



Wild About Birds

Spring 2005

# BirdChat

Backyard birdfeeding experts serving the Cincinnati area since 1989!

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## Turning Your Backyard into Wild Bird Habitat: Spring is Here...and the Living is NOT Easy!

**S**pring has finally arrived but this should not signal the end of the birdfeeding season. Many people believe that there is no need to feed the birds in spring and summer. We look at the budding trees and flowers in spring, and the blossoms and greenery in summer, and assume there is plenty of natural food.

The truth is that during the spring and early summer, birds have a hard time finding natural sources of food. The seeds that matured last summer that the birds fed on in the fall and winter, are used up now; our plants and trees have not yet developed seeds and fruit and the insect population is not yet at its peak.

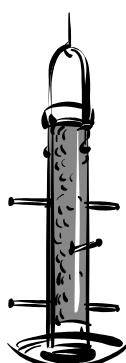
By maintaining your birdfeeding stations during the spring, in addition to your feeder regulars, you may be surprised by visits from migrating species or you may see some of the species that reside in our area only in the summer. In the spring it's not unusual for sunflower feeders to be visited by rose-breasted grosbeaks for a day or two. If you put out orange halves or nectar the orioles might drop by. Red-bellied

woodpeckers like oranges, too! Grape jelly also attracts orioles, as well as catbirds and robins. Apple halves might attract robins, catbirds, blue jays, and cardinals. Hummingbirds will soon become daily visitors if you provide a constant supply of fresh nectar. You might attract bluebirds and robins to a tray feeder if you put mealworms in a shallow container with slick sides (like a tuna can or small margarine tub) so they can't crawl out! Put peanut pieces in a feeder and you'll be visited by chickadees, titmice, nuthatches and woodpeckers.



Another feature you should not omit from your bird feeding station is a water source. A bird bath with a dripper or mister will be especially attractive to your wild birds this spring and summer.

So, by all means, DON'T stop feeding the birds in spring and summer. The bonus you earn is that birds are more likely to build nests and raise their young in the trees and shrubs around your property if you provide them with a well stocked feeding area year round!



*Wild About Birds* is owned and operated in Milford, Ohio by Peggie Flierl. *BirdChat* is a periodic newsletter written by Ms. Flierl for customers of *Wild About Birds*. Material appearing in *BirdChat* may not be reprinted without permission. Any comments should be directed to Ms. Flierl at:

1133 Main Street,  
Milford OH 45150  
(513) 248-2044  
[www.birdchat.com](http://www.birdchat.com)

## Species Specifics: Ruby-Throated Hummingbird

*"They can fly in any direction – even backwards!"*

*"...they reach their summer home – your backyard – in late April or early May!"*

One of our favorite summer visitors is the hummingbird; the only species that nests east of the Mississippi is the ruby-throated hummingbird.

Ruby-throats are only three quarters of an inch long and weigh a mere tenth of an ounce. Their feathers are specially structured which creates the jewel-like, iridescent appearance. They can fly in any direction – even backwards! Hummers have tremendous appetites, consuming up to 50% of their weight each day, especially during migration.

Ruby-throated hummingbirds spend the winter months in Central America (Costa Rica, Guatemala, Nicaragua, etc.) and Mexico. In late winter after they have molted into their breeding plumage, they begin the long journey north towards their nesting territories. All along the way they gorge themselves on tiny insects and nectar in order to have sufficient fat reserves to take them on the final non-stop 550 mile push across the gulf of Mexico into the U.S. That

leg of the trip takes the tiny birds about 18–25 hours. The ruby-throats continue north at the rate of about 15-20 miles per day, as the flowers they feed upon come into bloom, until they reach their summer home – your backyard – in late April or early May!

The male hummers arrive first followed by the females a few days later. Most species of birds form pair bonds and raise the young together. Not the ruby-throats – the males and females associate only briefly during mating, then the male leaves to establish and defend a feeding territory

while the female raises the young on her own. This behavior may explain why during the middle of the summer the hummingbirds seem to disappear from our yards.

The female builds the tiny half-walnut sized nest on her own in about 10 days. The outside is covered with lichen in order to camouflage it in a tree. She lays 2 pure white eggs which she incubates alone for about 16 days. The hummingbirds are no bigger than garden peas when they hatch and will stay in the nest for 14-31 days depending on the weather. When the young ruby-throats leave the nest, the female may continue to feed them for about a month. The plumage of both male and female juveniles resembles the adult female hummingbird. In late summer you may begin to see a few ruby feathers on the young male's throat.

