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GRANGE CO-OP'S WILD BIRD COUNTRY NEWS

Summer 2011

IF YOU FEED THEM, THEY WILL COME

I don't know about you, but I have been inundated with hungry birds this spring/early summer! My yard has been alive and exciting! At last count I have seen more than 20 different species of birds sharing my feeders. (Not counting those who don't eat seed or drink nectar!). Some species have come in hordes: the black-headed grosbeaks numbered 20 -30, purple finches about 30, pine siskins 10 -15,

lesser goldfinches 5-10, stellar jays 12, various blackbirds 10+, and the rufous hummingbirds? Easily more than two dozen could be seen at any one time. I love feeding the birds and

provide a smorgasbord for them throughout my yard all year long. I've certainly been kept busy keeping all my feeders and baths filled and cleaned this spring!

My greatest thrill so far this year has been a western tanager that has come to feed from my jelly feeder. I've seen the western tanager in my yard before, but



this is the first year I have seen them eat from my fruit feeders! Several pairs of evening grosbeaks have also frequented my sunflower feeders again this year. Now that nesting season is in full swing, the flocks have dispersed a bit and the feeder filling has slowed down. Whew! Now is the time to concentrate on my landscaping which will help feed and house

many species throughout the rest of the year.

As birds crowd to feeders they can get stressed and spread disease. There are a few "golden rules" of bird feeding that should be followed to help keep our backyard



visitors safe and healthy.

1. Give the birds enough space. If you have one feeder that is crowded, consider adding another one or two or three...



2. Stock fresh seed. Maintain fresh, dry, (non-moldy), seed in your feeders and the containers in which you keep your seed. Store seed outside in a metal can in a shed or garage to keep grain moths, which are common and "normal" in all bird seed no matter how processed it is, out of your house.

If you have the capability, store your birdseed in a freezer. That will kill the moth larvae and keep the seed fresher. Keep rodents, which can carry diseases, out of seed.



3. Keep hummingbird nectar fresh.

Hummingbird and Oriole nectar should be changed every 3-4 days in the summer and the feeders rinsed well in hot water before each



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fill up. Use a brush to clean the feeding ports. Fungus and molds are especially hazardous to hummingbirds.

4. Keep feeders clean. It is important to regularly clean your feeders to remove bacteria, feces, and mold spores. Dump out old or caked seed that may accumulate in the bottom of the feeder.



It is recommended you do a monthly cleaning of your feeders with a 10% bleach/water solution in plastic, ceramic and metal feeders or use a dilute vinegar solution (3:1) on wood to minimize fading. Rinse them well, dry, and refill with fresh seed. Check for sharp edges on which birds could cut themselves. Repair or replace as necessary.

5. Sweep or rake under feeders. Keeping the ground under feeders free of hulls and droppings will lessen damage to turf and prevent transmission of diseases. Seed trays attached to or placed under feeders can help catch the mess. Feeders can also be relocated occasionally to prevent a build-up of debris.

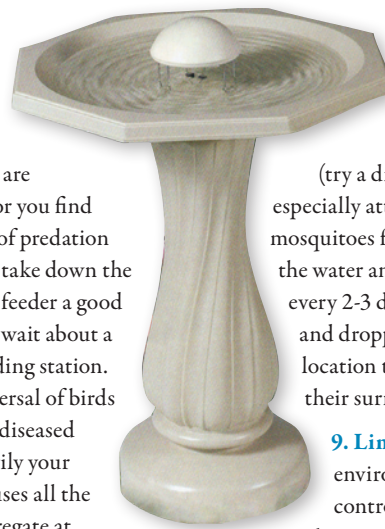
6. Take a break. Several diseases are contagious between birds. (You might see malformed bills; growths on feet, legs, or faces; swollen, reddish, crusty, or watery eyes.) If diseased birds are frequently visiting your feeders or you find several dead birds with no signs of predation around your feeder, temporarily take down the feeder, discard the seed, give the feeder a good bath with bleach and water, and wait about a week before reactivating the feeding station. This will allow a temporary dispersal of birds and discourage revisiting by the diseased birds. A sick bird is not necessarily your fault. Birds die from natural causes all the time. However, when they congregate at

feeders, diseases may get passed from one to another more readily.



7. Provide cover. Native trees and shrubs of various height and densities give birds places into which they can retreat and feel safe near the feeders. Plants should be close enough for safe

approaches and quick escapes, but far enough to allow a wide field of view for the feeding birds to see potential predators. (10-12 feet from feeders, especially if cats are a problem).



8. Provide water. A few inches (no more than 2") of clean water in a birdbath will be a welcome addition to any feeding area. Moving water, (try a dripper or water wiggler), is especially attractive to birds and will prevent mosquitoes from breeding as well. Change the water and clean the bath with a brush every 2-3 days to prevent a build-up of algae and droppings. Place the bath in a central location to provide the birds a full view of their surroundings.

9. Limit garden chemicals. Use environmentally friendly means to control pests and weeds and to fertilize lawns and gardens.

Ask Laura

QUESTION:

What kind of predators do hummingbirds have?

ANSWER:

Hummingbirds face some of the same hazards that other birds do, primarily free roaming cats and sometimes, (though not much of a meal), hawks. (Hummingbird Mc nuggets? Sorry.) However, because of their size, they can also face some very unusual predators. I was surprised to learn that praying mantis will capture, kill, and eat hummingbirds. So, if you see a praying mantis on your hummingbird feeder, usher him off to another part of your garden to eat the destructive insects rather than your hummingbirds.

Hummingbirds use spider webs as part of their nest construction. The spider silk helps to bind the nest to a tree branch and holds the nest together. However, if a hummingbird slips in the process of gathering the silk and becomes entangled in the web, it can become trapped and may be quickly wrapped and encased by the spider much like an insect would be.

Bees and wasps can sometime out maneuver and attack a hummingbird. Because of their small size, a single sting may be fatal to a hummingbird. This is often why a hummingbird will quit using a feeder if bees or wasps are frequenting the nectar ports.

DO YOU HAVE A QUESTION FOR LAURA?

E-mail: lfleming@grangecoop.com

Please write 'wild bird newsletter' in the subject line. Please be patient for a response, as it may take awhile to reply.

FIND A WORD!

C	G	I	S	S	T	A	T	I	B	A	H	A	T	R	W
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Words may be up/down, forward/backward, or diagonal

Sunflowers
Grosbeak
Oriole
~~Fruit~~
Suet
Birdfeeder
Binocular

Finch
Seeds
Sparrow
Birdbath
Chickadee
Millet
Water

Hummingbird
Tanagers
Habitat
Nest
Song
Hawk