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See back page for details.

Mid Winter Blah's 2 Day Sale

Friday, Feb. 23 - Saturday, Feb 24, 2024

News

from the bird store

WINTER Reminders

February is national Bird feeding month. Fill your feeders and enjoy! Help the birds survive and repopulate. Do what you can to create inviting habitats for our beautiful songbirds to thrive!

Make sure to have food, shelter and open water for the birds and mammals alike. This past fall saw a large natural food crop and we had the largest number of birds ever on the Sturbridge Christmas Bird Count. They were in the woods, not at the feeders as they typically would be. Abundant natural food and mild weather means the birds don't need us like they would in a cold snowy winter. As the natural crop diminishes we have seen the birds returning to the feeders more and more.

Winter is also the perfect time to observe birds. Against the white snow the differences in coloration of the male and female birds are easier to see. Make it a challenge, or an activity to do with your children or grandchildren. Embrace the winter and count the birds for science. Look for more information on Cornell Labs Project Feeder Watch. <https://feederwatch.org>



It's easy to join, Project FeederWatch runs from November 1 through April 30. For each count, select two consecutive days as often as once a week. Watch your count site as much or as little as you want during each two-day count. For every species you can identify, record the maximum number of individuals visible simultaneously during your two-day count. Count all birds you see in your count site during the day that are attracted to resources that you provide, even if they don't visit feeders, but ignore birds that simply fly over your count site. You can also record mammals that you see in your count site, sick birds and bird mortality, behavioral interactions and predation events, etc. Once you sign up you will be provided with all the necessary information. Submit counts through the "Your Data" section of the Cornell Project FeederWatch website or the FeederWatch mobile app. You can also download the FeederWatch Handbook and Instructions from the Cornell site.

Happy Winter Birdwatching!



Bear Necessities

According to a recent survey there are over 40,000 bear in New England. Broken down by state:

Massachusetts	4,500
Connecticut	800
Rhode Island	5-10
Maine	24,000-26,000
New Hampshire	6,100
Vermont	4,600-5,700

The bear are not going away so we need to learn to live with them. In addition to our Bear Proof Poles we are now stocking "The Bear Necessities", hot pepper seeds and suets to discourage the bear from your feeders.



We now carry two types of hot pepper seed: Hot Pepper Chips and Hot Pepper Mix. Hot Pepper Chips are completely hulled sunflower chips coated in hot pepper. All the birds love sunflower seed, and the hulled seed is also great for feeding the Goldfinch and other small songbirds as it doesn't need to be shelled. Hot Pepper Mix is a mix of sunflower chips, safflower, rendered beef soft pellets, cayenne pepper and vegetable oil. Hot Pepper Suet completes the set. The trick is to use just the hot pepper products and the bear will keep their distance. Hot pepper seed and suet does not harm the birds, it is just too spicy for the mammals.

VALENTINES DAY IS COMING.

Don't forget your sweetie! We have loads of gift ideas for your special Valentine.

Suet History

Scan through almost any 18th century cookbook and you will find a recurring term: Suet. Suet was an important ingredient in English cooking. Suet also had numerous other uses in the 18th century as well. Countless medicinal ointments used suet as a base ingredient. It was used as lamp oil, as well as in the production of soap and leather treatments.

Suet is a special hard fat found in the loins of beef and sheep. True suet is located on the inside of loin area. It is the hard fat that surrounds the animal's kidneys.

What about suet and the birds you ask? When did we start feeding suet to the birds? Nature provided the first "suet," or fat from animal carcasses, and it is a special treat for hungry birds in cold and icy times. Elizabeth Davenport's bird-feeding notes of the 1890s recall plain suet pieces being nailed to tree trunks so we know it has been in use as bird suet for well over 130 years.

In common usage, most kinds of beef fat are also called suet and can safely be fed to birds.

Suet is particularly attractive to woodpeckers, nuthatches, chickadees, jays and starlings. Wrens, creepers, kinglets and even cardinals, and some warblers occasionally visit suet feeders. Animal fat is easily digested and metabolized by many birds; it's a high-energy food, especially valuable in cold weather. Suet provides the extra calories birds need when temperatures drop.

Traditionally, packaged suet is made of rendered beef fat, though other fats, including vegetable fat, can be used. Bird-friendly goodies, such as seeds, nuts, nut butter, cracked corn or corn meal, oats, dried fruit, and/or mealworms are mixed with the fat to add nutrition and appeal.

The birds like all suets. Woodpeckers, chickadees, jays, and nuthatches will be especially drawn to suet with nuts in it.



Suet that includes fruit can attract species like orioles, bluebirds, cardinals, waxwings, and grosbeaks. Dried mealworms or bugs in the suet might bring attention

from robins, titmice, and starlings.

As with any suet make sure that it is a high quality suet that contains actual rendered suet and not just substitutes. Your birds will thank you for it.

Because You Asked



Why do some birds have colorful beaks?

Colorful beaks play a crucial role in many birds' lives. Pigments play a key role in creating a wide range of different colors and hues. Birds with colorful beaks are some of the most eye-catching creatures in the animal kingdom. They range from vibrant blues and greens to reddish oranges and yellows, each with its own unique hue. Many birds have evolved colorful beaks for a variety of reasons, including protection from predators or to attract potential mates.

Colorful beaks play an important role in mate selection among many species of birds. Because certain colors can signify certain traits such as strength, or intelligence, potential partners may choose mates that exhibit these characteristics through their striking bills!

Some birds have evolved their beaks into specialized tools used to capture prey or defend themselves against predators. The toucan's oversized bill is primarily used for hunting small animals like insects, lizards or frogs. The brightly colored bills of many tropical birds may also serve to startle predators.

