



# Wild Bird Center of Boulder

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# Boulder Backyards

Your Backyard Bird Feeding and Bird Watching Experts

May 2008

## Upcoming Events

### International Migratory Bird Day (IMBD)

May 10, 7:30-10:30am

The IMBD Theme this year is "From Tundra to Tropics" to emphasize the importance of these two regions to "our" migratory birds. Join the Wild Bird Center Staff and the Boulder Bird Club for a celebration of birds at Walden Ponds Open Space. This event will replace the Saturday Bird Walk so if you are planning to go on the Saturday Walk please head to IMBD. We will have walks leaving the Cottonwood Marsh Picnic Shelter about every hour, plus we will be conducting a "big sit" throughout the morning. Please drop by to talk and watch birds, have a treat and some shade coffee, buy an IMBD t-shirt, or go on a bird walk. Call the store for more information about this event or go to IMBD's Website to find out more about the significance of IMBD.

### Dawn Chorus Walk,

May 10, 5:30-8:00am

Go for an early bird walk before IMBD with Wild Bird Center Staffer Marlene Bruning. Marlene has been leading this walk before IMBD for many years. Birding in May is too great not to go out early one morning. Come listen to the dawn chorus and watch the morning unfold! Meet at the Walden Ponds Cottonwood Marsh Parking Lot.

### IMBD Pancake Breakfast,

May 10, 8:00-9:00am

Wild Bird Center Staffer Steve Runnels will be serving up a campfire breakfast of pancakes and sausage at IMBD again this year. Steve asks only for a small donation that will go to Colorado Audubon Conservation Programs for the breakfast.

### Sketching Class at the Wild Bird Center in Boulder

Let's sketch Boulder's beautiful wildflowers! This fun class will focus on sketching techniques that will enable you to capture the beauty of wildflowers. We will discuss observation skills and the use of pencil/people sketching and watercolor pencils. The primary sketching tool will be the pencil. We will add touches of color with watercolor pencils. Bring an 8 1/2 x 11 sketchbook, pencils, pens and watercolor pencils, brush, and container for water. Space is limited to 6 participants. Sign up early!

**Instructors:** Marlene Bruning, bird and wildflower expert from the Wild Bird Center will lead the field trip. Susie Mottashed, author and illustrator of "Who Lives In Your Backyard?" will be the classroom instructor.

- \* 2 Sessions
- \* June 12, Thur, 6:15pm - 8:30pm (classroom)
- \* June 14, Sat, 8:00am - 10:00am (field sketching outdoors)
- \* Cost: \$45
- \* To register: Call Wild Bird Center at (303) 442-1322 to register and pay for the class
- \* Registration Deadline: June 9, 2008

## Buy Three or More Botanical Interests Seed Packs and Receive 25% Off.

The Wild Bird Center is now selling flower seeds from local seed Company Botanical Interests. Our selection has been customized to provide you with great plants for attracting birds, butterflies, and wildlife. Botanical Interests seeds have high germination rates and the most attractive and informative packaging in the industry. The seeds are back by the hummingbird feeders. Please come in and see our selections and use this coupon.

**Mention CODE WB0508. Call (303) 442-1322 or bring in to redeem.** Some restrictions may apply. Not valid in combination with other promotions. Expiration date: June 6, 2008.



## Check Off the Spring Birds!

We have updated our Common Birds Checklist to reflect changes in our local birds. This is an easy to use list of regular birds found around Boulder County. New additions include Eurasian Collared-Dove, and Blue Grosbeak. Whereas Evening Grosbeak and Rough-legged Hawk are leaving the list as they are just not very common anymore. Use the checklist on your next birdwalk or as a yard list to document your backyard birds. Pick one up during your next visit or download one on our web site.

- \* Waders & Water Birds
- \* Waterfowl
- \* Raptors
- \* Shorebirds & Gulls
- \* Doves, Owls, & Nightjars
- \* Swifts, Hummingbirds, & Kingfishers
- \* Woodpeckers & Flycatchers
- \* Corvids, Larks, & Swallows
- \* Chickadees, Nuthatches, & Creepers
- \* Wrens, Thrushes, Waxwings, Vireos, & More
- \* Warblers, Tanagers, & Buntings
- \* Sparrows
- \* Blackbirds & Orioles
- \* Finches & Weaver Finches



## Send Us Your Pictures



A fun new feature at the store is a digital photo frame to show camera lens/customer pictures. Please send us photos of your backyard wildlife and we will add them to our slide show. Along with your pictures please give us your name, date of the photo, and your general location. (We especially love to get pictures of birds on feeders) E-mails can be sent to WCBoulderCO@aol.com.

