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Songbird Station NEWS

Celebrating 26 Years Helping Families Enjoy Nature Together

Attracting Baltimore Orioles

How to Make Your Yard a Home for Them

by Mel Toellner

It seems that every year we have customers that come in asking why their Orioles don't stay around or why they can't get them to their yards. Sometimes, they get them to stay from a few days to a few weeks and maybe return in the fall for the same amount of time. Some of the lucky homeowners get their Orioles to stay all summer and nest year after year. So, here are some tips on attracting and keeping the Orioles around.

Orioles migrate at night, so when they arrive in your yard they are tired, cold and hungry. Orioles are attracted to the color orange, so an [Oriole Magnet hanging over your feeder](#) will certainly give them a better target to focus on. Make sure you have food out before you anticipate their arrival. If you wait until you see an Oriole, you

are too late, they have already left looking for a food source. Oranges, cut in half and hung from some type of spiked feeder, such as [Holland Hill Fruit Feeder](#), is a good way to attract them to your yard. Offer orange slices with the cut side out, and enjoy watching, not only Orioles, but Woodpeckers, Warblers, and other birds enjoy as well.

Orioles are also attracted



SE6010

to nectar and grape, or some berry, jellies. Over the counter jelly has very high sugar content. However, the lower sugar and higher fruit content in [BirdBerry™ Jelly](#) will more closely match the natural food sources of birds. Plus, they absolutely love

its combination of grape and blackberry fruit. We found that providing BirdBerry™ Jelly is one of the constants in yards that kept Orioles all summer! Our [Ultimate Oriole Feeder](#) will let you feed three food sources at one feeder. This high-capacity nectar feeder also has a built-in ant moat to keep the ants away from the food for the Orioles. Best of all, when you add oranges, it does not keep



SE905

the moat from working as with other feeders.

Orioles love [Songbird Essentials Oriole Nectar](#).

They are all natural with no artificial dyes. By popular demand, we now offer a [24 oz. can](#) (as well as 8 oz. packets) of easy mix granular. Orioles love 'em!



SE645

If you are lucky enough to get an Oriole to nest in your yard, you will enjoy the craftsmanship that goes into their nest building. Oriole nests are a pouch-type nest that they attach to a very small, flexible branch to keep the squirrels, or other predators, from getting to their eggs or to babies. All these tips, and more, are in our "Tips to Attract Orioles" brochure we have at the store (they're free). We want you to enjoy Orioles in 2021!

Go For the Gold! All About the Gold Finches



Finally, after feeding flocks of Goldfinches all winter, I am starting to get my due reward, and you can, too! Enjoy bright yellow Goldfinches by putting out fresh nyjer thistle. Or, better yet, our [Fantastic Finch 2 Mix](#) of nyjer and finely chopped sunflower. Goldfinches like to feed in "flocks," so make sure you have plenty of feeder space. Almost every time I look out at my [Copper Finch Feeder](#), all 24 feeding slots are full of Goldfinches! The same is true for my [36 inch Yellow Spiral Feeder](#). Another, less costly, way to feed more Finches is to put out our inexpensive [Songbird Essentials Thistle Sacks](#). Go for the Gold!

The Good, the Bad & the Ugly

by Grant Toellner

One of the first questions of any avid bird watcher is, "How do I attract and feed the 'good' birds (Cardinals, Finches, and Clingers) while keeping away the 'bad' (Grackles, Blackbirds) and especially the 'ugly' (Starlings, Sparrows)?" While it's almost impossible to totally eliminate a sighting of the "bad" or "ugly" in your backyard, there are a few good defense tactics out there to keep the unwanted visitors away. The tactics involve choosing the right type of seed to feed, using the right type of feeders, as well as other preventative methods.

The first, simple, way to attract good birds and discourage the bad and the ugly is by choosing the right type of seed to feed. The two best types of seed known to discourage the bad and ugly birds are [black oil sunflower](#) and, my personal favorite, [safflower](#). While neither is a 100% solution, both are loved by most songbirds and are at the bottom of the bad and uglies' dining lists. Another seed solution is to stop feeding seeds that contain millet, milo, or cracked corn. The bad and the ugly birds love to pick through and eat those ingredients from seed blends while most songbirds won't eat these at all. If you already have a mixed seed feeder, no problem! The solution is to use bird feeders designed specifically for songbirds. Also, eliminate ground feeders - a favorite hang-out spot for the bad and ugly.

