



ALBERTA

## The Showroom is OPEN



**Friday February 12<sup>th</sup>**  
**Receive 15% off**

**In-store and curbside ONLY**

**\*\*Sorry! Excludes optics, books, cards and consignment items\*\***

### **We are still offering the following services as well**

**CURB SIDE PICK UP:** call, place and pay for your order at least 15 minutes prior to your arrival. Please pull in to the curbside parking stall, pop your trunk/hatch, phone (403) 640-2632 to advise of your arrival and a team member will come out and load your vehicle with your receipts attached. Payment can be made by Visa, Mastercard or E-transfer (NO CASH)

**DELIVERY:** Deliveries will still be made on Thursdays ONLY. Please phone the store at (403) 640-2632 any day prior to 12:00 noon on the Wednesday before your delivery; place and pay for your delivery. Please phone with your order as early as possible to avoid disappointment. If you have any special instructions please do not forget to inform us when you place your order.



# Black-billed magpie

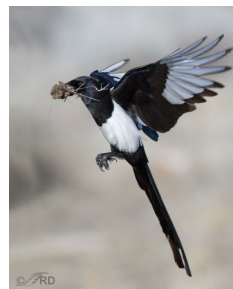
Reported by members of the Lewis & Clark expedition team, this little daredevil winged pirate loved to enter the tents of the explorers and make a quick snatch of food and escape just as quickly—they were therefore nic-named “Bad boys of the West.”

- In the past, Magpies have been considered vermin (due to their feeding on poultry eggs and orchard crops) and farmers have placed bounties on them. They are now protected under the Canada Fish and Wildlife Act
- The Black-billed magpie spends up to 40 hours building nests with domes on top (see my notes below)
- A group of Magpies has many collective names: tribe, mischief, gulp, tittering, etc.



Going to extremes to prevent Magpies from nesting and in the end it didn't work

Christmas is long over and we are fast approaching February. Now is the time to watch the activity of Magpies. If you see them flying with sticks or other nesting material in their beaks, follow them to see where they are going to build a nest. If you want the Magpies to chose someone else's yard to set up their nest, you need to remove the nest before the young are laid. You may trim out the trees until the cover they provide is too thin for the Magpie to roost in comfortably. If you have a pressure sprayer you can use it to knock down the nest during the early stages of construction. The Magpies will continue to try to reconstruct it, but eventually after several attempts at knocking it down, they will get the message and move on.



Magpie nests are typically durable domed structures made of sticks with an interior mud cup or bowl lined with grass.

**Ghost magpies** are birds that, through a genetic mutation, exhibit imperfect albinism. The mutation means the amount of black pigmentation in their feathers is much lower than in normal black-billed magpies, giving them a distinct white-grey colouring and, curiously, blue eyes.

## What's in a name?

The first element is Mag, nickname for *Margaret*, long used in proverbial and slang English for qualities associated generally with women, especially in this case "idle chattering" also has long been familiarly applied to birds. Pies were proverbial since Middle English for chattering (as were jays), hence the application of *pie* to a prattling gossip or tattler, also "sly person, informer" (late 14c.) and in 15c.-16c. a *wily pie* (or *wyly pye*) was "a cunning person."



# How bird watching may get us through the winter — and a pandemic

*Bird watching has become the surprising breakout hobby of COVID-19 — it seems everyone's eyes are turning to the skies as we stick closer to home*

*The Calgary Herald, December 28, 2020 - Carol Patterson*

Bird watching has been the surprising breakout hobby of COVID19. Once heavily favoured by grey-haired, khaki-wearing retirees, it seems everyone's eyes are turning to the skies as we stick closer to home.

Feed sales are skyrocketing, binoculars are selling quickly, and punk rocker Paul Riss tattooed Latin names of 240 bird species on his body. Can the pastime transform the drearily similar days of a pandemic winter?

“Winter is slim pickings, but there's definitely a lot of birds you can get to know well,” says Gavin McKinnon, a well known Calgary bird watcher and Grade 11 student, who is out several times a week looking for birds.

