



**ALBERTA**

## Caring For Winter Birds When the weather gets really cold.....

Three things to remember if you are going to feed birds in the winter: 1. The nights are especially cold and long for our feathered friends, so they rely on being able to find a food source quickly in the morning. 2. Feeding high energy foods are a definite and 3. most important for the small songbirds is an open source of water.

**KEEPING FEEDERS** clean and full is a responsibility you should take very seriously. A back-up feeder clean, full and ready when the snow gets deep and it is difficult for you to access your feeder. Over-crowding at feeders can cause stress and can result in birds becoming ill, so clean, well maintained feeders are essential. When you retrieve the feeder at the end of the day, have another feeder clean and full to make your chore easier.

**FEEDING HIGH-ENERGY** foods can give birds a boost when they need it most. Suet (made with beef kidney suet) will satisfy this requirement, but there are also other foods like black oil sunflower seeds (in the shell or shelled), peanut kernels and meal worms.

**SUPPLYING A SOURCE OF OPEN WATER** Just like humans, birds can last for days without food, but not without water! It also serves another vital element to their survival. Birds need to keep their feathers clean and spend a lot of time and energy preening throughout the day. Without clean feathers they cannot insulate their bodies against the cold and it becomes more difficult for them to expend energy flying. Large birds like Bluejays can find open water along rivers and ponds, but small songbirds cannot do this. Having a heated (a misnomer because the water isn't heated; it is just kept from freezing) birdbath which is thermostatically controlled is the answer and there are many, many options to choose from.

**PLEASE REMEMBER:** When winter temperatures fall below  $-24$  degrees C. to turn off you heater or heated bird bath and remove the water. This will prevent the water that is splashed onto the songbirds feathers from freezing which could cause hypothermia and possible death.

**Here is another tip:** provide shelter not only to get away from the severe winds and snow of winter, but to provide protection from predators like cats and predatory birds. A great way to do this especially at this time of year—if you had a real Christmas tree, put it in the backyard standing up in the snow—here the birds can hunker down and feel secure.



# Snowy Owl

It's that time of year when the Snowy owls, who have been spending the rest of the year in the north, head on south in search of food and become a favourite of "birders" to seek out. So here are a few tips to help you find these beautiful visitors to Alberta.

1. Snowy owls CANNOT be found west towards the mountains. Go east—out into the vast farmlands especially where there are bales of hay—particularly those large round bales. These make excellent perches for Snowy owls who are looking for food and what better place to find mice, voles and even gophers on a warmer winter day
2. Snowy owls will also take advantage of the fence posts to perch on so always search along fence lines looking for these rather large white birds. TIP: The male is pure white; females and immatures have black striping on their feathers
3. Also look on top of telephone poles—another great advantage site for Snowy owls not only to perch and look for prey in the fields below, but also to enjoy the well deserved catch

There is another resource that "birders" can take advantage of here in Alberta during those cold, winter months. Local organizations have engaged the expertise of those in the know to help you find these beautiful birds. A "Snowy Owl Prowl" is a way these experts can share not only their sightings but also their vast knowledge of these birds and for a very nominal fee it is a wonderful way to spend a wintery day during our long months of winter.

**NOTE:** The Wild Bird Store in conjunction with expert "birding guide" Jim St. Laurent has two planned "Snowy Owl Prowls" in the new year of 2025. Check out our Saturday Morning Bird Walks page in this newsletter for dates. Come spring they will be head back to their summer breeding grounds in the north where food is now plentiful which is required to raise their young.



**Mature male**



**Mature female**

Male Snowy owls are barred with dark brown when they're young and get whiter as they get older. Females keep some dark markings throughout their lives. Although the darkest males and the palest females are nearly alike in colour, the whitest birds are always males and most heavily barred ones are always females.

Snowy owls are territorial on their breeding areas, and sometimes their wintering areas as well. Some Snowy owls defend their winter territories fiercely, even engaging in combat with other Snowy owls (a behavior not recorded on their breeding territory). Some banded Snowy owls return to the same wintering site year after year.