Another effective way to attract good birds while discouraging the bad and the ugly is to use the right types of feeders. There are many feeders designed just for songbirds. Here are a few of my personal favorites. I am a big fan of both Chickadees and Titmice, and they seem to love the Clingers Only Feeder. I like this one,



[SE7013 Clingers Only](#)



because it is small, easy to fill, and has a small clinging area, which makes it Blackbird proof and discourages Sparrows. If you are a Woodpecker or Nuthatch lover, try using an [upside-down feeder](#). Suet is one of the main foods that attract larger bad and ugly birds, but neither like to hang

upside-down, so they will simply avoid it. The [Songbird Essentials Upside-down Suet Feeder](#) is my choice, because it is made from durable, recycled plastic, which makes it environmentally sound, and it comes with a lifetime warranty.

If your yard is already set with feeders, try shortening the perches on your tube feeders. Smaller birds will still be able to cling, but the larger birds will not.

The last way to get rid of bad and ugly birds is to use prevention methods involving the elimination of them altogether. Some might consider this inhumane, but it is necessary to secure the safety of our native birds' futures. For example, the growth of the population of non-native English Starlings has had a hugely negative impact on birds like the migratory Purple Martin. When Purple Martins are away from their nests, Starlings will invade the nests and destroy eggs or kill any young they find inside. Starlings have also been known to trap and kill adult Martins in their cavities.

Non-native House Sparrows have contributed to the decline in the Bluebird population. House Sparrows not only destroy Bluebird eggs, but they also kill both adult and young birds by using their hooked beaks to attack the Bluebirds inside their nest boxes.

One way to eliminate them is what I like to call "the old-fashioned way," which is using a pellet gun. Before going with this approach, make sure you are very careful of your back stop and have your gun set to the appropriate power. You should also have a pair of binoculars on hand to make sure you properly ID the bird before you shoot. The "ugly birds are considered pests and are legal to kill, but the "bad" birds I mentioned are native and it is illegal to kill them.

Although nothing is a total fix for preventing the bad and ugly birds from hanging around your backyard, the tips above have been used effectively and are seen as the best tools for keeping the bad and ugly away from yards. **2**



[SERUBSUDE100HD Upside Down Suet Feeder](#)

Enjoying Outdoors While Staying Safe

by Holly Seaver



The weather is warming up, and we are spending more time outside. If your Mom, Dad, or grandparents are gardeners, you may want to get out and enjoy it with them. Now, you can have your own kid-sized garden tools, wheelbarrow, and sun hats to wear. Plant in our root viewer kit and watch how things take root and grow. It's a nice way to see how some of our foods grow. You can paint your own flower pots or stepping stones to put in your garden, too. Come see our kits that include everything you need to make them just the way you like.

To make sure that you stay sun safe when outside, Songbird Station has lots of fun sun hats for kids of all ages. Stop in and see our Luvali reversible sun hats in many colors and fun designs for children. These Sun Hats have a UPF 50+ rating to help protect your children from the sunshine's rays.

While they last, **super sale price: \$10!** Regularly \$20.



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Make a Wind Chime



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Backpack Explorer Guide

Luvali Sun Hats

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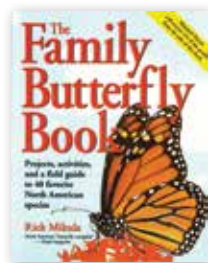
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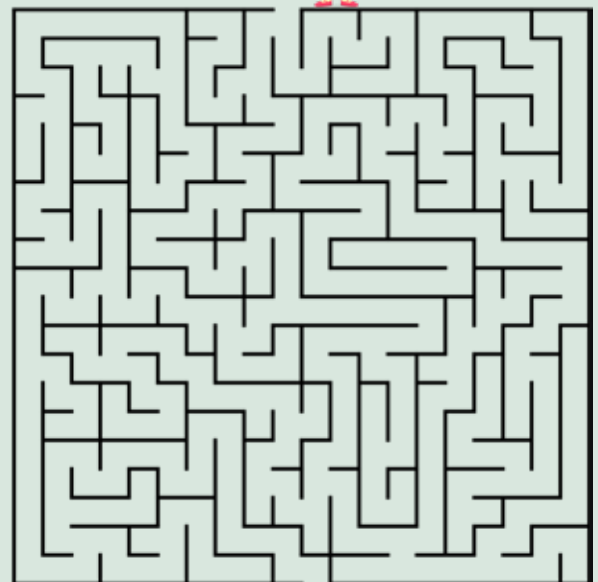
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PUZZLE TIME

The girl wants to help her grandma by watering the flowers in her garden, but she can't find them. Can you help her find her grandma's flowers by showing her the way through the maze?