On recent outing to Fish Creek Provincial Park, he scans the snow-covered pathways, explaining, “It's a great winter birding spot. A lot of birds normally found in the mountains and foothills come down here in winter. On the creek we've seen American dippers and we can get all three types of Chickadees (found in Alberta).

“I've blasted past 300 (species) this year, probably because I've had more time on my hands. At the beginning of the year I hadn't planned on doing this,” he reveals. Now he's often out searching for rare birds—those avians outside their normal range or season. He reached 320 species before Christmas and is still counting.

“It's nice to see something that's not normally seen here,” he says. “This year has been an extremely good year for rare birds. We had a Ruff (a tall shorebird normally found in Europe and Asia) and a Great-tailed grackle in city limits.”

Like a storm chaser, McKinnon's always watching for the next big event. When a Red-backed shrike showed up in B.C.'s Powell River in October, he went to see it. Normally seen in Western Europe to Russia, this was the first time it was spotted in Canada.

Using an eBird app developed by the Cornell Institute of Ornithology and messages from a WhatsApp bird group, McKinnon then turns his attention to the forest beyond Votier's Flats' parking lot where a Northern pygmy owl had been observed a day earlier.

McKinnon started birding at age seven on a family outing to Ontario's Point Pelee National Park and attracted media attention in 2019 when he undertook a Big Year—a quest to see as many birds as possible within a specific geographic area. His target was to see 300 bird species in Alberta—a stretch because the Alberta Bird Record Committee's official checklist shows only 426 species and many are rare or vagrants (birds who migrate off-course and show up in Alberta unexpectedly).

Thanks to his Father's help crisscrossing the province, McKinnon reached his goal. Now, with the pandemic, he's having another good birding year.

If it isn't your style to huddle outside in a bush with a pair of binoculars in your hands and the wind whistling in your ears, you can watch birds out your window. It may be the first place many of us notice Magpies or Chickadees and if you set up a bird feeder you can count on regular visitors. With 23 years of backyard bird feeding expertise, Kris Brown, co-owner of the Wild Bird Store, has one of the few businesses thriving in 2020 and suggests people start with a window feeder that brings birds close to the house.

“Winter is a time when birds need us more. Feed and water are greatly diminished,” says Brown. Different birds eat different foods. Getting the right match is as important as making sure you're following the rules. You can't set up a bird feeding station in a public park and it's not always okay at home.

“We ask people where they live,” Brown notes. “If it's in a condo or a rental, we encourage them to check their lease or with their property manager as some of those places don't allow you to feed birds.”

If you would like to join the growing number of backyard birders we can help. We offer virtual seminars (during this challenging time) on such topics as winter bird feeding 101, nest boxes, Hummingbirds and so much more. Our knowledgeable staff are here to help you with setting up your backyard or any questions you may have regarding backyard bird feeding.



**THE WILD BIRD STORE**  
*Backyard Birding Specialists*

# Rare Sightings



As reported in the article on the previous page, Gavin McKinnon had spotted one of these rare birds in Calgary last year

The **Ruff** is a medium-sized wading bird that breeds in marshes and wet meadows across northern Eurasia. This highly gregarious sandpiper is migratory and sometimes forms huge flocks in its winter grounds, which include southern and western Europe, Africa, southern Asia and Australia.

The ruff is a long-necked, pot-bellied bird. This species shows marked sexual dimorphism; the male is much larger than the female (the reeve), and has a breeding plumage that includes brightly coloured head tufts, bare orange facial skin, extensive black on the breast, and the large collar of ornamental feathers that inspired this bird's English name.



Photo by CAMERON ECKERT

By **Tim Gilck** on January 4,

Courtesy of Haines Junction birders, Canada likely has a new bird species.

A Eurasian hawfinch has been spotted around the village since Dec. 14.

It's a close relative of the more-familiar black-and-yellow Evening Grosbeak of the Canadian North Woods, but this species is found exclusively in Europe and Asia.

At this time of year, the closest members of the species should be residing in Japan, said Cameron Eckert, a member of the Yukon Bird Club.

