in early mornings each spring in an effort to dance their way into a female chicken’s heart.

Perhaps my favorite mate attraction method goes to the loggerhead shrike. Shrikes are robin-sized birds that kill their prey by first stunning them with a whack of their bill then impaling them on thorns. A male will often leave all or parts of mice, frogs, large grasshoppers and even small birds hanging from thorns on a single bush. One theory is this is his



... continued from cover

way of proving that he is a good provider.

Singing, dancing and sharp clothes – it does kind of sound like the making of a good movie. Choosing the right “mate” is incredibly important for birds as well as any animal. Your goal is to survive and perpetuate the species. The wrong choice doesn’t mean marriage counseling or divorce court, it often is life or death.

Southern Platte Pass Trail Butterfly Garden

By Carla Dods, Platte Land Trust

Missouri Master Naturalists and Platte Land Trust were awarded a Platte County Parks & Recreation grant in 2015 to establish a roadside butterfly garden along the Southern Platte Pass Trail in Parkville. The trail runs along 64th Street/45 Highway from I-29 to 9 Highway. Check out the garden near Riss Lake on the north side.

The butterfly garden will support monarch and other butterflies, bees, and song birds with food and shelter. Milkweed and other native plants were selected for their benefits to wildlife during the growing season, especially spring and fall monarch butterfly migrations.

Although the plants were small in 2015, they were focusing energy on a strong root system. The mantra for native plants is "Sleep, creep, leap" for how native plants grow each of the first 3 years. Now a second year of growth has started and some of the plants are a good size.

While taking care of the garden in 2015, Master Naturalists found caterpillars for some of our wonderful butterflies, including monarchs. We anxiously awaited the arrival of the 2016 butterflies during the spring migration. There will be more flowers blooming this second season, to feed more butterflies, bees, and pollinating insects. And the song birds that feed the insects to their young! Watch the garden grow as you drive, walk or bike by.

Are butterflies and gardening a passion for you? Join Master Naturalists, Platte Land Trust and other volunteers as we care for the garden. Sign up on the Platte Land Trust website, www.plattelandtrust.com.

On My Honor . . .

While we are on the topic of native plantings and butterfly gardens, I have to take a minute and brag on our son Matthew. In June, he finished his Eagle Scout Project by leading the installation of a butterfly way station/pollinator garden at Union Chapel Elementary. We are so proud of the hours and hours he poured into this project and want to give special thanks to Carla and David Dods and Mary Nemecek who donated many hours to make this garden such a success. If you get a chance, ride by and check it out. It is the area just outside the front door of the school.



Favorites Hummingbird Feeders & Supplies

Schrodt's Faceted Glass Feeders

A favorite in the “pretty” category.



Aspects Hummzingers
Best selling Feeders. Lifetime warranty, Made in the USA, easy to clean, most effective anti-bee design.



Songbird Essentials Humminbird Brush Set

Favorite hummingbird cleaning brushes. One for the bottle, one for the small ports



Songbird Essential Nectar Protector

Simply the safest, most effective way to keep ants out of your nectar and jelly feeders . . . period!

NectarAid Self Measuring Pitcher

So easy to use and cuts down on washing a bunch of dishes. It remembers the ratio for you Just mix, pour and store!



BirdsChoice WGRES Hood Protects your nectar from rains, provides shade and gives you a lot of extra red color to attract Hummingbirds!

HUMMINGBIRD NUMBERS PEAK IN LATE AUGUST/EARLY SEPTEMBER



Have Binos, Will Travel!

Wow what a spring season for the bird feeders. The orioles and grosbeaks were absolutely spectacular over that middle part of May. Yes, this is a bit later than normal but the numbers that people were reporting were amazing. Some had well over 20 orioles coming to their feeders and I know my high count for Rose-breasted Grosbeaks was 7 at once on my platform feeder. I can't say the field birding was equal to those numbers. Warbler migration was rated average at best by most folks. The amount of rain and the timing of fronts just worked against us this spring.



*Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Photo by Rick Jordahl*

The hikes and programs listed below are available to our store customers
(organized groups, can be arranged separately)
and fill on a first come first served basis.

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

Thursday Morning Bird Hikes

Every fall we suggest that you to get out as much as possible during the migration period. This fall we are going to try to help you out with that charge. Every Thursday morning during April and May, Ruth, or myself will lead a morning bird hike at one of our favorite spots. Hopefully, one or all will fit in with your busy schedule.

