



The American robin is the largest and best-known member of the thrush family in Canada. It is mostly active during the day, and on its winter grounds, it assembles in large flocks at night to roost in trees secluded in dense vegetation.

## American Robin



- The American robin is not related to the European robin who is from the family of Old World flycatchers

- American robins are often thought of as the ultimate sign of spring, but not all of them pack their bags for winter. While some northern population head south in search of food, many stay put year-round. Those that stick around form lively groups that hunt for berries and fruit
- American robins are considered an indicator species, meaning their health gives scientists clues about the health of the environment. They were among the first birds affected by the pesticide DDT, which caused widespread die-offs. After the chemical was banned in 1972, robin populations bounced back quickly. Since robins eat many worms and insects from the ground, limiting pesticide and herbicide use in yards keeps these cheerful birds thriving

During the Christmas bird count here in Calgary for 2025 there were spottings reported of 249 American robins. With the change in winter temperatures here in Calgary for the past couple of years, we can expect more and more American robins “to stay rather than go” in the coming years.

## Rare European robin spotted in Montreal

A rare European robin has been spotted on this side of the Atlantic and it's becoming a wee celebrity.

On Rougemont Avenue in Montreal, dozen of photographers and birders have been showing up since the first spotting by an avid bird watcher on January 11, 2026.

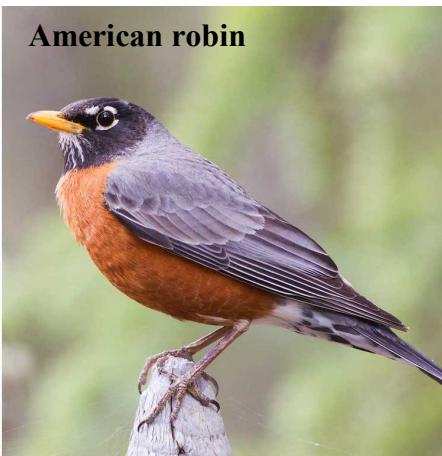
The hearty little bird usually lives in Europe and can be found as far as northern Scandinavia.

It is possible that he hitched a ride and crossed the Atlantic Ocean. Other possibilities are the weather conditions as well. Lately in Europe, they have had cold fronts and even snow in Paris, France. Also it is possible he has been in or near Montreal since fall migration.

European robin



American robin





## JIM ST. LAURENT

Jim's years of guiding bird walks for the Wild Bird Store has been instrumental in teaching "birders" how to get the most out of their birding excursions.

Unfortunately, Jim has decided he can no longer continue to spend many hours walking while guiding his walks. An option for Jim is to continue his lifelong passion, not only for birding, but for sharing his knowledge and passion in a different way. Birding by car has become an alternative but might surprise you with the multitude of species you have the opportunity, especially when your guide is so proficient at finding wild birds.

### **NORTHEAST IRRICANA AREA Saturday February 7, 2026**

**Ticket price \$7.00 (includes GST +fees)**

### **PRIDDIS TO LONGVIEW AREA Saturday February 21, 2026**

**Ticket price \$7.00 (includes GST +fees)**

**PLEASE NOTE:** All trips are by car. Bring lunch. Will usually be 5-6 hours. We will be searching for winter visitors such as Snowy owls, Snow buntings, Red-tail hawks, Gyrfalcons, Redpolls and others. As well as foothill birds like Great gray owls, crossbills & others.