## January 4, 2021

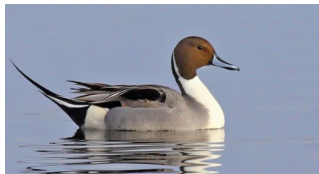
Myrna Periman  
Andrew Barnes  
12 mins  
Wednesday, December 30, 2020

PICTURES

On Monday, we were fortunate to meet "Jade," Calgary's now-famous Anna's Hummingbird. His landlord has gone to great lengths to provide him with food and shelter. When we arrived, Jade was zipping around the sunny top of a large spruce tree. Hummers are miniature acrobatic missiles, so photographing them is difficult. It wasn't until I looked at my images after that I realized that I'd taken a (very lousy) picture of him nabbing an insect out of the warm December air! He also came in for a sip of nectar, sitting long enough in (very lousy) light for me to get a couple of snaps. It was interesting to see this rare/out-of-season bird and it was heartening to meet such a devoted and caring human.

## eBird Canada

Interested in rare wild bird sightings in Calgary? Keep up to date with eBird Alberta where individuals post confirmed sightings of rare birds in Alberta.



Northern pintail—January 3, 2021

Wyndham-Carseland Campground



Mountain bluebird—January 4, 2021

Riverdale Park, Calgary



American white pelican—January 1, 2021 Frank Lake



# salmonella outbreak in British Columbia

VANCOUVER -- A B.C. wildlife group is asking residents to take down their backyard bird feeders to stop the spread of a deadly salmonella outbreak.

In a [notice posted online](#), the Wildlife Rescue Association says there's been increased reports of "sick and dying birds" across the Pacific Northwest, from Oregon to British Columbia.

Most at risk is the pine siskin, the group says this is potentially due to their social nature in feeding close together which would make it easy to pass the disease.

Wildlife Rescue says the number of sick birds started increasing last month. Through 2020, 127 pine siskins were brought into showing symptoms of salmonella infection, 75 of which were brought in just in December.

Since the new year began, 36 pine siskins suspected of salmonella poisoning have been brought in, and "more are coming in every day."

The group says bird feeders are a "significant source of transmission," because the disease is easily spread when the animals are feeding in close proximity.

Residents who have backyard feeders are asked to take them down for at least 14 days so the birds will disperse. At the very least, people are asked to clean their feeders with a 10 per cent bleach solution (nine-parts water to one-part bleach) at least once a week. Also to clean the ground below feeders daily.

In addition, if you see a sick bird near your feeder, the group asks them to be taken down until the middle of February. The symptoms may not be obvious, "infected birds may appear thin, fluffed up, and lethargic."



Help prevent the spread of

**SALMONELLA**

The Wild Bird Store recommends backyard birders in and around Calgary purchase another finch feeder if you have finches in your backyard. This way when you need to replenish your feeder, you can replace it instead of refilling it and clean the feeder you take down with a solution of 1 part bleach to 9 parts water. Rinse thoroughly, allow to dry completely and refill ready to switch out with your other finch feeder. This will help prevent the spread of salmonella.

# Seminars



Kris Brown-Schoepp

## NEST BOXES

**Thursday, February 18, 2021**

@ 6:00pm

Cost: \$10.00 +fees and GST

**Thursday, March 11, 2021**

@ 6:00pm

Cost: \$10.00 +fees and GST

**Please note:** All seminars are presented via ZOOM, purchase tickets through Eventbrite.ca.

**Selecting a nest box...where to place a nest box...when to set up your nest boxes...**

**Get the answers to these questions and a whole lot more.**

**Q and A period will follow the presentation.**

## Hummingbirds

**Thursday, April 8, 2021**

@6:00pm

Cost: \$10.00 +fees and GST

**Thursday, April 22, 2021**

@6:00pm

Cost: \$10.00 +fees and GST

**You too can have these "garden jewels" in your backyard. Kris will offer tips on how to attract them to your yard and keep them coming back year after year. The right food, the necessity of water and plenty of tips.**

**Q and A period will follow the presentation.**



Kris Brown-Schoepp

## Mason Bees

**Thursday, May 6, 2021**

@6:00pm

Cost: \$10.00 +fees and GST

**Thursday, May 20, 2021**

@6:00pm

Cost: \$10.00 +fees and GST

**Learn how to have success with your Mason bee cocoons and how to harvest next years cocoons. We will instruct you on how to store your cocoons, when to place them outside and how to insure the hatching bees will lay their cocoons in the proper place.**

**Q and A period will follow the presentation.**



Kris Brown-Schoepp



Join the ever growing number of Calgarians who are raising Mason bees in their own backyards.

