



Saturday, September 26, 2026

10:00am to 5:00pm



“Crack an egg—where everyone gets a discount”



Cupcakes & squares from Brown Sugar Bake Shop in Okotoks. As well refreshments will be available.

“Door Prizes from many of our suppliers”

THOSE PESKY BLACKBIRDS

It is that time of year once again when our backyards become havens for gathering flocks of Blackbirds. This is in preparation for the fall migration. They are noisy, messy and to say the least, annoying. The recourse is simple – STOP FEEDING! This may seem a bit drastic, but it is the only way to make the hoards disappear and move on to some other location. I know, you think well what about the other birds who have been feeding in my backyard – well if the Blackbirds are there, they aren't getting much of a chance. Believe me when I say, birds are never reliant on your backyard for food – they just think of it as a fast food restaurant. They will continue to fly into your yard, realize there is no food and move on – but they will be back!



So who are these pesky birds that will join forces to migrate: (security in numbers)?

Common grackle Common grackles are one of the most resourceful black birds you will find in Alberta. Their favorite foods are grains, such as corn and rice, and they are known to gather in enormous flocks in farm fields growing these crops. In addition, they also eat a wide variety of seeds, acorns, fruits, insects, spiders, frogs, fish, mice, other birds, and even garbage!

Males are black overall but have an iridescent blue head and bronze body when seen in the right light.

Females look similar, except they are slightly less glossy than males.



(male) Common grackle

Brown-headed cowbird stocky, chunky blackbird with a thick, conical bill.

Males have completely black bodies with a brown head (hence the name). In poor light, it can be hard to tell that the head is actually brown.

Females are a plain brown color. There is slight streaking on the belly and a black eye.

Cowbirds have a truly interesting way of reproducing. Instead of spending energy building nests and raising their young, they let other birds do it for them! Females deposit their eggs **INSIDE** the nests of other species, which means the “chosen” bird does all the hard work. Interestingly, over 220 species have been identified as having hosted eggs, from small kinglets to large meadowlarks. The other birds typically don't realize the deception and raise the baby cowbird to adulthood at the expense of their own hatchlings!

Lastly, here is a question for you to ponder: How does a Brown-headed Cowbird know it's one? It's interesting to think about since they aren't raised by their own species. But after they leave the nest, they never spend time again with whatever type of bird their host mother was!



Brown-headed cowbird

European Starling A common blackbird in Alberta, they are about the size of an American robin. Their plumage is black and appears to be shiny.

Breeding adults are darker black and have a green-purple tint.

In winter, starlings lose their glossiness, their beaks become darker, and they develop white spots over their bodies. But did you know these birds are an invasive species? Back in 1890, one hundred starlings were brought over from Europe and released in New York City's Central Park. The man responsible (Eugene Schieffelin) had a mission to introduce all of the birds mentioned in Shakespeare's plays in North America.

The rest is history as starlings easily conquered the continent, along the way out-competing many of our beautiful native birds. Their ability to adapt to human development and eat almost anything is uncanny to virtually no other species.

It's the magical way they travel in flocks, called a murmuration.



Red-winged blackbird

It's common for them to be found in large flocks that feature various other blackbird species, such as grackles, cowbirds, and starlings. They traditionally will not eat at bird feeders, but we are seeing more of this, and they will eat seed on the ground.



**PLEASE TAKE NOTE OF THE FOLLOWING
CHANGE IN DELIVERY SCHEDULE**

**Commencing June 1, 2026 deliveries
Will be EVERY SECOND week**

**Delivery dates will be as follows for the month of
September 2026**

September 10 and September 24

We apologize for any inconvenience!



On Location:

Wildwood Community Centre (4411 Spruce Drive SW):

EVERY Tuesday 3:00 pm to 6:00 pm

**PLEASE NOTE: Crowfoot location hours change to 2:00pm to 5:00pm
September 2, 2026.**

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

Every Wednesday 2:00pm to 5:00pm

Please place orders by 12:00 noon the day BEFORE truck is on location

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.