**All trips start by meeting at 9:00am at the rear parking of the Wild Bird Store. Carpooling is encouraged.**

**Any trips postponed due to weather may be held the following Saturday.**



# ON LOCATION

Wildwood Community Centre (4411 Spruce Drive SW)

1st Tuesday of each month 3:00pm to 5:30pm

Seed Truck will be at this location Tuesday, February 3, 2026

Crowfoot Arena (corner of John Laurie & Nosehill Drive NW)

Every Wednesday 2:00pm to 5:30pm

**PLEASE NOTE: There will be NO Seed truck at this location Wednesday February 11 and Wednesday February 18, 2026. We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause.**

The Mobile Seed Truck is a mini version of The Wild Bird Store, and as such, we are limited to what we can carry. It is therefore, highly recommended that you place an order the day before the truck is to be at your desired location. This will ensure that when you come to the Mobile Seed Truck you get the items you need. You can place orders by emailing [orders@wildbirdstore.ca](mailto:orders@wildbirdstore.ca) or texting to

(403) 701-4571

# OPTIONS FOR SHOPPING AT THE WILD BIRD STORE

In Store or on the Seed Truck



Phone your order in and pay for it at least 30 minutes prior to arriving at The Wild Bird Store for pick up. Park in the curbside parking stall, call the store (403) 640-2632, pop your trunk or hatch and leave the rest to us.



Please phone the store at (403)640-2632 any day prior to 12:00noon on the Wednesday before your delivery with your order, place and pay for your delivery.

Please phone with your order as early as possible to avoid disappointment.

If you have any specials instructions, please do not forget to inform us when you place your order.

A minimum of \$25.00 (before GST) is required on ALL delivery orders

**PLEASE NOTE:** There will be NO home deliveries on Thursday February 12 and February 19, 2026. We apologize for any convenience this may cause.



**QUESTION:** When providing dried mealworms to our backyard birds, should one rehydrate them? According to numerous web sites on the internet, a number of self-proclaimed experts on the gastrointestinal systems of birds claim that the dried mealworms act like a sponge soaking up precious moisture from the bird's internal tissues to cause fatal dehydration. Moreover, others claim that nestlings fed dried mealworms by their parents will choke and die because of the hard, sharp surfaces. Or they will die from overworked kidneys trying to process the dry protein or even from constipation caused by impaction in the intestines.

**RESPONSE:** None of this is true. None of it has been substantiated by proper peer-reviewed studies carried out by credible scientists specializing in avian gastrointestinal physiology. It is a myth that has been perpetuated by pure speculation on the internet and reminds me of the infamous claim that sparrows eating rice grains thrown at a wedding will cause the birds' stomachs to swell and make the bird explode?

So, what do we know about mealworms? First, they are the larval form of the mealworm beetle (*Tenebrio molitor*). Due to a short breeding cycle and lifespan, they can easily be raised in large numbers, making them a good source of insect food for insectivorous backyard birds. Ideally putting out live mealworms bought from a pet store would be the best option, but that can get expensive and lead to other logistical problems. But feeding dried mealworms is acceptable too. Just ask any bird lover engaged in rehabilitation of sick, injured or orphaned insect-eating songbirds and they will confirm my thoughts. Moreover, I have never had anyone, e.g. citizens or scientists, in my four decades of feeding birds and writing about the practice tell me that they have actually observed adult or baby birds dying in any manner directly or indirectly from being fed dried mealworms. Keep in mind that most birds, certainly songbirds, have a double-chambered stomach, the first part breaking down food with pepsin and hydrochloric acid and the second part equipped with extremely powerful muscles and even more powerful acid to grind food down. Did you know, for example, that turkey stomachs can actually break down metal and that some birds purposefully consume small stones to help digest hard seeds? That owls and other raptors swallow whole food items like insects, mice and small birds and then regurgitate pellets of fur, feather and/or chitin (horny polysaccharide that forms part of the hard outer integument especially of insects, arachnids, and crustaceans)?

I could go on and on, but I strongly urge anyone who is skeptical of my words above to read an excellent and highly detailed article by Dan Gleason, a retired ornithologist from the University of Oregon and the owner of a Wild Birds Unlimited store. The link is <https://eugene.wbu.com/mealworms-article>.

Sadly, one only finds his article on the internet after being bombarded by an onslaught of two or three internet pages of "fake news" on the subject. No wonder folks are confused!