We suggest you order your cocoons now to avoid disappointment.

Cocoons come in a box of 10 (price to be determined at a later date) and if this is your first time, it is recommended you order 3 to 5 boxes.

Please visit Eventbrite.ca to order your cocoons starting February 1, 2021. All livestock orders must be paid in full at time of order and there are no refunds.

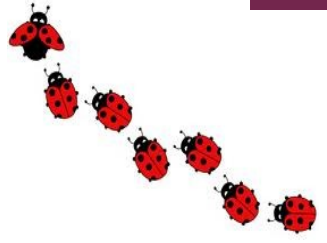
We also carry a complete line of Mason bee supplies for your one-stop shopping convenience.



Great -horned owl



Seen outside the backdoor of the Wild Bird Store January 9, 2021



Once again The Wild Bird Store will have Ladybugs for sale. Starting March 1, 2021 you can order in quantities of 1000 \$15.00 +fees & GST or 3000 \$40.00 +fees & GST through Eventbrite.ca. All orders must be prepaid and there are no refunds.

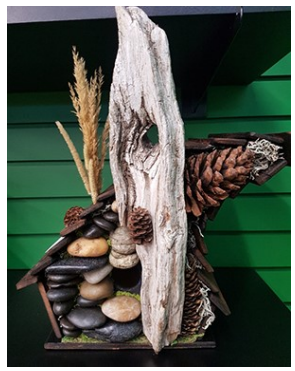
Ladybugs will be available the 1st week of June 2020 and we will call you when they are available for pick-up. **Please note** because they are livestock, once you have been called to pick-up you will have 48 hours to do so. Thank you

Locally hand-crafted Ladybug houses unique to The Wild Bird Store

**\$29.95 +GST**



LADYBUG HOUSE



## Do you have woodworking skills?

The Wild Bird Store is looking for local talent to build wood products, including bird houses, bird feeders, bird baths and accessories to join our team of builders. If you are interested, we would love to hear from you.

Please email Kris at [info@wildbirdstore.ca](mailto:info@wildbirdstore.ca)

**NEW!**



**Raincoast Photo** Masks from British Columbia— Available in three designs –birds of Alberta, Big Year and hummingbirds. Each mask comes with nose grips and 2 filters.

**\$13.99 +GST**



**Raincoast Photo** mugs from British Columbia Available in 3 designs: Backyard birds of the AB, Chickadees and Hummingbirds.

**\$9.99 +GST**



Hand-crafted in Airdrie, several unique designs to choose from. Mugs are dishwasher and microwave safe.

**\$55.00 +GST**



**Four the Birds** valentine seed treat. Made with red quinoa, whole sunflower, peanuts and fruit. If your sweetheart is a backyard birder this is an excellent gift and a real treat for the birds. Made locally in DeWinton.

**\$23.99 +GST**



Attract birds with nesting material! It will complement other rewilding efforts like [pollinator-friendly gardening](#), [erecting a bee home](#) and [planting a butterfly garden](#).

From hanging nests to cup nests and those hidden inside man-made bird houses, they all need a combination of twigs, dried grasses, moss, hair, mud and even spider webs.