Here are a few examples of birds with colorful beaks & bills:

American White Pelican

The colorful, large beaks of American White Pelicans are used during the breeding season for display purposes to attract mates.



Atlantic Puffin

Their vibrant beaks play an essential role in their breeding, communication, and feeding, allowing them to carry multiple fish at once to their young.

Puffins' beaks are also used for mate selection, as the bright colors indicate health and fitness.



The Black Skimmer

The bright colors of the Black Skimmer's bill are believed to help it locate prey in low light conditions.



American Purple Gallinule

The colorful beak helps it spot food under murky waters, while also serving as a warning sign to other animals of potential danger.



Wood Duck

The colorful bill is used to attract mates during courtship displays and for visual communication with other members of its species.



What's The Difference Between a Beak and a Bill?

A beak is a hard, pointed structure that is used for pecking and tearing food. It is typically found on birds of prey, such as eagles and hawks, as well as on parrots and other seed-eating birds.

A bill is a softer, more flexible structure that is used for grasping and manipulating food. It is typically found on birds that feed on insects, fish, and other small prey.



Marshmallow's Musings

Notes from Marshmallow the Cockatiel

Hi I'm Marshmallow the Cockatiel. I wanted to tell you about the down and dirty. Bill, Nancy & Dezeree call it the Marshmallow Fluff. They always say Marshmallow how can you POOP that much! So I thought I'd tell you that birds poop every 15 minutes or more depending on how big we are. We don't poop when we sleep, but we do wake up to do the deed. Some birds poop a lot in the morning because they store it up till they wake up. At least I make small easily cleaned poops unlike my friend Ditto the Starling who used to make a runny mess on things! Some of my bird friends eat a lot more than I do so you know what that means, more poop! Small size birds can poop 100 times a day, medium birds up to 48 times a day, and large birds up to 24 times a day.

We usually poop before we fly because who needs the excess weight when we are flying. Pooping makes us more lightweight and aerodynamic.

And that's the Poop! Marshmallow



Birdwalks and Events

New birdwalks for spring will be updated on our web calendar soon. We will keep you updated. If you want to stay informed make sure we have your email address.

You can also check the **CALENDAR** tab at thebirdstoreandmore.com

Who's The Leader?

Did you ever wonder how a flock of birds in flight knows who the lead bird is? The leader bird in the flock changes throughout the flight. Coordinated flight in birds is achieved by every individual both leading and following, by anticipating sudden changes in the direction or speed of the flock by looking at the birds closest to them.

With a flock of geese initially the strongest flyer will take up the lead position and then the geese take turns flying in front. They communicate when it is time to change by honking.

Many large species of birds fly in a V-formation on their long migratory journeys. Birds are able to travel over 70% longer distances when flying in a formation, versus flying alone because it is more aerodynamic.

Other birds flock together for the same reason that many other species gather in large numbers, like swarms of insects, herds of antelope, or schools of fish. There is safety in numbers.

Some of these large flocks move in what is called a murmuration. In 1984, Wayne Potts published a key paper in the journal Nature that started the path of discovering birds' secret behind murmuration.

Murmuration refers to when birds, like starlings, flock together in thousands, moving across the sky in giant swathes, as a single entity.

They twist, and swoop, and change direction in split seconds, as a way to confuse their predators and warm their bodies prior to roosting overnight.

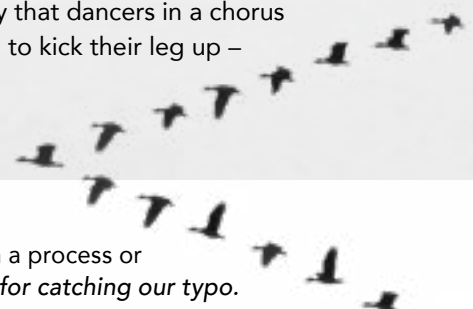
Group cohesion in a murmuration relies on each flock member obeying three rules:

1. Do not collide with a neighboring bird.
2. Fly in the same average direction as neighboring birds.
3. Fly towards the average position of neighboring birds.

By following these three simple rules, giant flocks can move at high speeds, changing direction quickly in response to attacks.

Birds anticipate abrupt changes in the direction the flock is flying, by observing the six or seven birds closest to them. When one bird changes direction, the change spreads like a wave through the flock.

Pott's named his theory *the chorus line hypothesis* because of the way birds know to change direction or speed, in the same way that dancers in a chorus line know when to kick their leg up – by anticipating the change.



Did You Catch Our Typo?

There was a typo in our Christmas newsletter. It should have said Bears engage in a process or HyperPHagia not HyperPLasia. Auto correct is not always correct! *Thanks Pam L. for catching our typo.*

The Bird Store and more... Mid Winter Blah's 2 Day Sale

Friday, February 23 and Saturday, February 24, 2024

Get rid of the mid winter blah's and think spring!



20% off everything in the store

(Excludes Optics and Bear Proof Poles)

One purchase per household/family

No other Discounts or bucks apply. Seed Saver Cards cannot be used in conjunction with the sale. In store items only no web/phone orders.

You MUST bring your newsletter with you to receive the sale price NO EXCEPTIONS!



Here's the rules:

- Save 20% on your purchases (Excluding Optics and Bear Proof Poles)
- No coupons, bucks, or other discounts apply
- Seed Saver Cards cannot be used in conjunction with the sale.
- (You may use your Seed Saver Card to pay for your seed purchase but only the 20% sale price will apply not a combined discount)
- No special orders, rain checks, web orders, or phone orders
- Sale is on in stock merchandise only; once it's gone it's gone!
- You have to be here to get the goods!

Bird Store Hours:
10:00am-6:00pm Monday - Saturday

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 736, Fiskdale, MA 01518
Phone: (508)-347-BIRD

thebirdstoreandmore.com

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