



# Wild About Birds

Backyard birdfeeding experts!

1133 Main Street  
Milford, OH 45150  
513-248-2044  
www.birdchat.com

## BirdChat: Fall 2011

October 2011 - Newsletter - Volume XXIII, Issue 5

### Turning Your Backyard into Wild Bird Habitat: Fall and Winter

**F**all 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. A

hopper feeder mounted on a pole and filled with Backyard Bird Mix will attract cardinals, chickadees, titmice, nuthatches, woodpeckers, and finches. They'll eat the sunflower seeds and peanut pieces in the mix and scratch the millet on to the ground where it will be eaten by the ground feeders—doves, sparrows, and juncos. A tube feeder hung in a tree or on a shepherd's crook 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

*"Birds, like all animals, require fresh food, water, and shelter to survive."*

house finches and our winter visitors—purple finches and pine siskin. A feeding tray placed close to the ground and filled with Backyard Bird 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.

Make sure you offer fresh water to the birds all year. During the winter months install a birdbath de-icer 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.

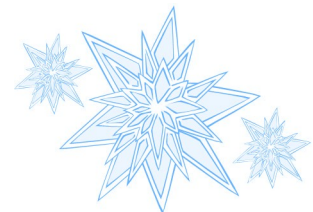
If you establish a birdfeeding station early this fall that imitates wild bird habitat by meeting all their survival requirements, you will entice a great variety of birds to your yard throughout the fall and winter seasons.

#### In this issue:

Turning Your Backyard into Wild Bird Habitat:  
Fall and Winter

Species Specifics: Carolina Wren

Fall Clean-up Do's & Don'ts



## Species Specifics: Carolina Wren

I can't count the number of times customers have told me stories about little brown birds that decide to nest in their garage (or shed or tool box or front door wreath or hanging flower basket or apron pocket or old boot) and, with no further identification, I'm able to tell them that their "little brown bird" is a Carolina wren!

The Carolina wren is a stocky bird with an upturned tail and a slightly downturned bill; it is cinnamon brown on top, light buff below, with a prominent white eyebrow. At 5½", this is the largest eastern wren.

The Carolina wren is a southeastern bird whose range has slowly crept northward; they are now common in the northeast and upper midwest. Carolina wrens sometimes don't survive severe winters and the species'

range then retreats south.

This little wren has a great, big voice: a loud, three part phrase that sounds to me like "tea kettle, tea kettle, tea kettle". Get too close to their nest and they'll scold you with a loud, raspy buzz!

Carolina wrens will forage for small insects from the tops of the trees down to the



leaf litter on the ground.

They'll scrounge around the edges of your windows and under your porch looking for tiny spiders and spider eggs. This wren will even visit your birdfeeding station for small bits of seed and suet. I put out meal worms every day for the pair of Carolina wrens that

visit my backyard.

As you've already learned, Carolina wrens will build their nests just about anywhere – in tree cavities, manmade nesting boxes, even inside buildings! Both sexes spend about 5 days building the domed nest of twigs, mosses, bark, and rootlets, lined with softer material. For 12-14 days the male feeds the female while she alone incubates 4-8 cream colored eggs marked with brown splotches. The nestlings are fed by both parents for another 12-14 days before fledging. Carolina wrens usually produce 2-3 broods each year.

The next time you open your garage door or try to water your hanging plants and a stocky, little brown bird darts out and starts to scold you, there's no need to get out the field guide for identification...it's a Carolina wren!

**Shop local. Support your community's economy!**

*Wild About Birds* is owned and operated in Milford, Ohio by Peggie Flierl. *BirdChat* is a periodic newsletter written by Peggie for customers of *Wild About Birds*. Material appearing in *BirdChat* may not be reprinted without permission. Any comments should be directed to Peggie at:

1133 Main Street, Milford OH 45150  
(513) 248-2044 [www.birdchat.com](http://www.birdchat.com)

## Fall Clean-up Do's and Don'ts

It's autumn; the temperature and humidity are dropping. Are you getting antsy? Do you feel like getting into the yard to rake up leaves and snip off dried-up flower heads? Stop...don't do it!

Go ahead and rake the leaves off your grass but allow some build-up to remain in your beds and around your shrubs. Insects can winter over in leaf litter and will provide a good source of protein for foraging birds in cold weather.

The dried heads of black-eyed Susans, coneflowers, zinnias and many other flowers offer seeds for hungry birds through fall and early

winter. If there are some weeds in the garden at the end of the season, leave them be; the birds will appreciate the seeds they provide and the freeze that arrives with the winter will kill off most of the weeds before next spring's planting season begins.

Pruning evergreen bushes is another chore that can wait until spring: the denser the shrub, the better cover it will provide our backyard feathered friends on a cold winter's night. If fall pruning is a must for some of your landscape bushes, use the clippings to build a brush pile around your birdfeeding station. Brush piles provide the

birds with shelter from the weather and cover from predators. And during storms this winter, the birds will have easy access to birdseed under the pile even when feeders are covered with snow!

If you've been waiting until fall to cut down that dead tree on the edge of your property...wait! Snags (dead trees) provide wild birds with insects and shelter. Unless the snag is a hazard to life or property, let it stand.

So, now that you really don't have anything to do this fall: get the birdfeeding station ready for the winter; put on a light jacket; settle down in a comfy lawn chair; and just watch the birds!