## Collect

Collect natural, biodegradable, pesticide-free nesting materials like:

- **Dog fur** (free from flea and tick treatment chemicals), horse hair (clean their brushes) or wool. **DO NOT** use human hair.
- **Moss.**
- **Dry grass**
- **Cattail fluff.**
- **Twigs and strips of bark**
- **Dried leaves**—just a few

Don't use:

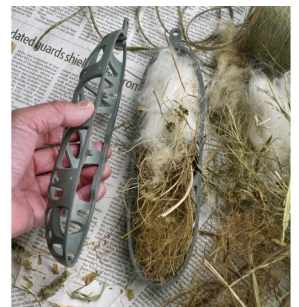
- **Human hair** (it's too thin and can cut or tangle birds).
- **Yarn or string.**
- **Dryer lint** (it's a bit of a chemical soup and could contain plastic microfibres).
- **Synthetic fibres.**



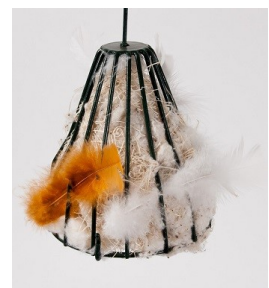
## Tips:

- You can buy bird-nesting material at wild bird stores or where bird seed is sold. Most contain cotton, hemp and wool fibres or fluff!
- Fill your cleaned metal suet feeder from winter with nesting material, or repurpose a metal kitchen whisk.

**Swallows and robins also use mud.** It's excellent to keep a patch of bare ground and exposed soil. ([Native mason bees](#) and [butterflies also need mud puddles.](#))



The Wild Bird Store sells nesting material



# Keeping in Touch with The Birding Community

## Christmas bird count 2020 results

Christmas bird counts (CBC) have taken place in the Calgary region since 1952, covering a circle 12.1 km in radius centred on the Louise Bridge (10th St NW) in Calgary.

### Count Summary

No. of Species Recorded	70 (plus xx cw)	Routes Counted	35	out of	35
No. of Individual Birds	58009				

Snow Goose		Horned Grebe		Black-backed Woodpecker		House Sparrow	6987
Ross's Goose		Rock Pigeon	1583	Downy Woodpecker	222	American Pipit	
Greater White-fronted Goose		Eurasian Collared-Dove	5	Hairy Woodpecker	47	Evening Grosbeak	2
Cackling Goose	16	Mourning Dove		Pileated Woodpecker	3	Pine Grosbeak	72
Canada Goose	26335	American Coot	3	Northern Flicker	328	Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch	
Trumpeter Swan		Killdeer		American Kestrel		House Finch	1158
Tundra Swan		Wilson's Snipe		Merlin	19	Purple Finch	1
Wood Duck	1	Ring-billed Gull		Gyrfalcon		Common Redpoll	35
Blue-winged Teal		California Gull		Peregrine Falcon		Hoary Redpoll	
Cinnamon Teal		Herring Gull		Prairie Falcon		Red Crossbill	23
Northern Shoveler		Glaucous Gull		Northern Shrike	4	White-winged Crossbill	129
Gadwall	3	Pacific Loon		Canada Jay		Pine Siskin	34
American Wigeon		Common Loon		Steller's Jay		American Goldfinch	
Mallard	11810	Double-crested Cormorant		Blue Jay	149	Lapland Longspur	
American Black Duck		Great Blue Heron		Black-billed Magpie	3063	Snow Bunting	
Northern Pintail	1	Black-crowned Night-Heron		American Crow	113	American Tree Sparrow	
Green-winged Teal	3	Golden Eagle		Common Raven	515	Dark-eyed Junco	91
Canvasback	2	Northern Harrier		Black-capped Chickadee	2086	White-crowned Sparrow	
Redhead	35	Sharp-shinned Hawk	5	Mountain Chickadee	6	Harris's Sparrow	
Ring-necked Duck	4	Cooper's Hawk	3	Boreal Chickadee	11	White-throated Sparrow	10
Greater Scaup		Northern Goshawk	1	Horned Lark		Song Sparrow	1
Lesser Scaup	3	Bald Eagle	44	Golden-crowned Kinglet	10	Lincoln's Sparrow	
Harlequin Duck	5	Red-tailed Hawk		Ruby-crowned Kinglet		Swamp Sparrow	
Long-tailed Duck	1	Rough-legged Hawk	2	Red-breasted Nuthatch	391	Western Meadowlark	
Bufflehead	222	Ferruginous Hawk		White-breasted Nuthatch	106	Red-winged Blackbird	
Common Goldeneye	979	Great Horned Owl	8	Brown Creeper	19	Rusty Blackbird	
Barrow's Goldeneye	4	Snowy Owl		Winter Wren		Brewer's Blackbird	
Hooded Merganser	5	Northern Hawk Owl		American Dipper	2	Common Grackle	
Common Merganser	65	Northern Pygmy-Owl		European Starling	445	Orange-crowned Warbler	
Red-breasted Merganser		Long-eared Owl		Brown Thrasher		Cape May Warbler	
Ring-necked Pheasant	7	Short-eared Owl		Townsend's Solitaire	8	Black-throated Blue Warbler	
Gray Partridge	22	Boreal Owl		Varied Thrush		Pine Warbler	
Ruffed Grouse		Northern Saw-whet Owl	2	American Robin	64	Yellow-rumped Warbler	
Sharp-tailed Grouse		Belted Kingfisher	3	Bohemian Waxwing	664	Kinglet sp.	1
Pied-billed Grebe		American Three-toed Woodpe	1	Cedar Waxwing	5	Accipiter sp.	1

