



Winter Backyard Birds of Calgary

Black-capped chickadee



Although this is a year-round resident of Calgary, it is during the frigid months of winter this species shines! Always a happy little bird, it shares its love of life with his song even on the coldest days of all. It is a true gentleman at the feeder, taking an individual seed to eat in a nearby bush or tree. This species is very family oriented and not aggressive towards others.



Red-breasted nuthatch

If you have Black-capped chickadees feeding in your Backyard you are sure to have the Red-breasted nuthatch



White-breasted nuthatch

Not as common as the Red-breasted nuthatch, so consider yourself very fortunate to have one visiting your backyard.



Common and Hoary redpoll

Both the Common (photo top) and Hoary (photo bottom) redpoll are arctic species and will only migrate south to warmer climates when there is a shortage of food, so some winters we can see them in Calgary, and other winters we don't. They are known to conserve body heat by burying themselves in the snow to insulate against severe cold weather.





Downy (top photo) and Hairy (middle photo) woodpeckers, and Northern flicker (bottom photo)



Once again, all three of these species can be seen in Calgary year-round. In the spring and summer months, their main diet consists of insects, but during the winter they like offerings with high fat content, like peanuts and suet. The Downy and Hairy can be difficult to distinguish from each other unless seen side-by-side, but differences to look for: The Hairy is smaller and his “moustache” can be seen if you look closely.



Crossbills (white winged top photo) and (red bottom photo)

Their lower and upper bills are “crossed” to allow them to

Pry apart the pine cones to access the seeds which are

Their favourite foods. Crossbills gather grit on roadsides, making them vulnerable to vehicle strikes, and to possible ill effects from ingesting salt and other chemicals used to treat roads in winter.



Blue jay



The Blue jay likes to be noticed, so he will always announce is coming!

And you will no doubt notice how particular he is about his food choice.

Peanuts-in-the-shell are his favourite food of choice, but not just any peanut will do.

He will pick up each peanut and shake it to see if there are several inside the shell but also to see how fresh they are. He will of course also eat peanut kernals.

You may think he is just being a “pig” but he has an ulterior motive – he caches most of what he takes – you will often see crows following them to see where they have cached the peanuts.

Dark-eyed junco



We must not forget one of our most endearing species during the winter. Known affectionately as “snow birds” they appear when winter weather and snow set in and are part of the sparrow family. They prefer to forage on the ground but will be welcomed into your backyard by your bird feeders and the sounds of other birds.

Other species that can be seen tend to be permanent year-round residents of Calgary. These include House sparrows, Black-billed magpie, Pine siskins, House finch, American crows, Bohemian waxwings (although they will not eat at your feeders, you may have trees like the Mountain ash or Shubert which retain frozen fruit throughout the winter), and the Merlin (a small falcon who may be in your yard hunting House sparrows). In recent years, Calgarians have spotted more American robins and the occasional American goldfinch staying over winter.



Merlin



American robin

**Bohemian waxwing eating
mountain ash berries**



American goldfinch in winter

What is the Best Strategy for Feeding Birds in Winter?

The single most effective method is deploying high-density beef suet blocks paired with black-oil sunflower seeds (in shell or kernals), across specialized, predator-baffled feeding stations.

Beef suet provides pure, easily digestible animal fat that gives small birds an immediate metabolic boost. When formulating or buying suet, avoid cheap blocks packed with cracked corn or dynamic fruit flavorings, which lower the total fat percentage per ounce.

Black oil sunflower seeds are different from the familiar stripe-shelled seeds you may have snacked on yourself. They're smaller, making them easier for small birds to eat, and their fat content is higher. The thinner shells mean less mess around your feeder, but they are still messy. For that reason, many backyard bird enthusiasts buy hulled seeds (also called kernals or waste free). They cost more per pound, but there's no waste.

Peanuts have an even higher fat content than black oil sunflower seeds and are packed with protein. They can be challenging for small birds to eat, but they're a favorite of jays and woodpeckers. Be forewarned that squirrels love them, too. The biggest downside to peanuts is the need to be vigilant about spoilage, especially in damp conditions. Aflatoxins in moldy peanuts can sicken birds.

