



Wild About Birds

Fall 2005

BirdChat

Backyard birdfeeding experts serving the Cincinnati area since 1989!

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Wild About Birds is owned and operated in Milford, Ohio by Peggy 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:

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Turning Your Backyard into Wild Bird Habitat: Fall and Winter

Fall is a busy time in our backyards and a perfect time for you to set up your birdfeeding station. If you are a year-round bird feeder, like me, then now is the time to get all your feeders repaired and cleaned.

During the fall months our resident birds form small flocks seeking winter feeding territory. Additionally, we are fall and winter hosts to several species of birds that migrate into our area to escape the harsh northern winter. These species include juncos, white-throated sparrows, red-breasted nuthatches, pine siskin, purple finches, yellow-bellied sapsuckers, white-crowned sparrows, brown creepers, evening grosbeaks, fox sparrows, and tree sparrows; they, too, will be searching for good feeding grounds.

Birds, like all animals, require fresh food, water, and shelter to survive. They will choose your backyard this fall if you meet all these needs when you set up your birdfeeding station. In order to reduce competition, different birds feed in different niches. Your backyard wild bird habitat should include feeders of varying types and at different feeding levels to attract the greatest variety of birds. One of our Wood Country hopper feeders mounted on a pole and filled with Songbird Mix will attract cardinals, chickadees, titmice, nuthatches, woodpeckers, and finches. They'll eat the sunflower seeds, safflower seeds, and peanut pieces in the mix and will scratch

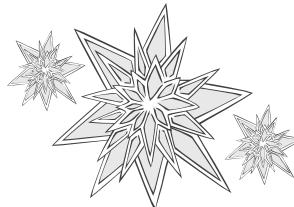
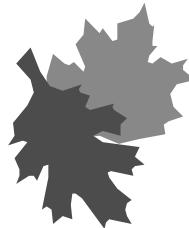
the millet on to the ground where it will be eaten by the ground feeders—doves, sparrows, and juncos. A tube feeder (Aspects, Droll Yankee, Vari-Craft) hung in a tree and filled with black oil sunflower seeds, safflower seeds, or our Cardinal Mix will attract the smaller

birds—chickadees, titmice, nuthatches. Add a finch tube with tiny holes to dispense Nyjer seed to attract resident gold finches and house finches and our winter visitors—purple finches and pine siskin. A Wood Country tray placed close to the ground and filled with Songbird Mix and some cracked corn will be visited by all the ground feeders. If you want to attract all the different woodpeckers common to our area—downy, hairy, red-bellied, red-headed, pileated—then be sure to add a suet feeder or peanut feeder (Wood Country, Aspects, Looker, Wildlife's Choice, etc.)

Make sure you offer fresh water to the birds all year. During the winter months install a deicer (Nelson) so that your feathered friends have access to water every day. It may surprise you to know that you will attract a greater variety of birds to your yard if you include a bird bath in your backyard habitat; not all birds are attracted to a feeding station but all birds require water for drinking and preening.

The shrubs and trees in your yard will provide cover from predators. You can increase the amount of shelter you provide by building a brush pile using the clippings from your fall pruning. After the holidays, recycle your Christmas tree by placing it near your feeding station for additional cover. Please make sure that any cover you provide is not so close to your birdfeeders that a predator (your neighbor's cat!) might hide and pounce on unsuspecting birds.

If you establish a birdfeeding station early this fall that imitates wild bird habitat by meeting all their survival requirements, you will entice a great variety of birds to your yard throughout the fall and winter seasons.



Species Specifics: Raptors

“...the importance of raptors... preservation of their native habitat...”

“...from the Latin raptare which means to seize and carry away.”

Many of you probably don't know that we, *Wild About Birds*' staff, are volunteers with RAPTOR, Inc. RAPTOR (Regional Association for the Protection and Treatment of Raptors) is a non-profit organization that relies on volunteers to carry out two important missions — 1) Educate the public on the importance of raptors and the preservation of their native habitat; 2) Rehabilitate and return injured or orphaned raptors to their natural environment. During business hours, we take phone calls reporting these injured birds of prey and dispatch the volunteers to pick them up.