Mountain Bluebird 1 Swainson's Thrush 1 Anna's Hummingbird 1

**Record High Counts:** Northern Flicker (328) and Black-billed Magpie (3063) – probably due to increased coverage.

**Also High Count:** White-throated Sparrow (10).

**Low Counts:** Gray Partridge, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Northern Goshawk, Rough-legged Hawk, Bohemian Waxwing, Common Redpoll, Red Crossbill, White-winged Crossbill and Pine Siskin (see sheet for numbers).

**Noteworthy Missed Species:** American Wigeon, Ruffed Grouse, Killdeer, Red-tailed Hawk, Prairie Falcon, Snow Bunting and American Tree Sparrow.

	2020	2019		2020	2019
Mallards	11810	8362	Cackling goose	16	42
Bufflehead	222	154	Common golden eye	979	432
Gray partridge	37	22	Bald eagle	44	24
Eurasian-collared dove	5	15	Black-billed magpie	3063	2343
Common raven	515	346	Pine grosbeak	72	142
White-winged crossbill	129	1			

Anna's hummingbird



Swainson's thrush

Mountain bluebird





## Q: Should We Feed Wild Birds From Our Hands?

**A:** It is well known that certain North American bird species can be enticed to take various kinds of food items right out of our hands! For example: Bluebirds, Chickadees and Nuthatches, to name a few, can be trained to take mealworms or seeds from one's palm and I have seen many photographers and videos of folks feeding several Hummingbirds at once from various receptacles of sugar water held in the hand. But whether humans should engage in this practice is no easy question to answer in even a single page.

While I can fully understand the pleasure derived from it, allow me to first draw my lines in the sand. First, I am against offering mice, live or dead to any kind of bird of prey for any reason, mainly because it can create a dangerous situation whereupon the raptor in question might associate all humans with food offerings. Barred owls, which will take live mice from the hand, are already gaining a reputation for striking humans while defending their nests. Aside from causing serious physical injury, think of the life-long trauma to be suffered by a child attacked by such a bird, not to mention the damage to raptorial birds in the public eye. Second, I am opposed to hand-feeding water birds such as ducks, geese, swans and gulls in parks and especially on public beaches. It does not take long for the feathered freeloaders to grow in number to become an annoying nuisance, but their copious feces in the water can also lead to disease transmissions to humans, such as *Escherichia coli*. I speak from experience. Gulls and Swans can also become physically aggressive. Third, a case can certainly be made for not hand-feeding any listed threatened or endangered species. Take Florida Scrub jays for instance. Studies have shown that supplementing their food can negatively alter the breeding success of this species by affecting the timing of fledging their young and it has also been known to result in collisions with vehicles. One now requires a Federal permit to feed them.

So, when is it okay to hand-feed birds? Well, since we already offer various healthy foods to our backyard birds via our feeders, I personally see no wrong in having them also come to our hands for those same foods in that environment. Think of the immense pleasure it can bring to a child experiencing a wild creature trustfully landing on their hand, perhaps even stimulating that child to become a lifelong fan of birds, professionally or otherwise.