The ruby-throated hummingbirds begin their migration, which is triggered by day length, in the fall. This is the time of year you may notice an explosion in the number of

hummers in your backyard. You should leave your feeders in place so the migrating birds can stop along the way to feed. Do not take down your nectar feeders until you go a whole week without seeing any hummers (usually late September to mid-October). This will ensure that the migrating birds store up plenty of fat on their way towards making their spectacular non-stop crossing of the Gulf of Mexico. When they reach their winter territory they will start their annual molt and the miraculous cycle begins all over again!



### Amazing Hummer Facts

- ❖ Found only in the western hemisphere
- ❖ Fly about 30mph
- ❖ Diet is 75% nectar, 25% insects and spiders
- ❖ Wings beat about 70-80 times per second
- ❖ Depending on air temperatures, hummingbirds must eat every 5-60 minutes
- ❖ Do not have a very good sense of smell, are attracted to flowers' colors not scents like insects are
- ❖ Weight equals about 2½ paper clips
- ❖ At rest, their hearts beat 500 times a minute (8 beats per second)
- ❖ Visit from 1,000 to 3,000 flowers a day for nectar
- ❖ Nectar recipe closest chemically to real nectar is: 4 parts water to 1 part table sugar; boil the water before mixing it with the sugar; store extra nectar in refrigerator
- ❖ Never use food color, honey, cherry juice, Kool-aid, 7UP, artificial sweeteners, etc.
- ❖ Feeders with very few parts and those that are easy to take apart are best
- ❖ Glass bottle feeders are easiest to clean
- ❖ Nectar must be changed and feeder should be cleaned at least two times per week
- ❖ Some part of feeder should be red to attract hummingbirds
- ❖ Try to avoid yellow as it attracts bees



# Wild About Birds' Seasonal Shopping Guide ~ Spring 2005

**Wild About Birds** is not only the area's best shop for backyard birdfeeding supplies but we also have a fabulous selection of gifts for Mother's Day (Father's Day, teacher appreciation, graduation, weddings, too!).



Here are two pictures of our new, expanded, twice as large shop.....



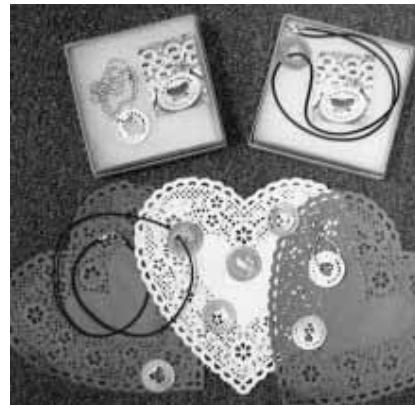
...lots of shopping opportunities.  
Come by and check out your brand new  
*Wild About Birds!*



Delightfully scented Lang candles come in several sizes in great reusable designer boxes.



Moms love Burt's Bees' products—favorites are Head-to-Toe starter kits and Milk and Honey body lotion. Two new items are the Hand Repair Kit and Lip Shimmers—Burt's famous lip balm with a little color added!



For your pocket, key chain, or necklace — blessing rings— are versatile charms that touch the heart!



We carry USA made Yesteryears Pottery in several handy pieces (lotion dispenser, spoon jar, salt/pepper, candy dish) and beautiful designs.

**Happy Mother's Day**

**\$5 OFF**

any \$25 purchase

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Backyard birdfeeding experts!  
1133 Main Street  
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513-248-2044

Coupon expires 05/08/05

# Wild About Birds' Seasonal Shopping Guide ~ Spring 2005

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This is the time of year for putting out the hummingbird feeders and nesting boxes!

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Three of our best selling hummingbird feeders; we have more than a dozen different designs from which to choose.



These cute birdhouses from Great Lakes are not only quite decorative but are completely suitable for outdoor use!



Looker Products in Illinois makes these terrific nesting boxes! The View-Thru, on the far left, is a best seller—it has an acrylic side panel so you can peek at the babies!

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Bird bottles from Anthony Stoneware provide happy homes for bluebirds, wrens, and chickadees.



New, wonderful, and decorative hummingbird feeders—the Little Pear from Bella Bird and Holland Hill's Victorian Love Birds; Mom (or Dad, the bride-to-be, your favorite teacher, or the new graduate) would love these two feeders!