## 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 birds for *Bird Watcher's Digest* and *Canadian Wildlife* magazines and is the author of several books and over 200 peer-reviewed scientific publications. He is the consultant editor for multiple editions of DK Canada's *Birds of Canada*, *Birds of Eastern Canada*, *Birds of Western Canada*, and *Pocket Birds of Canada*. To know more about him, visit [www.askprofessorbird.com](http://www.askprofessorbird.com) or email [david.bird@mcgill.ca](mailto:david.bird@mcgill.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.



**Write a Google review** on your experience at The Wild Bird Store, and as a thank-you, we will give you 100 customer loyalty points (\$5.00 value). To get a promo code, kindly email [info@wildbirdstore.ca](mailto:info@wildbirdstore.ca)  
(Please one Google review per customer)



**Earn 200 customer** loyalty points (\$10.00 value) by referring a friend, acquaintance or fellow birder.  
Please visit the store to get a promo code



**No need for a card** just give your phone number.  
You earn \$1.00 for every \$20.00 spent (sorry, excludes “sales” items, books, optics and consignment items) and can be used in-store and on Mobile Seed Truck. As a loyalty member, our monthly promotional and in-store “specials” are automatically given at the cash register.



**Combining our Seniors** 10% discount with the loyalty program (sorry—excludes “sales” items, books, optics and consignment items.)



**Discount for membership** 10% discount for members of Fish Creek Park, AIWC, Priddis Golf Club, Nature Calgary, Sandy Cross Conservation, Springbank Garden Club and Calgary Horticultural Society. Must present valid membership card at time of purchase.



**Discount for Military Members & Veterans** 10% discount on purchases in-store or on Mobile Seed Truck (sorry—excludes “sales” items, books, optics and consignment items)



# Help Your Garden Grow with Mason Bees

The Wild Bird Store is now offering Mason bee cocoons for sale. We suggest you order your cocoons now to avoid disappointment.

Please visit the link below to purchase your cocoons. Mason bees will be available for sale until February 28, 2026 or until supply is gone.

If this is your first time ordering, we recommend you order 3 to 5 boxes.

Price for a box of 10 is \$21.99 and includes +GST and fees.



**Because these are livestock, there are no refunds.**

The Wild Bird Store also carries a complete line of Mason bee supplies for your one-stop shopping convenience.

## Creating A Mason Bee Habit Seminars

Kris will be presenting in store seminars on Mason bees coming up in the month of April. Watch for the announcement in the March 2026 newsletter. Space will be limited.

## Tips on Watering Your Bees.

The key is to create a gentle slope into the water. That way, the bees can land, gently approach the water, and put its proboscis down into the water;

Start with a glass or ceramic pie plate—almost everyone has one in their home. Add smooth stones—you will need enough to fill the pie plate three-quarters full. Add water—fill the dish three-quarters of the way full with water so that the tops of the stones are still showing, and what you've just done is created a bee watering station. It's that simple.

**Important to remember:** Birds do not like bees, so remember to place your bee watering station as far away as possible from your bird bath. Deep pools of water with no easy off ramp are hazardous for bees.





## Calgary Christmas Bird Count 2025 results!

There were 265 participants with 154 in the field and 111 FWs. A total of 43,631 birds were counted, made up of 68 species. The record number of species ever counted was in 2003 and was 77 species. The 15-year average for the number of species is 67.

There was one new bird added to the cumulative number of species since CBC began in 1952: Northern mockingbird!

Other unusual species included Long-eared owl, American kestrels, Northern shoveler, Sharp-tailed grouse, and a Common grackle.

For more information including a map: check out [www.naturecalgary.com](http://www.naturecalgary.com)



## Christmas Bird Count

The Christmas Bird Count started in 1900 (1952  
Calgary started to participate) and is the longest running Citizen Science project in North America. Christmas Bird Counts are conducted on a single day between December 14 and January 5 within a 24km diameter circle. Results are used to assess population and distribution trends of birds.

Participants can chose to participate in the feeder watch, from the comfort and warmth of their own home, or be a bush beater and owl prowler by coordinating efforts with others in their circle to go for a walk to count birds in the field.