What about hand-feeding birds in public parks and other greenspaces? Do the birds become entrained to expect to be fed and then stressed in some manner when food is not forthcoming? To my knowledge, there are no scientific studies to support such a notion. I believe that those birds who willingly come to humans, whether it be a feeder or a hand, are merely treating them as fast-food outlets, always reverting to natural foods when available.

I leave you with one last example—offering bread, cheese, raisins, granola or pet kibble to Canada jays (hopefully, our future National bird!) at a road stop, campsite or on a hiking or ski trail. While there is no doubt that it involves much pleasure and nurtures a love for nature, experiments conducted in Algonquin Park by Dan Strickland, Canada's foremost expert on the species, demonstrated that "providing winter supplements causes breeding Jays to raise more and healthier nestlings". To use Dan's own words. And lest you think such questionable foods are harmful to the birds, Dan will also tell you that "Canada jays normally subsist all winter on semi-rotten bits of raw, vertebrate flesh, insects, spiders, berries and mushrooms, and all in various stages of decay, especially if there have been winter thaws that encourage even more than the usual amount of bacterial growth".

My bottom one on the question of hand-feeding birds is that, until further studies have been done, offering in one's hand preferably healthy foods to various non-aggressive songbirds in public greenspaces or in one's backyard is not likely to cause them any harm and the benefits appear to outweigh any risks.

David M. Bird January 14, 2021

## ABOUT DR. DAVID

*David M. Bird is Emeritus Professor of Wildlife Biology and the former Director of the Avian Science and Conservation Centre at McGill University. As a past-president of the Society of Canadian Ornithologists, a former board member with Birds Canada, a Fellow of both the American Ornithological Society and the International Ornithological Union, he has received several awards for his conservation and public education efforts. Dr. Bird is a regular columnist on*



The above is the opinion of the author, Dr. David M. Bird a Canadian ornithologist who has dedicated his life to the study of wild birds. The Wild Bird Store reminds readers to abide by local and Federal restrictions when feeding or hand-feeding wild birds in public parks and greenspaces.

# What Is It?



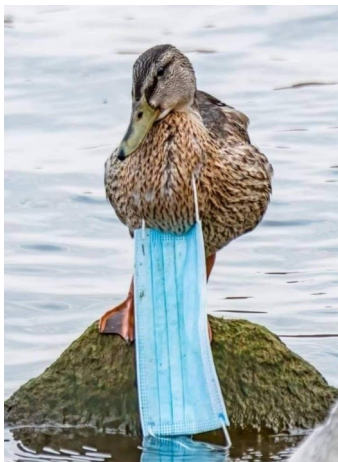
As bubbles freeze, you see designs start to form immediately as they swirl and dance around. This is caused by a thin layer of water between two layers of soapy water. It is the middle layer that freezes, so it turns to ice inside the soapy layers. The bubbles only last for about 40 seconds or so before bursting.

Photos by Catherine Hamilton

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See March newsletter for answer



With face masks now compulsory on public transport and indoor spaces in Calgary, discarded face coverings can harm wildlife.

Please remember to cut off the white ear straps before disposing of your face mask.

This should also apply to plastic shopping bags and plastic can holders.

We should also cut up disposable gloves too to stop animals getting trapped in them.



# Opinion: Potential urban chicken farmers need protection mostly from themselves

The Calgary Herald—December 29, 2020 Will Verboven



The City of Calgary is planning to update its Responsible Pet Ownership Bylaw; one presumes that involves cats and dogs, but no, it appears to include many other animals, including wildlife. The latter has caused feathers to be ruffled as the proposed changes suggest feeding wild animals could become illegal.

One imagines bylaw officers snooping around backyards to catch homeowners illegally feeding a few woodpeckers. Birdhouses will be seized as evidence of criminal intent. Stores could be charged with being accessories to criminal bird feeding by selling birdseed. Thousands of outraged wild bird supporters will be out demonstrating against such draconian bylaws.