Heartwood birdhouses attract many different cavity nesting birds in our backyards.



# Provide Homes for Bug Catchers

**B**irds nest during the spring and summer and most birds feed insects to their nestlings/fledglings. So rather than fool with one of those “bug zappers” or smoky, smelly candles to ward off insects this summer, why not invite more birds into your yard to do the job for you!

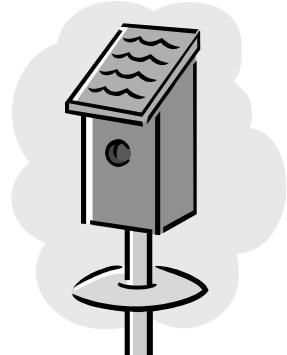
In addition to continuing your bird feeding program all year long, placing nesting boxes throughout your property will attract cavity nesting birds. Bluebirds, chickadees, wrens, titmice, nuthatches and some woodpeckers will readily accept a manmade box in place of a natural cavity for raising their young.

It's important to remember, whether you're purchasing ready-made or building your own nest boxes, each species of bird has specific hole size and dimension requirements (see chart

below). Additionally, all good bird houses should have the following features:

- natural, unfinished wood is best
- only non-toxic stains should be used; wood should not be painted
- wood should be at least  $\frac{3}{4}$ ” thick
- you must be able to open the box (one panel should lift up or be removable) for clean-out
- ventilation holes/slots are required at the top of the sides; drainage holes in the bottom
- no perch but rough inside front so babies can crawl out

*Wild About Birds* offers a wide assortment of nesting boxes both ready made and in kit form. This is the ideal time to put up your new nesting boxes so hurry in, pick up a few and offer homes to nature's “bug catchers”!



SPECIES	BOX SIZE (HXWXD)	HOLE SIZE	DIS-TANCE ABOVE FLOOR	MOUNT HEIGHT	HABITAT PLACEMENT
Bluebird	8"X5"X5"	1½"	6"	4-6'	Brushy borders, pastures, no tall undergrowth
Carolina Chickadee	8"X4"X4"	1⅛"	6"	6-15'	Brushy borders, woods
Nuthatch	8"X4"X4"	1¼"	6"	5-20'	Woods
Titmouse	8"X4"X4"	1¼"	6"	6-15'	Woods
Downy Woodpecker	8"X4"X4"	1¼"	6"	6-20'	Woods, yard
Carolina Wren	6"X4"X4"	1⅛"	1-6"	6-10'	Woods, thick underbrush
House Wren	6"X4"X4"	1"	1-6"	6-10'	Brushy borders



## Things to do!

- ✓ Open your garden pond when the water temperature reaches 50°.
- ✓ Clean up birdbaths using a very mild (10%) bleach solution and a scrub brush.
- ✓ Put out short pieces of string, twine, yarn, hair from your dog's brush, but no dryer lint, for the birds to add to their nests.
- ✓ Mid-April is the best time to put out orange halves to attract orioles.
- ✓ Hummingbird feeders should be cleaned and put out now, too.
- ✓ Add a dripper to your birdbath. The sound of dripping water will make the bath irresistible to the wild birds in your backyard.
- ✓ If you find a nestling out of its nest, put it back. The adults will continue to care for it; it's only a myth that your scent will keep them away.



## Did you know?

- ? April is usually our “stormiest” month.
- ? Because their lifespan is so short, most backyard birds are only 10-12 months old when they breed for the first time.
- ? There are about 100 billion birds in the world. About 7 billion live in the U.S. during the nesting season.
- ? The robin is a forest bird that, over time, adapted to suburban areas.
- ? A bird's feathers are heavier than its skeleton.
- ? Ducks and geese usually “imprint” during the first day after hatching but auditory imprinting begins 1-2 days before hatching.
- ? Nestling tree swallows eat their weight in insects every day.
- ? Birds pant to keep cool—just like a dog!





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**SHOP HOURS:** Mon-Fri 10am-6pm  
Sat 10am-5pm  
Sun noon-4pm

**INSIDE:**

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Hey, as many of you have pointed out to us over the past several months —

## **WE'VE OUTGROWN OUR NEST!**

So...by the time you get this newsletter, the "reconstruction" of *Wild About Birds* will be complete. We've broken down the center wall and doubled the size of the shop. It's gorgeous! Come check it out!

Mark your calendars now for our big "Reopening Sale-abration", Saturday 6/18!  
(Watch your mail for more information.)