Unlike most owls, Snowy owls are diurnal, extremely so. They'll hunt at all hours during the continuous daylight of an Arctic summer, and they may eat more than 1,600 lemmings in a single year.

Snowy owl young may disperse remarkably far from their birthplace. From a single Snowy owl nest on Victoria Island in the Canadian Arctic, one young bird went to Hudson Bay, one to southeastern Ontario, and one to the far eastern Russian coast.

Thick feathers for insulation from Arctic cold make Snowy owls North America's heaviest owl, typically weighing about 4 pounds—one pound heavier than a Great horned owl (the provincial bird of Alberta) and twice the weight of a Great gray owl.

**PLEASE TAKE NOTE OF THESE TEMPORARY  
CHANGES IN 2025**

**As of January 6, 2025 The Wild Bird  
Store will be closed on Mondays until  
further notice.**

**THERE WILL BE NO MOBILE SEED TRUCK ON  
LOCATION AS FOLLOWS:**

**WILDWOOD LOCATION:**

**TUESDAY FEBRUARY 11 AND TUESDAY FEBRUARY 18**

**CROWFOOT LOCATION:**

**WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 12 AND WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 19**

**NO DELIVERIES THURSDAY FEBRUARY 13 AND  
THURSDAY FEBRUARY 20**

**We apologize for any inconvenience!**

# Saturday Morning Bird Walks With

## Jim St. Laurent

# 2025

**SNOWY OWL PROWL** 1st DAY TRIP Saturday January 11, 2025

9:00am meet at rear of Wild Bird Store and carpool

Ticket price: \$7.00 +GST

**BEBO GROVE** (Fish Creek Park) Saturday January 25, 2025

9:00am meet in the parking lot at the end of 24th Street S.W.

Ticket price: \$7.00 +GST

**SNOWY OWL PROWL** 2nd DAY TRIP Saturday February 8, 2025

9:00am meet at rear of Wild Bird Store and carpool

Ticket price: \$7.00 +GST

**The Diplomatic Mission of the Olive-sided Flycatcher** earlier in 2024, Birds Canada chose the Olive-sided flycatcher as its 2024 Avian Ambassador. As the year draws to a close, we can reflect on what exactly that position entails. It's diplomatic mission began way back in May when they first arrived in Canada. They brought us an urgent message, but to understand it we must pay close attention.

The birds that returned to Canada this spring were about 3% fewer than those that departed in the fall of 2023. Year after year, the population of Olive-sided flycatchers shrinks by about this much. This pattern tells the story of a changing world. A world with fewer insects to catch and fewer trees to nest in.

In a few months the Olive-sided flycatcher will depart once again from the tropics. They will defy the worsening odds and travel over 10,000 miles across the hemisphere. They will return to familiar places, like small pockets of the boreal forest where they've had previous breeding success. Some individuals will return to these familiar landscapes, to find the habitat severely altered—or gone.

Here, we must come clean. The Olive-sided flycatcher isn't just an ambassador for Canada's boreal forest, or aerial insectivores. They are also ambassadors for long-distance migrants, who don't belong to a single ecosystem or country. They advocate for a huge range of ecosystems between the threat-filled Andes and the also vulnerable boreal forests of the north. Their journey can remind us of the interdependence of all ecosystems, species, and people—and of the urgent need to come together to protect this home we share.

To read the entire article please visit: <https://www.birdscanada.org/the-diplomatic-mission-of-the-olive-sided-flycatcher>



Jim's years of guiding bird walks has been instrumental in teaching "birders" how to get the most out of their birding excursions. Children 12 and older are most welcome as long as accompanied by an adult and have purchased a ticket through our website: [www.wildbirdstore.ca](http://www.wildbirdstore.ca)

All participants on any bird walk must have purchased a ticket through our website: [www.wildbirdstore.ca](http://www.wildbirdstore.ca) and present the ticket to Jim prior to the bird walk.