3 Lesser Known Birds That Migrate to Missouri

by Grant Toellner



Male Rose-breasted Grosbeak

When people think of birds that migrate to Missouri for the spring and summer, most usually think of Ruby Throated Hummingbirds, Purple Martins, or Baltimore Orioles. Most people would not even think to say, or even know, that Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, Indigo Buntings, and Eastern Towhees also come to Missouri for the spring and summer months. Attracting these lesser known birds is simple - just keep doing what you are doing. All three are known to eat from regular bird feeders; you just might have to look at little more often to spot them.

Male Rose-breasted Grosbeaks are a hard bird to misidentify; no other bird has a black head and back with a red triangular patch on its clear, white belly. Females look the exact opposite; they are brown and white with a white line streaked above the eye. Grosbeaks are known to travel and breed from far northwestern Canada all the way back through the Appalachians and the Northeast. If spotted at a feeder, a Red-breasted Grosbeak most likely will be snacking on either sunflower and [safflower seeds](#) or [shelled peanuts](#).

Even more unmistakable than a male Rose-breasted Grosbeak is a male Indigo Bunting. A male Bunting is brilliantly colored all blue with a silvery conical bill. Females, like many other bird species, are less colorful. Female Buntings have a warm, chocolate brown color throughout their entire body. Indigo Buntings spend most of their spring and summer months throughout most of the U.S. and are strongly migratory; they spend the rest of their months in Central and Northern South America. Indigo Buntings are usually spotted in the backyard around feeders feeding on [black-oil sunflower](#) or other seed mixes. Birdman Mel has had luck attracting Buntings with millet on ground feeders and our Fantastic [Finch 2](#) mix in tubes.



Male Indigo Bunting

The Eastern Towhee is considered a migratory bird to Central and Northern Missouri, but some do live year-round in Southern Missouri around the boot-heel of the state. Male Eastern Towhees are commonly referred to as the "Hollywood Robin." They have the same overall color of an American Robin; however a male Towhee's colors are much more clean and bright than a Robin's. Females look very similar, except that, instead of black on their backs, they have more of a sienna brown color. Eastern Towhees are known to migrate as far north as Southern Canada and the Northeast and as far west as Kansas and Nebraska. During the winter months, Towhees may linger throughout the Midwest, but when harsher weather arrives, most head to the southern part of the U.S. To spot a Towhee in your backyard, check the ground every so often, because that is their preferred place to eat.



Eastern Towhee

If you are looking for more information on birds that live and migrate to Missouri, I recommend the book **Birds of Missouri: Field Guide** from Adventure Publications by Stan Tekiela. It is loaded with great tips and information on how to identify birds!

Want to make sure you readily see our spring visitors? Come in today, and let our Songbird Station staff help you find the pair of Vortex Optics that best fit your needs and budget. We guarantee you won't find Vortex Optics for less than our great, everyday low prices at Songbird Station.

Keep your eyes open! New visitors are on the way!!

Check BirdMigrationMaps.com to view where your favorite bird has been sighted!



View the locations of migratory bird sightings

Enjoy the Joys of Spring/Summer Bird Watching While Stretching Spring & Summer Birdseed Dollars

by Mel Toellner

Spring and early summer are absolutely my favorite times to feed the Birds. Why? First, I know they need and appreciate my help as a combination of (a) the harsh winter caused many seed supplies in Mid-Mo to be already largely consumed, and new seeds won't be available until late summer, (b) the rigors of building nests and raising babies greatly increases calorie demands on avian parents, (c) new babies and lots of migrating birds that return to central Missouri in the spring puts huge pressure on available food sources of many of the songbirds you and I love to see in our yards.



Secondly, now is when lots of "action" takes place! It's fun to watch rituals like a male cardinal offering a female a seed. Though, my wife is probably correct when she says "That'll keep up until he gets what he wants, and then it'll be over!"