August 25th	Cooley Lake	8:00 - 10:30
Sept. 1st	Little Bean Marsh	8:00 - 10:30
Sept 8th	Weston Bend S.P.	8:00 - 10:30
Sept 15th	Parkville Nature Sanc.	8:00 - 9:30
Sept 22nd	Amity Woods Sanc.	8:00 - 9:30
Sept 29th	Sorry, No Hike	
Oct 6th	Smithville Lake	8:00 - 10:30
Oct 13th	Martha Lafite	8:00 - 10:30
Oct 20th	Wyandotte Co. Lake	8:00 - 9:30
Oct 27th	Lewis & Clark S.P	8:00 - 10:30
Nov 3rd	Amity Woods Sanc.	8:00 - 9:30

In Store Classes

Planting a Butterfly/Pollinator Garden

Wednesday, August 31st 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Join us as we go through our process used from planning to planting the pollinator garden at Union Chapel Elementary. Primary Designers David and Carla Dods and Mary Nemecek will be on hand to answer questions about the plants that were selected and why, soil preparation and layout. This is just in time for you to plan on what you want to buy at the Native Plant Sale on September 10th.



Monarch photo by Brian Voorhees

Weekend Bird Hikes

Fall Shorebird Migration

Sunday, August 21st 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

Because shorebirds are so dependent on water levels and there are only a few spots in our area suited for them, we will not make our decision on exactly where we are going until a few days ahead of time. Sign up and leave you contact information and we will let you know the exact location. This is the best time of year to study shorebirds in both adult and juvenile plumage.



*Greater & Lesser Yellowlegs
Photo by Mary Nemecek*

Mark Your Calendars

3rd Annual Native Plant Sale Store Parking Lot

Saturday September 10th 9am - 5pm

Once again, this event will benefit Burroughs Audubon. The popularity of these plant sales continue to grow and that is great for wildlife and our customers!

September at Smithville

Sunday, September 18th 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Mid September can be very productive at Smithville Lake. It is a time of movement for many species of gulls and is a great time to look for rarities like Lesser Black-backed and Sabine's Gull. A few years ago a Long-tailed Jaeger was discovered harrassing the many gulls. Meet at the Jerry Litton Center at 1 p.m.



Always check for more programs on our website:
www.backyardbirdcenter.com/calendar



SPECIES PROFILE: Common Yellowthroat (*Geothlypis trichas*)

Story and photo by Ruth Simmons

Each spring, I look for a little masked bandit skulking in my shrubby vegetation. Sometimes I can hear their “which it ta, which it ta, which it ta” song, which lets me know that they are in the area. Though its name doesn’t say so, the Common Yellowthroat is a warbler, the small colorful group of birds that spend most of their time in the tops of the trees. This warbler, however, is kind to our necks and moves much closer to the ground. Males are olive colored on the back with a bright yellow throat and breast with gray flanks and belly. His black mask has a white border, making him one of the easier warblers to identify. The female, on the other hand, is olive on the back with a pale olive breast and belly and no mask. She lives up to her name with a bright yellow throat. Yellowthroats are also true to the Common part of their name; nesting in Mexico, all of the lower 48 states, and across most of Canada. Dense, marshy areas are favored for nesting, with nests usually less than four feet off the ground. Both parents care for the young and in warmer areas have two broods each summer. While you won’t see them at your feeders, leaving a shrubby area near a water feature could get you some great looks at this little masked bandit.



**SEPTEMBER 3RD IS BINOCULAR SATURDAY:
EVERYONE WHO TRIES A PAIR OF BINOCULARS
WILL RECEIVE A FREE GIFT!
REGISTER TO WIN A FREE PAIR OF BINOCULARS**




CONSERVATION CORNER: Powell Gardens

Article and photo by Mary Nemecek

East of Kansas City on 50 Hwy sits a botanical treasure- Powell Gardens. A 970 acre combination of exquisite gardens, architectural features and natural areas, Powell Gardens offers something for both people and wildlife.

Alan Branhagen, Director of Horticulture, is responsible for creating a winning interactive experience for visitors. His design of the Island Garden won top large garden design award for the use of perennials by the Perennial Plant Association. Alan wrote ‘The Gardeners’ Butterfly Book’ and frequently contributes to the KC Gardener and other publications. What many garden visitors don’t know is that Alan is a skilled birder and naturalist. His concern and love of the natural world is woven throughout the work at Powell Gardens. From the care of the natural areas to the education incorporated in Powell Garden’s many attractions, Alan promotes and conserves the natural world.

Powell Gardens hosts a variety of events including native plant sales, educational classes, dinners of culinary excellence and butterfly counts. Top event billing though has to go to the Powell Garden’s butterfly festival, scheduled for August 5-7th and 12-14th this year. The two outdoor breezeways host butterflies native to our area including the imperiled monarch butterfly. Experts from Monarch Watch in Lawrence, KS and Master Naturalists will be on hand to answer questions about butterflies and how to attract them.

You don’t need to wait for an event to visit Powell Gardens though. The experience starts in the parking lot arboretum filled with the native trees of Missouri. Stroll through the gardens behind the visitors center and onto the Byron Schutz Nature Trail that winds through Powell Garden’s natural areas. There are 24 interpretive signs along the trail and plenty of frog filled ponds, butterflies and birds. Enjoy lunch at Cafe Thyme (check hours as they vary seasonally) where a window table will give you a good view of the bird feeders.