So, what is a raptor? Raptors are diurnal (Falconiformes—hawks, eagles, osprey, vultures) and nocturnal (Strigiformes—owls) birds of prey or predators: they feed upon other animals. These flesh eating birds usually have sharp, curved talons (claws) and hooked beaks. The word raptor comes from the Latin *raptare* which means to seize and carry away.

Native Americans admired the hunting skills of birds of prey and even worshipped them. Early settlers, however, observed raptors killing domestic animals and viewed them as a threat to their own survival. Unfortunately, this fear has passed through the generations and still exists today. What some people fail to realize though is that if predators don't keep the population of prey ani-

mals (often rodents) in balance, these animals will over-populate and threaten the food supply—a balance of both populations (prey and predator) is necessary.

Raptors are indeed killers on the wing. Although the hook on the end of its bill looks lethal, it is usually the



bird's needle sharp claws that do the killing. Hawks and falcons dive at their prey at incredibly high speeds, piercing its body and underlying vital organs. Small birds are picked off in mid-air; larger prey is often knocked to the ground with a killing blow. Bald eagles grab fish from the water and osprey dive in after their fish prey! Vultures don't hunt at all—at least not living prey! Vultures “hunt” for carcasses; they clean up road kill and other dead animals so that the environment is not fouled by the stink of rotting flesh and hoards of swarming flies.

The biggest advantage hawks and eagles have over their prey is their incredible eyesight; their eyes are bigger than their brains and an eagle's eyes (a bird that weighs less than ten pounds) are actually larger than a human's. Owls' brains are even smaller because not only do they have incredible eyesight but also over-the-top auditory capabilities; owls do most of their hunting at night and must locate their prey by sound. All of this equipment takes up a lot of space in their skulls!

Raptors deserve our respect, if not admiration, for the skills they possess and the role they play in the balance of nature.



If you would like information about volunteer positions available with RAPTOR, Inc. or would like to make a donation to this worthy organization, please call Cindy Alverson 513-677-9422.

Summer 2005 “Used Feeder” Sale Results

The following is the press release that appeared in the paper this summer following our very successful fund raiser for RAPTOR, Inc.

“..sent a check to RAPTOR, Inc. in the amount of \$1,000.00!”

Wild About Birds, backyard birdfeeding supply, garden and gift shop in Milford, contributes to the Milford Facility Building Fund of RAPTOR, Inc.

RAPTOR, Inc. is a volunteer organization in the Cincinnati area dedicated to the rescue, rehabilitation, and eventual release of injured or orphaned birds of prey. *Wild About Birds* has been involved with RAPTOR for many years; during business hours *Wild About Birds*' staff members take phone

calls reporting these injured birds of prey and dispatch RAPTOR volunteers to the caller's location.

Peggie Flierl, *Wild About Birds*' owner said, “Earlier this summer the generous customers of *Wild About Birds* turned in almost 100 used feeders that we cleaned and repaired. During our annual Summer Clearance Sale, August 5-7, our customers came through again and bought back these reconditioned feeders, donating about \$500 to RAPTOR. We were happy to match our customer's contribution to support RAPTOR's expansion in Milford and sent a check to RAPTOR, Inc. in the amount of \$1000!”

Dear BirdGal

Dear BirdGal, I just love red-breasted nuthatches! Some winters I have them at my feeders; some winters I don't. How can I attract these cute little birds to my backyard? Betty in Milford

Dear Betty, I agree with you! I think the diminutive red-breasted nuthatch is one of our most delightful winter visitors. However, unlike the juncos and white-throated sparrows, the red-breasted nuthatch does not visit our backyard every winter. I recently paged through some old journals of mine and discovered a pretty consistent pattern for red-breasted nuthatch visits. They are an irruptive species that emigrate out of their northern territories during years when the wild food crop is low. Irruptive species move in response to food requirements not weather like most migrating species. I have read reports that suggest the reason we see these irruptive species (purple finches, pine siskin, redpolls, evening grosbeaks) every other year is that some trees are alternate bearing which means that during the "off year" the food supply up north is naturally low. If they do visit us this winter, keep them around with peanuts and suet! BG



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\$10 OFF
Any heated birdbath
or birdbath de-icer!