It's fun to encourage children and grandchildren to watch the building of nests, laying of eggs, and the birth and development of baby birds. It helps get children excited about being outdoors - away from those phones, tablets, and iPads!

In this newsletter you'll find great articles on using nectar/fruit to attract

Hummingbirds and Orioles and other fruit eaters. But, to enjoy and help the widest variety of nature songbirds, it is important to also keep offering seed. Did you realize that Goldfinches only eat seed - no bugs, no fruit.

It's very important to offer water near your Finch feeders. Put one of our [Songbird Essentials birdbaths](#) nearby, and it'll draw a crowd. We have Missouri's largest selection of birdbaths. Come in; we'll have one you and your birds will love.

In Grant's article, ***The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly***, he addresses ways to save seed dollars by discouraging Grackles and Blackbirds from visiting your yard for a free meal by feeding [Songbird Essentials safflower](#) and utilizing cages and other restrictive feeders. Try these methods; they work.

I'm sure many of you realize that central Missouri is the heart of Missouri farm country. Grain crop prices, like corn and soybeans, have had HUGE price increases the last few months. Bird seed prices follow behind livestock feeds so will trend in the same way. We predict the summer of 2021 will have high bird seed prices. Fortunately, we have pre-booked a portion of our seed needs, which is allowing us to keep our prices lower while the market forces others to increase. Keep seed **quality** in mind during this time. When competitors begin to push their "cheap" mixed seeds (full of junk and trash) your way, remember that no one has as [high quality seed](#) as we do!

Now, more than ever, is a great time to save seed dollars by purchasing a squirrel proof feeder from Brome or one of our long-term, reliable hoppers with

weight activated closing bars. By utilizing our metal [Squirrel Defeater Baffles](#) on a tall pole (we have them), you can also use feeders you already own in a squirrel-proof way.

In Deborah's article on ***Woodpeckers***, she discusses seed cylinders in cages. These are another great way to continue to help songbirds while stretching dollars.

Another way I save is by using our Songbird Essentials [clingers](#) [feeders](#) that only small clinger birds like

Chickadees, Finches, Downy Woodpeckers, Nuthatches, and Titmice, can use. One final trick I use is to practice putting seed out on a [tray feeder](#) protected by a baffle. I put only the amount my songbirds will eat each day. They have come to learn that I do this while I enjoy breakfast and coffee with my wife Bev, and the birds.

Try these tips, and you'll enjoy bird feeding for less in 2021.



BD1015 - Squirrel Buster Classic

Come in, and let our staff tailor a seed dollar saving program specifically for you!

Unique Products to Attract Hummingbirds - only from Songbird Station



Hummingbirds
sitting on a nest with
Hummer Helper

Did You Know?

- Hummingbirds beat their wings about 78 times per second. During a display dive, their wings can beat up to 200 times per second.
- They take about 250 breaths per minute.
- Their hearts beat about 1,260 times per minute.
- They have 1,500 feathers.
- They consume half their body weight (1/8 lb) in food every day. That would be like an average kid eating 40 to 50 pounds of food a day

A Hummingbird nest is not much bigger than a quarter, and often it contains just 2-3 eggs no bigger than small peas. It's typically hard to see as it blends in well to the tree branch it's attached to and is made of fine animal or plant down and moss or lichens. Hummingbirds have been proven to really take to a product called [Hummer Helper™ Nesting Material](#), which provides a natural replacement for some hard to find materials. It's the only nesting material recommended by the Hummingbird Society and proven to be used by hummers!

Hummingbirds, like many birds, need, and are attracted to, water. One of the best ways to attract Hummingbirds is with a "mister" that emits a fine spray of water. I love [Songbird Essentials Easy Mister](#). Attach it to a hose after watering flowers and get ready to see Hummers zip through the mist. It only uses .75 gallons of water per hour!



SE7021 Hummer
Helper with cage



Hummingbird basking
in mist from Easy Mister



SE7019 Easy Mister

How Do Hummers Differ From All Other Birds?



From their glittering, iridescent colors to their flying skills, the Hummingbirds possess many unique features.

Color - Iridescent coloring is present on some feathers.

Feathers - Hummingbirds have no downy feathers at all. Hummers have the least number of feathers of all birds.

Brain - The brain of the Hummer is larger in proportion to the body size than that of any other birds.