It gets worse; thousands of wild birds could starve to death in the winter! Their frozen blood would be on the hands of heartless city councillors who support anti-wild bird bylaws. One is amazed as to who the bird-brains are that hatch these ill-conceived proposed bylaws. But I digress.

Since it seems that having backyard chickens is becoming a politically correct human right for city folks, I suspect Calgary will join the progressive bandwagon with such chicken-friendly places like Vancouver and Victoria. The least Calgary city councillors could do is put some teeth into regulating this over-glorified hobby. Bylaws should require potential city chicken farmers to have the written permission of every neighbour three homes deep in every direction. Housing should be secure, well-lit and heated for the winter. Chickens should be health inspected annually by a veterinarian. Health and animal care standards apply to poultry just as they do to cats and dogs. City chicken farmers need to have liability insurance to cover disease and parasite outbreaks that can spread to humans or pets.

The real issue is the possibility of legalizing backyard chickens for egg production. That's now illegal in most parts of Calgary. There are good reasons for that ban; chickens, pigeons and domestic waterfowl can be messy, noisy and odorous in constricted areas if not looked after by attentive and caring owners. Keeping such birds also attracts pesky predators, like Magpies, Ravens, Coyotes and Raptors. Did I mention domestic birds can be disease carriers of E. coli, salmonella, avian influenza and other nasty afflictions like worms and lice? I expect none of that matters to folks who believe producing your own eggs is ideologically better and helps break their dependence on the evil corporate capitalist food chain. These are the same folks who fervently believe a brown shelled egg is better than a white shelled egg.

Having said all that, don't expect much common sense with a new Calgary pet bylaw. But then again, new poultry regulation will require dozens of chicken happiness inspectors. Now that should warm the hearts of busybody city managers.

*Will Verboven is an agriculture opinion writer and agriculture policy consultant*



# Bird Seed Truck



On location at Crowfoot YMCA/Arena  
(corner of John Laurie Blvd. & Nosehill Drive NW)  
Every Wednesday 2:00pm to 5:00pm

Text us @ (403) 701-4571



email us at [orders@wildbirdstore.ca](mailto:orders@wildbirdstore.ca)



With limited space on the truck, we highly recommend that you call in your order by Tuesday @ 5pm, to ensure we have what you need.

## DONATIONS



Located at The Wild Bird Store (near the seed bins). We collect your cash as well as “wishlist” donations and arrange to deliver them to local wildlife organizations including Calgary Wildlife Rehabilitation, Alberta Institute of Conservation and Ellis Bird Farm.

We ask for your support quarterly for each of these organizations. For January, February and March 2021 your donations will go to:

Calgary Wildlife Rehabilitation



# Bird Book Nook



We have also set up one of many jigsaw puzzles—please feel free to place puzzle pieces while enjoying your visit. Be sure to check out our many jigsaw puzzles for sale all with a wild bird theme and in sizes of 500 or 1000 pieces.

The Galler-oom has been transformed into Bird Book Nook, a library of the birding/nature books that we carry as well as some local artwork and birding/nature videos on the TV screen. We invite you to browse the new set-up and enjoy the many publications we carry.

The Bird Book Nook is also for rent for small groups of 35 people or less that need a meeting or event space. Table and chairs are available as well as refreshments for \$50/hour. For more information or to book the room, please email [info@wildbirdstore.ca](mailto:info@wildbirdstore.ca).

**We offer a discount** if you return your seed bags (sorry—not the Mother Nature bags which we cannot re-use), suet ball containers, if you bring your own container to fill or use a bag from our re-cycle bin. This discount is in addition to any other discount offered.



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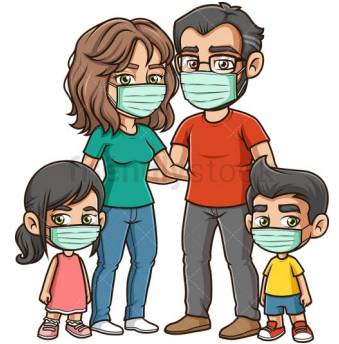
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## Family Day—February 15th

### We will be closed



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