Text us @ (403)701-4571 OR email us at orders@wildbirdstore.ca

OPTIONS FOR SHOPPING AT THE WILD BIRD STORE



Shop in Store

In Store or the Seed Truck



Curbside Pick up

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



Home Delivery

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 YOUR ORDER IN AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE AS
SPACE IS LIMITED!**

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

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

Delivery charge of \$10.00 is applicable to every order



QUESTION: My husband and I live in a suburban neighbourhood of a small town and for the last several days, we have been seeing a gathering of about 25 Turkey vultures perching regularly in a copse of trees nearby. Can you offer any explanation as to why these birds are there and whether we should be concerned?

RESPONSE: There are two possibilities, both related. It all depends on the time of day you are seeing them perched in this particular grove of trees and whether it is a daily routine. If it was just a one-off observation over a few days, it could be that there is some food nearby in the form of a large roadkill

such as a deer. But if you are seeing them in the same location over a period of a month or more, particularly in the early evening and/or mid-morning, you are likely looking at a favoured roost site. You see, three or four decades ago, seeing turkey vultures in towns and cities was a rarity, but today they are much more common in these habitats. They now commonly soar right over the skyscrapers of large cities like Montreal all summer long. I see them regularly in my suburban area in British Columbia nine months of the year. These roosts can vary in size from a dozen or so birds up to 4,000, but more often they contain about 100 to 300 individuals. A typical day begins with turkey vultures staying at the roost and sunning themselves for thermoregulation until one to five hours past sunrise, after which they all leave to patrol the area for carrion. The bad news is that these roosts are often located in small towns where the birds can become quite a nuisance, at least to some people. In some parts of the southern U.S. ranging from Florida to Virginia, roosting flocks of turkey vultures have been culled by wildlife managers because they cause damage to human structures by pecking and clawing at construction surfaces such as roof shingles and defecating and regurgitating on children's playground equipment and boat covers. One flock of turkey vultures notably desecrated a cemetery by tearing off garlands and ribbons from gravestones. To my mind, we need to find more non-destructive ways to disperse these highly useful feathered sanitary engineers which also serve to make our environment more interesting.

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 or email david.bird@mcgill.ca

DAVID M. BIRD, Ph.D Emeritus Professor of Wildlife Biology McGill University			CANADA JAY MÉSANGEAI DU CANADA FRIENDLY, SMART, LOYAL AND TOUGH. TRULY THE MOST CANADIAN BIRD! AMICAL, INTELLIGENT, FIDÈLE ET ROBUSTE. UN OISEAU VRAIMENT CANADIEN! WWW.CANADAJAY.ORG
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SATURDAY MORNING BIRD WALKS WITH



JIM ST. LAURENT

Jim is currently away until further notice. Please watch future newsletters or the calendar online for his date of return.



**Sorry! Excludes optics, books,
cards & consignment items**

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 Nature Centre.

We ask for your support quarterly for each of these organizations

For September, October and November 2026 your donations will go to:



THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

FOUND AN INJURED BIRD/ANIMAL? BELOW IS A LIST OF LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS TO CONTACT IN YOUR AREA



1. Northern Alberta Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation (WILDNorth)

12515 128 Street, Edmonton
780-914-4118 www.wildnorth.ca

2. Alberta Society for Injured Birds of Prey (ASIBP)

51562 Rge. Rd. 222, Sherwood Park
780-922-3024 & 780-720-5507 www.raptorshelter.org

3. Medicine River Wildlife Centre (MRWC)

Twp. Rd. 360 between Rge. Rd. 40 and 42, Spruce View
403-728-3467 www.medicineriverwildlifecentre.ca

4. Alberta Institute For Wildlife Conservation (AIWC)

Twp. Rd. 282 & Rge. Rd. 30, Madden
403-946-2361 www.aiwc.ca

5. Cochrane Ecological Institute (CEI)

Twp. Rd. 280 & Rge. Rd. 51, Cochrane
403-932-5632 www.ceiwildlife.org

6. Calgary Wildlife Rehabilitation Society

11555 85 St NW, Calgary
403-214-1312 www.calgarywildlife.org

7. Alberta Birds of Prey Centre

2124 16 Ave, Coaldale
403-345-4262 www.burrowingowl.com

* Emergency * 911

-In an emergency where there is immediate danger to humans

* Report a Poacher * 1-800-642-3800

-Report suspicious or illegal hunting and fishing activity, or dangerous wildlife encounters

-For reporting large, injured wildlife (bears, moose, deer and cougars)

When suspected sick, injured, trapped or in-need wildlife is found, please note the species, location and other relevant information and contact the nearest wildlife rescue organization for advice and so they can determine if rescue is required. Phone numbers valid as of 2023.