One food not to offer is bread. Scattering breadcrumbs in your yard is certainly easy and may evoke fond childhood memories, but birds that fill up on bread aren't getting the nutrients they need to fuel themselves through the winter.

The greatest hidden threat to winter songbirds is not a lack of food, but an absolute lack of liquid water. When backyard ponds, creeks, and puddles freeze solid, birds face a critical dehydration crisis. While they can eat clean snow to stay hydrated, melting ice crystals inside their bills drains their internal core body heat.

Maintain a shallow water depth (1–2 inches) – adding flat stones to the bird bath offers birds a platform. When temperatures drop below 20 degrees celsius, either disconnect the heated bird bath or place a wire grid over the bird bath bowl to prevent the birds from bathing in the water. This will prevent frozen legs and feathers. To prevent the spread of diseases like salmonellosis and conjunctivitis, clean your bird bath and feeders regularly,

According to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, there are both benefits and risks. Done responsibly—by keeping feeders clean, providing appropriate foods, being mindful of disease transmission, and placing feeders appropriately to minimize predation and window strikes—feeding is unlikely to hurt. And in the winter, when natural foods are scarcer and potentially covered by snow, the supplemental food may help. An analysis of 30 years of data from Project FeederWatch suggests that the native species that most frequently use feeders were doing better over time.

But ultimately, the main reason to feed birds is the joy they bring. As ambassadors for the natural world, the birds at our winter feeders connect us to nature and remind us of the importance of conservation.

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

**Commencing October 1, 2026 deliveries
Will resume to EVERY Thursday**



On Location:

Wildwood Community Centre (4411 Spruce Drive SW):

EVERY Tuesday during the month of October 2026

3:00 pm to 5:30 pm

PLEASE NOTE: Crowfoot location hours change to 2:00pm to 5:00pm September 2, 2026. We apologize for any inconvenience.

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



The Wild Bird Store would like to thank everyone who joined us to celebrate our 29th year anniversary and for your continued support of our dedication to the birding community. We truly appreciate each and every one of our customers.

HAPPY BIRDING!



QUESTION: We have been hearing about plans to introduce more Wild Turkeys into Alberta for the purpose of gamebird hunting, yet we have also been watching many new stories on television across Canada showing these large and very formidable birds invading cities and becoming quite a nuisance. Should we be worried about this?

RESPONSE: When European settlers first arrived in North America, Wild turkeys were only present in 39 continental states and Ontario. However, partly due to range expansion from the U.S. due to milder winters caused by climate warming as well as introductions of captive-bred birds for hunting purposes, Wild turkeys have made successful incursions into almost all of the Canadian provinces and not just into wild habitats. These highly intelligent and wary birds have learned that they cannot be shot in suburban and urban areas and that there are few wild predators large enough to kill them there. Moreover, there is plenty of food in the form of bird seed in feeders, pet food left outdoors, and fruit and vegetables in backyard gardens. If that were not trouble enough, their breeding season results in large aggressive males being driven by high testosterone levels to attack even creatures much bigger than themselves, including humans. The province of Alberta currently has two sustainable breeding problems, one in the Cypress Hills in the southeast and another in the southwest, notably Crowsnest Pass.

Ironically, ranchers in Alberta are welcoming the translocation of “problem” Wild turkeys from other provinces like British Columbia on to their farms for the purpose of hunting for both sport and food. And because the hunting of these birds can bring in much needed revenue into government coffers, the Alberta government is considering the possibility of introducing even more turkeys into the province along with careful monitoring to ensure that the birds do not become a problem for both ranchers and folks in towns and cities. From my personal perspective as a wildlife biologist with a fair bit of experience with conflict between urban wildlife and humans, I would be very careful about what they wish for. More and more frequently, reports of Wild turkeys becoming a serious nuisance in towns and cities all over North America are showing up in the media.