Flight - Hummingbirds have the fastest wing beat. They are the only bird capable of hovering and backward flight. Hummers are the only birds with an upstroke power that is equal to the downstroke power.

Muscles - The breast muscles of a Hummingbird are the largest of any bird relative to body size.

Heart - Hummingbirds have the largest heart in relation to body size (up to 2.4% of body weight). The most rapid heart beat belongs to the Hummer.

Metabolism - Hummingbirds have the greatest energy output relative to body size of all warm-blooded animals. Hummers and Whippoorwills

are the only two birds that can become torpid.

Lungs - Hummers have the greatest oxygen consumption of all birds - 12 times more than Pigeons!

Appetite - In one day, a Hummingbird will eat half its weight in food and eight times its weight in water.

Eggs - The smallest eggs of any bird are the Hummingbird's.

Family Size - The Hummingbird family (Trochilidae) is the second largest in the Western Hemisphere.



Birdwatcher's Digest
**Enjoying Hummingbirds
More**

An excellent and
inexpensive reference!

Ask Birdman Mel!



Q. I find several different types of nests in my bluebird boxers. Can you help me identify them?

A. I think the chart below from the North American Bluebird Society will help you. We're active members of NABA and all our [Songbird Essentials Cedar and Shake Shingle Houses](#) carry the NABA approval seal.

Q. I was thinking of trying some nesting material this year, but there are so many to choose from, and I was curious if one was better than the other?

A. While I am not sure one is better than the other, I really like the Songbird Essentials [Alpaca Nesting Material](#). It comes from right here in the Show-Me State, and the reason I like it so much is because it is an all-weather, friendly material. It has microscopic air pockets that help keep the birds warm, and it also repels water and quickly dries. Chickadees, Titmice, and other

Q. Do Songbirds ever develop laryngitis?

A. Yes. Our voice box is called the larynx; their song box is called the syrinx. So, more accurately, they develop *syringitis*. But, don't laugh! With humans, we just sound hoarse; with songbirds, it ruins their lives!



Eastern Bluebird Nest



House Wren Nest



Tree Swallow Nest



Carolina Chickadee Nest



House Sparrow Nest

Q. In the past I have had trouble with wasps in my birdhouses; any suggestions on how to keep them out?

A. One trick I use that works is to rub the birdhouse ceiling with a dry, or slightly wet, bar of unscented soap. The soap coating prevents the wet, mushy, nest-building materials brought in by wasps from sticking to the wood ceiling. I also have issues from time to time with wasps on my hummingbird feeders, so I hang up a couple wasp traps around my house as well. We stock several styles that are attractive yet functional that can be found at Songbird Station.



SE630
8oz. Oriole Nectar



SE907
Alpaca Nest Bag

Wonderful Woodpeckers by Deborah Irving

Depending on the time of year, Missouri is home to seven species of woodpeckers. The hairy, downy, pileated and red-bellied woodpeckers make Missouri their home all year. Northern flickers may migrate more south during the winter, and the red-headed will if they do not have enough acorns to eat. Yellow-bellied sapsuckers don't breed in Missouri but will stay during the winter months.

Even in spring and summer a suet feeder is a number one way to draw a variety of woodpeckers to your backyard. We have a wide selection of suet and suet feeders, including those with tail props to help out the larger size woodpeckers like the pileated.

Woodpeckers are uniquely adapted for a life of climbing and pecking on trees. The tail prop feeders have been designed with this in mind. Woodpeckers' special zygodactyl feet, with two toes pointing forward and two back, help

get a firm grip on vertical surfaces. They use their tails, which are stiff feathers, to help brace themselves as they go up and down trees.

Some woodpeckers have a very distinct sound, and, if you are not as skilled at the different calls, identifying them by their colors may be more helpful. I recommend the book by **Stan Tekiela, Woodpeckers**. This book has some detail and great facts about woodpeckers as well as beautiful pictures!



A peanut feeder, or my favorite, the [Classic Log Seed Feeder](#), which is a caged seed cylinder, really draws woodpeckers to the backyard. The woodpeckers love to cling on these and fly back and forth eating from several of their favorite feeders at once. We have several different varieties of logs to choose from.

Stop by Songbird Station and let our knowledgeable staff help you start enjoying woodpeckers in your backyard today.

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Mother's & Father's Day Gift Ideas

For Mom & Grandma



Check out
more great
gift ideas
inside!



For Dad & Grandpa