Made by Kamala and Kyle with the hope that it will help fellow wildlife lovers when they come across animals and birds in need!

www.KamalaKylePhotography.com



The Lonely Camp: SNOWY OWL RESEARCH

A satellite-tracked female snowy owl in the eastern Canadian Arctic spent 186 days on sea ice, hunting ducks at open water cracks in the pack ice hundreds of miles from land in total winter darkness. The biologists who tagged her expected her to fly south for the winter. She flew north onto the frozen ocean. The finding flabbergasted them. Inuit seal hunters had known about it for centuries.

Jean-François Therrien, a doctoral student at Université Laval working with professor Gilles Gauthier, tagged 12 adult female snowy owls on Bylot Island in Nunavut as part of an International Polar Year research project studying key indicator species of northern ecosystems. When winter came, the tracking data showed something nobody in the academic world had documented with technology. Eight of the 12 owls spent more than 95 percent of their winter locations over sea ice or along the coast. Six adult females spent most of the winter far out on the Arctic sea ice. One stayed there for 186 consecutive days. She was not lost. She was not drifting. She was hunting.

The ocean freezes across the Canadian Arctic every winter but it does not freeze solid. Leads and polynyas, cracks and pools of open water, persist throughout the ice sheet. Sea ducks, particularly eiders, and seabirds concentrate at these openings because the open water is where the food is. The owls found the ducks by finding the water. Gauthier described the hypothesis directly: bird researchers at coastal field sites have observed snowy owls attacking eiders in winter. If the satellite positions of the owls matched the locations of open water leads recorded by other satellite systems, the connection would be confirmed.

The owls were not behaving like the animal most people picture when they hear the words snowy owl. Most people imagine a white bird sitting on a fence post in a farm field somewhere in Minnesota or upstate New York, hunting mice in the snow. That version of the snowy owl is real. It is the owl that shows up on Christmas Bird Counts and birding websites and nature documentaries filmed in places where camera crews can reach. The other version, the one the Inuit have always known, is an owl that flies north when winter starts, lands on sea ice in the Arctic dark, finds a crack in the frozen ocean, and sits beside it killing ducks at temperatures that drop below minus 50 degrees Fahrenheit.

The isotope data confirmed the diet shift. Stable isotope analysis of feathers showed that marine prey made up a substantial portion of the winter diet for owls that chose the sea ice. A snowy owl that breeds on lemmings in the summer and switches to sea ducks in the winter is not a rodent specialist. It is a predator that changes its entire hunting strategy, its prey base, and its habitat seasonally, moving from tundra grassland to frozen ocean the way a seasonal worker changes job sites.

Project SNOWstorm, a US-based tracking initiative that has followed more than 115 snowy owls with GPS transmitters since 2013, found the same behavior at a smaller scale on the Great Lakes. Snowy owls wintering in the northern United States moved out onto frozen Lake Michigan and Lake Erie for weeks at a time, hunting ducks at the cracks that opened and closed between wind-driven ice sheets. The researchers described the Great Lakes behavior as practice for the full Arctic version: owls learning or maintaining the ice-hunting skills that adult females use on the Arctic Ocean in the years when they stay north.



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www.wildbirdstore.ca

info@wildbirdstore.ca

The Store is open Monday through Saturday 10:00am to 5:00pm

We are CLOSED Sundays, and ALL Statutory holidays for Faith, Family and Friends

We still offer curbside pickup every day we are open and delivery service on every 2nd Thursday of each month

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 2026



FOLLOW US ON:

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Instagram @thewildbirdstore

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

DID YOU KNOW?

to walk on floating vegetation, such as lily pads, without sinking. This talent has earned them the nickname ‘lily trotters’.

There's a bird that can walk on water - sort of! Jacanas possess preposterously long toes relative to body size that spread the birds' weight, enabling them



HAPPY BIRDING!