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 david.bird@mcgill.ca www.askprofessorbird.com			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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Wild turkey management engagement

The Alberta Government gathered input from Albertans to help finalize the draft Management Plan for Wild Turkeys in Alberta that outlines actions to best manage the wild turkey population in 2021.

Wild turkeys were introduced in Alberta in 1962 to create new opportunities for gamebird hunting and wildlife viewing. Since then, self-sustaining wild turkey populations have established themselves in southern Alberta and are hunted on a limited draw basis.

The purpose of this engagement was to:

- educate Albertans on the status of wild turkeys in the province
- gauge level of interest and support for wild turkey populations in Alberta
- gather feedback on the goals outlined in the management plan

As part of our Vision for Recreational Hunting, ongoing collaboration with landowners, conservation organizations and Albertans is required to understand the interest in wild turkey populations and to improve and direct management actions.

Online survey

Albertans shared their feedback on the actions outlined in the draft management plan through an online survey between August 23 to October 3, 2021.

Feedback was collected on topics related to:

- public education
- interests and concerns of landowners
- allocation of turkey hunting opportunities
- increasing the range and population of wild turkeys in Alberta

Thank you for your participation. We are currently reviewing feedback.

Outcomes

Feedback collected will inform the future work of wild turkey management by strengthening future versions of the plan and helping us to improve tools and policies used to achieve our conservation mandate.

For more information, read the [Management Plan for Wild Turkeys in Alberta](#).

Wild turkeys in backyard



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

Why Robins Skip the Bird Feeder

Ever noticed how robins seem to ignore your bird feeder, even when every other perch is full? It's not that they're being picky - they simply have different tastes and habits from most backyard birds. While chickadees and finches flock to seed mixes, robins prefer their meals fresh, juicy, and wriggling. Understanding their preferences is the first step to turning your yard into a robin-friendly retreat.

Robins are primarily insectivores and fruit eaters. Their diet revolves around earthworms, beetles, caterpillars, and seasonal berries rather than seeds. That's why they rarely stop by typical feeders - they're not interested in the grain and sunflower seed blends that attract many other birds.

In spring and summer, robins spend most of their time foraging on the ground, tugging worms from moist soil after rainfall. Come winter, when insects are harder to find, they rely on berries and fruit left behind on trees and shrubs.

Offer What Robins Truly Enjoy

If you want robins to visit regularly, skip the seed feeder and focus on what they actually eat:

Serve Fruit, Not Seed: Place chopped apples, grapes, raisins, or berries on a flat surface such as a platform feeder or shallow dish.

Keep Water Available: Robins need clean water for drinking and bathing year-round. A heated birdbath in winter ensures they always have access.

Grow Native Plants: Shrubs like serviceberry, dogwood, and winterberry provide natural food sources that robins depend on through all seasons.

Encourage Ground Foraging: Robins hunt for worms in soft soil. Avoid overusing pesticides and keep your lawn healthy to help maintain their food supply.

To welcome robins throughout the year, think beyond food. Planting trees and shrubs gives them safe spots for nesting and sheltering from harsh weather. Evergreens offer protection in winter, while fruit-bearing species sustain them when insects disappear. Keeping your garden diverse and natural supports not only robins but a wide range of native birds.



Staying Connected



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Phone (403)640-2632

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 Thursday from October 1st to June 1st

Monday, October 12, 2026



FOLLOW US ON:

The Wild Bird Store will be CLOSED

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X (Twitter) @wildbirdstoreyyyc

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

STRANGE BUT TRUE



Last month I
very strange photo
worth another

cares deeply about its young. Given the dangers beneath the water they walk through, they carry their babies under their wings. When they carry their babies, the chicks' dangling legs make it look like the parent has multiple sets, giving them the nickname "spider bird." The parent clamps the baby between its wings and body, protecting the chicks from being grabbed while also hiding them from sight.

focused on the enormous feet of the Jacana. Then I received a
from a customer – a Jacana carrying its nestlings. I thought it was
look at this species. The African jacana is a remarkable bird that

HAPPY BIRDING!