The weather plays a big part in bird walks and Jim reminds participants to dress anticipating weather changes and to carry water to keep hydrated.



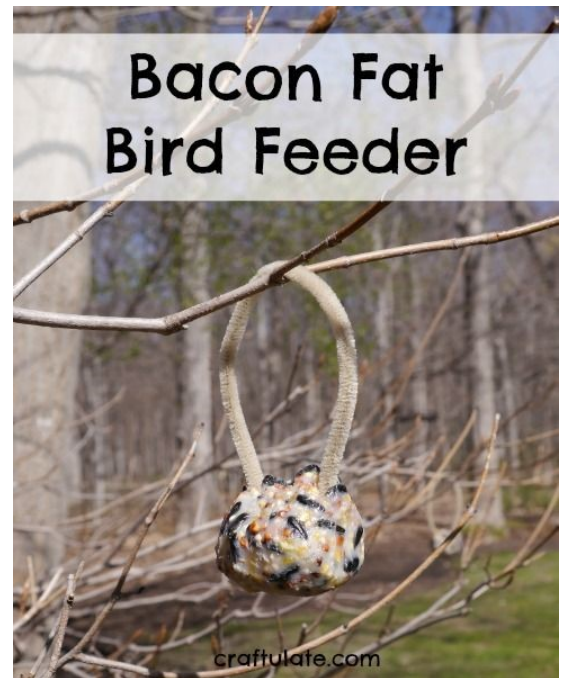
**We offer a discount** if you bring your own container or bag to refill (sorry—not the Mother Nature bags which we cannot re-use), suet ball containers, if you bring your own container to fill or use a bag from our re-cycle bin. This discount is in addition to any other discount offered.



**QUESTION: Is it okay to use bacon grease or drippings in my suet offering to my wild birds?**

**RESPONSE:** Here is my take on this subject. My initial gut reaction is that the average lifespan of a small songbird like a Chickadee coming to our feeder is about two to three years. Besides various diseases and parasites, they face a lot of dangers ranging from predators to inclement weather. Would consuming a little bit of bacon grease along with all the natural foods they consume really make a difference in their lifespan? Maybe.....maybe not. Let's be honest though. There are not yet any scientific studies out there that make an argument for it either way, at least to

my knowledge. And you know, because it tastes so good, I eat bacon even though I know for certain that it not good for me. But I am making that lifestyle choice for my own body, whereas when we offer bacon drippings to the wild birds, we know that they will happily eat it. It is well-established that bacon always has some detectable amounts of nitrosamines, which are carcinogenic compounds formed from some of the preservatives used in bacon, in particular, very high cooking temperatures used to fry bacon are conducive to nitrosamine formation. So despite the fact that birds love it, bacon and bacon fat could pose too much of a risk to the long-term health of wild birds. Hence, I cannot recommend it. As for me however, I will personally still continue to enjoy it!



## 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).*

<p><b>DAVID M. BIRD, Ph.D</b> Emeritus Professor of Wildlife Biology McGill University</p>			<p><b>CANADA JAY</b> <b>MÉSANGEAI DU CANADA</b></p> <p>FRIENDLY, SMART, LOYAL AND TOUGH! TRULY THE MOST CANADIAN BIRD! AMICAL, INTELLIGENT, FIDÈLE ET ROBUSTE. UN OISEAU VRAIMENT CANADIEN!</p> <p><a href="http://WWW.CANADAJAY.ORG">WWW.CANADAJAY.ORG</a></p>
<p><a href="mailto:david.bird@mcgill.ca">david.bird@mcgill.ca</a> <a href="http://www.askprofessorbird.com">www.askprofessorbird.com</a></p>			

# Ostrich



There are five key Ostrich species: Common, South African “Black”, Somali “Blue Necked”, North African “Red-necked” and Masai Ostriches.