For more information go to www.powellgardens.org





Time To Ask Mark...

Q. I had more orioles and grosbeaks than ever this spring. Why were they so plentiful?

A. That is a good question and I can only guess as to the conditions that came together that made these beautiful species converge on feeders in such high numbers. My best guess is the quick warm up and leaf out in March put plants on an earlier than normal schedule then the winds turned out of the north during much of the migration season in April. This held up many species from migrating a good week or so later than normal. Both Orchard and Baltimore Orioles love the blooms of Black Locust trees and others. By the time the birds arrived, many of their favored foods were past peak and they found feeder stations to be an easy way to refuel for their continued journeys or nest building.



*Male Rose-breasted Grosbeak
by Rick Jordahl*

Q. There were so many orioles coming to the feeders this spring and outside of the adult males, I was having a hard time telling them apart. Help?

A. You are not alone. First the two species we had coming. Baltimore Orioles and their smaller cousins the Orchard Oriole. The adult males are easy. The Baltimore in their famous bright orange and black plumage and the Orchards in their “burnt” orange and black. The females and immature males get to be a bit trickier. The small size of the Orchards are helped by the more greenish plumage of the females and immatures. Baltimore females and immature males have varying degrees of black in their head and orange/yellow on their bodies. In truth is a puzzling ID even for “experts”. It is best just to think of them as Baltimore Orioles!

Q. It was so cool and wet this spring. How does this affect our native birds?

A. The birds that are most likely impacted are the ground nesting species like bobwhites, prairie chickens and meadowlarks. Even Killdeer and Common Nighthawks can have a hard time keeping their young ones dry and warm. For most of our arboreal species, the trouble comes with the impact the weather has on insects. Research tells us that 9,000 caterpillars are fed to 4 to 6 chickadee nestlings over their 16 days in the nest. A delay or reduced hatching of certain insects that a species of bird depends on can greatly impact the number of young they are able to raise. It is just one reason that we encourage you to plant native tree, shrubs and wildflowers that support our native caterpillars and pollinators.



*Killdeer
by Mary Nemecek*

KOWA BINOCULARS HAVE ARRIVED!

INTRODUCTORY SPECIAL - TAKE 10% OFF ALL YF AND SV MODEL BINOCULARS THROUGH AUGUST

You probably read my review of the new Kowa Spotting Scope that we brought in last year. Now we are bringing in Kowa's superior line of binoculars.



The YF 30-8 Porro Prism Binocular is an ideal starter binocular!



The SV series come in 4 models. The 8X33, 10X33, 8X42 & 10X42 Binoculars are all waterproof and feature multi-coated Eco-glass optics and phase corrected Prisms.



*“He knows he’d be a poorer man if he’d never seen an eagle fly”
- John Denver, Rocky Mountain High*

Zero-Waste Fruit Blend
from Wild Delight

No one likes a bunch of waste on the ground under their bird feeders. Zero-Waste is just that, waste free feeding. Primarily sunflower kernels, peanuts, mixed tree nuts and various fruits, it is a favorite blend for those who hate the hulls that gather under your feeder station.

During the month of August, Zero-Waste Fruit will be:
\$5 OFF a 20lb Bag or
\$1 OFF a 5lb Bag.



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DID YOU KNOW? by Mark McKellar

One shorebird we will not see pass through here during fall migration is the American Golden Plover. While we may see them in the spring, most of these amazing birds take a much different fall route. After the breeding season in the arctic is concluded, these guys leave the coast of Canada and fly thousands of miles over the Atlantic Ocean before making landfall in South America. Their final winter destination is Patagonia. That is a total journey of more than 25,000 miles with more than 2,400 miles over open ocean!



*American Golden Plover
by Mary Nemecek*

BLACKBIRDS EXIT



*Male Common Grackle
Photo by Ruth Simmons*

Many customers hate dealing with the many blackbirds that invade our area in the spring for the nesting season. Some change their feeding patterns, others quit feeding all together in frustration. The good news is, by late summer most of those pesky blackbirds have moved out of the urban areas and start feeding in farm fields and pastures. By early fall the bulk of them move to the southern states for the winter.

In celebration, mention this and take \$2 OFF one 20lb bag of your favorite blend once in August.



*Male Rufous Hummingbirds are the
color of a freshly coined penny.
Photo by Dawn Shaw*

UPCOMING IMPORTANT BIRD DATES

- Late July - Adult orioles start to migrate out of our area.
- Early August - Best time to see Rufous Hummingbirds at feeders.
- August - Bluebirds nest a third time. Clean out old nest.
- August - Martins and swallows start to gather around large lakes.
- September - Most neotropical migrants are migrating south.
- Early October - Last hummingbird sightings come in.
- Mid-October - Safe to clean out nest boxes, juncos start to arrive.
- November - Waterfowl migration is in full swing.