## We Love to Hear From You!

Stop on in, send an email, or, give us a call. We love to hear about your latest birding experiences and look forward to sharing ours. Thanks for your support! Happy Birding! -- Steve, Scott, Marlene, and Bill

# Boulder Backyards



## Wild Bird Center of Boulder Hummingbird Basics: Hummingbird Feeding 101

**Avoid commercial mixes and make your own nectar\*\* with the formula below:**

- \* 4 parts water-1 part sugar
- \* No honey, brown sugar, fructose, artificial sweeteners, or red dye. All of the above can pose serious health risks to the hummingbirds.
- \* Every 3-4 days empty the old nectar from your feeder, rinse thoroughly, and fill with new nectar.
- \* Nectar can be stored up to 2 weeks in the refrigerator.
- \* No need to boil the water or nectar.
- \* If your nectar turns cloudy, then it is starting to ferment and mold. The hummingbirds will avoid spoiled nectar and will not be motivated to return.
- \* If your feeder gets really moldy and dirty you need to clean it well. You can use almost anything to clean the feeder, as long as you rinse the feeder well before using it. We would suggest a special hummingbird feeder brush and soapy water. Hydrogen peroxide or vinegar in the feeder overnight will also work very well. Having a hard time reaching inside the base to clean it? Put some uncooked rice and soapy water inside and give the feeder a shake to scour out the mold.

**Wild Bird Center Nectar does not contain any colors or preservatives. It only contains milled sugar which dissolves easily even in cold water.**

### Gardening for Hummingbirds

On the plains, it is essential to garden for hummingbirds if you expect any success in attracting them to your yard. Your best opportunity is during southward migration in July and August. Make sure your flowers bloom during this period. Here are some of the best plants for attracting hummers in Colorado in no particular order.

*Hyssops Agastache sp.*, salvias, trumpet honeysuckle *Lonicera sp.*, penstemons, orange carpet *Zauschneria garretti*, redbirds in a tree *Scrophularia macrantha*, scarlet hedgenettle *Stachys coccinea*, scarlet runner bean *Phaseolus coccineus*, cardinal climber *Ipomoea quamoclit*, butterfly bush *Buddleja sp.*, fireweed *Chamerion angustifolium*, coral bells *Heuchera sp.*, yucca *Hesperaloe sp.*, four o'clocks *Mirabilis sp.*, scarlet gilia *Ipopsis aggregate*, and bee balm *Monarda sp.*

### Other Hummingbird Facts:

- \* Feeders can be placed at any height. We would suggest placing your feeder so it is in afternoon shade to reduce spoilage.
- \* Hummers arrive around mid-April and leave by early September. There are no rules about when to start or stop feeding.
- \* Hummingbirds are summer residents of the mountains and foothills. They are only on the plains during migration.
- \* Rufous hummingbirds show up around July 4th and can dominate feeders. To combat this, put a small feeder up away from other feeders and higher than the other feeders. Fill it with a stronger sugar solution (3:1) and the rufous will tend to hummer silhouette prefer this feeder and leave the hummingbirds at the other feeders alone.
- \* Our only nesting hummingbird is the broad-tailed hummingbird. Two others, the rufous and the calliope, visit us during southward migration.
- \* Hummingbirds can also be attracted by splashing or misting water.

## Wild Bird Center Saturday Walks:

**Every Saturday year-round.**  
From 7:30 am (promptly)  
to 9:45 am (approximately)  
Every last Saturday of the month  
we travel further afield than  
normal and return a little later.



### Nature Photography by Wendy Marie Stuart

Visit our store to see a gallery of Wendy's matted and framed prints and greeting cards for all occasions.

## Ask Steve



**Q. Help! The blackbirds are taking over my feeders. Is there anything I can do about it?**

**A.** Picking The blackbird that most people complain about in the summer is the common grackle. It is a rather large dark songbird with a long keel-shaped tail and a yellow/white eye and black beak. Iridescence on the head often looks blue and its body bronze. There are several strategies you can employ to reduce the grackle activity at your feeders. The first is to use a caged feeder that restricts larger grackles from reaching your seed. Not all caged feeders have a big enough gap between the cage and the feeder to restrict the grackles. The caged feeders we sell restrict both grackles and squirrels. The other common ploy to thwart the grackles is to use safflower seed in your feeder. Grackles do not care for safflower which is an acquired taste for your other songbirds, but they will grow to like it. It may not reduce your grackle activity to zero, but it usually brings it to within tolerable limits. Another ploy is diversion feeding, putting out some feed on a platform that is easier for the grackles to use and that will lead to them leaving your other feeders alone. This ploy will only be effective if your existing feeders are very hard for them to use. Otherwise, you will just have grackles in more places.

Sometimes, people just don't want the grackles in their neighborhood. There is not much you can do about their general presence in your yard. They are grackle attracted to lawns, water, and spruce trees. So if your neighborhood contains any of these three elements, then you will probably have grackles. The grackles nest in suburban settings, then after nesting they flock up at wetland or agricultural areas. We usually seen a marked decrease in neighborhood grackles around mid-July

Here in Boulder County, common grackles are summer residents, but we are not far from their winter range. Over the past couple of decades, grackles have been showing up earlier and leaving later. I suspect it is only a matter of time before they are year-round residents.

To put a positive spin on the grackle, they are beautiful and can be quite interesting to observe. Perhaps these qualities can help people look past the harsh noises and sometimes aggressive behavior to see a different bird.