Ostriches were once known as the “camel bird” because of their Long necks, prominent eyes and sweeping eyelashes.

They can also tolerate high temperatures and go without water for long periods of time, similar to camels.



## DONATIONS

Located at The Wild Bird Store (near the seed bins). We collect your cash as well as “wishlist” donations and arrange to delivery of donations to these organizations that we support.

For the months of December 2024, and January & February 2025 donations will go to Calgary Wildlife Rehabilitation Society.



Calgary Wildlife Rehabilitation Society  
<https://www.calgarywildlife.org>

**Thank you for your support**



## ON LOCATION

Wildwood Community Centre (4411 Spruce Drive SW)

### · NOTICE · NEW HOURS

Every Tuesday 3:00pm to 5:30pm **PLEASE NOTE: Mobile Seed Truck will not be at this location Tuesday February 11, 2025 and Tuesday February 18, 2025**

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

Every Wednesday 2:00pm to 5:30pm **PLEASE NOTE: Mobile Seed Truck will not be at this location Wednesday February 12, 2025 and Wednesday February 19, 2025**

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

**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)





# OPTIONS FOR SHOPPING AT THE WILD BIRD STORE

In Store or on the Seed Truck



**Shop in Store**



**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. Park in the curbside parking stall, call the store (403) 640-2632, pop your trunk or hatch and leave the rest to us.



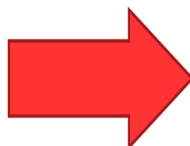
**Home Delivery**

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 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 deliveries  
Thursday February 13, 2025 and  
Thursday February 20, 2025**

**PLEASE NOTE: delivery  
charge within Calgary City  
limits is \$10.00**

**Please remember there is a  
minimum of \$25.00 (before  
GST) on ALL delivery  
orders.**





5901 3rd Street S.E.,  
Calgary, AB T2H 1K3

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

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

Please remember that as of January 6, 2025 the Wild Bird Store will be closed on Mondays until further notice. We appreciate your understanding!

Phone: (403)640-2632

**The Wild Bird Store will be closed on Wednesday, January 1, 2025**

Web: [wildbirdstore.ca](http://wildbirdstore.ca)

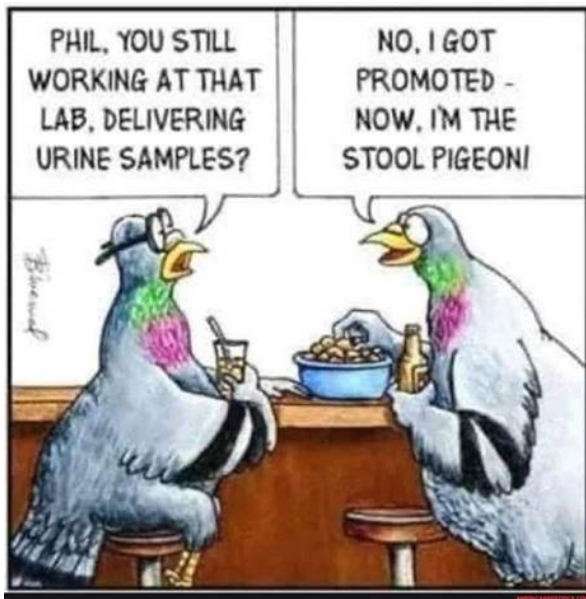
email: [info@wildbirdstore.ca](mailto:info@wildbirdstore.ca)



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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.

The Wild Bird Store  
Is the warranty & repair depot for:  
Squirrel Buster® Bird Feeders &  
Aspects® Feeders



LEUPOLD  
AMERICA'S OPTICS AUTHORITY

And the warranty depot  
for:

Leupold Binoculars & Spotting  
Scopes



**SENIOR'S DAY**  
Is EVERY Tuesday.  
If you are over 60 you will receive  
10% off your order

Sorry! Excludes optics, books,  
cards & consignment items

HAPPY BIRDING!