(Coupon expires 11/20/05)

Seasonal Shopping Ideas

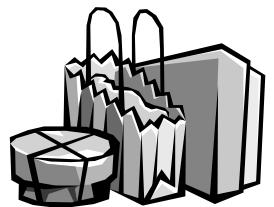
Fall is the time of year we love to fill our homes with wonderful aromas. At *Wild About Birds* our candles and candle accessories are very special! Our Lang candles come in wonderful reusable boxes. We also have electric candle warmers, both large and small units, so you can "burn" candles all the time without a flame—much safer! To melt in your warmers we have wickless soy wax candles and water based candles—the scent in both these products lasts much longer than melting traditional wax candles in your warmer. The newest addition to our candle line is "wax potpourri": cute, little pieces of shaped wax (i.e. Orange Slice looks just like a little slice of orange) that you can mix and match and melt in your small warming unit creating your own special seasonal fragrance for your home.



We discovered a gorgeous ensemble of kitchen linens from KayDee Designs—Hautman's beautiful

Orchard Cardinals on an apron, oven mitt, t-towels and placemats. We have the same design on a tote bag and matching umbrella, too!

The holidays are only a few weeks away—yikes! We have beautiful holiday cards this year; both Lang and Pumpernickel Press. We also have a few gorgeous Lang 2006 (yikes again!) calendars left. You must check out the winter themed giftware we have in stock right now especially if you've enjoyed our portly bird items (flags and key keepers) through the years. The line has expanded to include portly bird flags for fall and winter—too cute! We also have some party ware decorated with these adorable little birds—in their winter garb.





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INSIDE:

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Things to do!

- ✓ Close your garden pond if water temperatures have been below 50°.
- ✓ Plant berry bushes now to attract different birds next year.
- ✓ Hummingbird feeders should stay out until the end of October to ensure all the birds migrating through from further north get plenty of nectar during their long flight south!
- ✓ Make sure your heated birdbath or de-icer is in good working order.
- ✓ Clean and repair all your feeders for fall/winter feeding.
- ✓ When you are raking leaves, leave some on the ground for the birds to scratch among; they'll look for insects and small bits of seed.
- ✓ If you prune your bushes and trees, use the clippings to build a brush pile for your birds to use as cover this winter.
- ✓ Put suet out for insect loving birds—woodpeckers, titmice, nuthatches, chickadees and winter visitors like yellow-bellied sapsuckers.
- ✓ Before the holidays, string popcorn, cranberries, raisins, peanuts, Cheerios to decorate a tree outside for the birds. This custom dates back to northern Europe in the 16th century.



Did you know?

- ? Hummingbirds will add up to 50% of their body weight during migration before their non-stop 600 mile flight across the Gulf of Mexico.
- ? Most bird species migrate at night; many travel at an altitude of 3,000-6,000 feet.
- ? Birds preen their feathers by sliding their beaks over individual feathers; this activity locks the barbules (hooks) of the feathers together, eliminating the ruffled look.
- ? The barn owl is found on every continent except Antarctica.
- ? Mockingbirds are one of the few species that sing into the fall.
- ? The downy is the smallest woodpecker in the U.S.
- ? The heartbeat of a hibernating groundhog drops from the normal 80 beats per minute to 4-5 beats; its body temperature drops from 100° to 37-57°.
- ? Squirrels don't remember where they buried nuts; they find them by scent!
- ? Birds roost together at night because there is "safety in numbers" and they can keep warm by sharing body heat.