## The Cherokee Legend: The Sparrow and the Trees

This is a pourquoi tale (a story that explains why something  
in nature is the way it is according to legend)



As winter approaches, a sparrow with a broken wing cannot fly south with its family. It seeks shelter from the trees in the forest. One by one, the mighty, leafy trees (like the Oak and Maple) refuse the sparrow a place to stay, giving selfish excuses. Finally, the sparrow asks the humble Pine tree, which, despite having only small, needle-like leaves, welcomes the sparrow into its branches for the winter. And so the sparrow spent the winter with the Pine tree.

Spring came and when the Creator saw what had happened he called a council of trees and said to them “you who have so much and would not share with Sparrow shall now lose your leaves in the cold time. But Pine because you gave so much , you shall keep your leaves in coldtime.”

# Where do birds go when it storms?

Birds recognize changes in air pressure, which are often signs that weather is about to change. If they sense an approaching storm, they tend to forage more, often coming to feeders for the easiest source of food.

When bad weather hits, birds generally seek shelter from wind and snow/rain in dense shrubs or thickets, next to heavy tree trunks, and on the downwind side of woods and forests. Cavity-nesting birds hunker down in nest boxes/roosts and natural cavities to ride out storms.

Native plants that provide food for wildlife in the form of berries, seeds, nuts and nectar will do double duty and provide shelter during a rain/thunder storm, if you plant them densely.

Evergreens are particularly valuable, since their foliage remains green year-round. Here's a good rule of thumb: the more plants you have and the more densely you plant them, the more protection you'll be providing for wildlife and birds when the weather turns nasty.

Sometimes providing shelter means simply protecting or enhancing mature plantings that are already there. If you have large trees in your yard, don't remove them.

Even better, add smaller understory trees and shrubs to take advantage of vertical space, creating layers of shelter. Dead and dying trees, called snags, are particularly important. As snags decay, they lose branches and cavities form. Add that to the holes woodpeckers excavate, and you could have all sorts of animals taking up residence.



Beyond your plantings, you can also assemble simple structures that wildlife will use for refuge. Brush piles mimic fallen woody debris found in natural areas; build them by lining up a series of parallel logs, then laying successively smaller branches on top. This will give you a domelike structure filled with spaces that wildlife as large as foxes and as small as butterflies will take advantage of.

You can do the same thing with rocks by stacking smaller stones on and around bigger ones to create mini-caves and crevices. Try doing this along your property line to make a rock wall. Just be sure to stack the rocks without using mortar, which would eliminate those valuable hiding places.

And don't forget—you can buy special roosting boxes designed to provide instant shelter. These look like nesting boxes or birdhouses for birds, but they have entry holes toward the bottom to help the box retain heat in winter. They might even have perches on the inside to accommodate multiple birds. Not only wild bird may use these roosts, but squirrels, frogs and of course songbirds.

 **REMINDER**

Remember: birds will always forage naturally rather than relying on your feeding stations. If you are aware that a winter storm or even heavy rain may be coming, keep your feeders topped up so the birds can get an easy energy boost to help them through the storm.



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Monday through Saturday 10:00am to 5:00pm

**CLOSED** Sundays and ALL Statutory holidays for Faith, Family & Friends



Monday, Feb 16, 2026

**The Wild Bird Store will be CLOSED**

Follow us on:

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Go to YouTube, type in the search bar “The Wild Bird Store” to watch our videos and to help us become more visible. Be sure to click on “subscribe” before you leave the page.



## Why is it called a “Snowy owl” and not a “Snow owl”?

It's called a “Snowy owl” and not a “Snow owl” because “snowy” acts as a descriptive adjective, highlighting its snow-white plumage and Arctic habitat, which is a common pattern for bird names (like “Bluebird” or “Golden eagle”), whereas “Snow owl” sounds more like a compound noun. The name emphasizes its defining feature—feathers that look like fresh snow—blending perfectly with environment.



**HAPPY BIRDING!**

Sorry! Excludes optics, books,  
cards & consignment items