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"Nature News" from Wild Birds Unlimited at Moana Nursery



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1-2-3, How Many Birds Do You See?

Get ready to have some fun, count some birds and make a difference, because the 14th annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) takes place February 18 through February 21.

Anyone can participate. Simply watch and count birds in your yard, at a nearby park or maybe at a school. Then report what you saw by entering your bird list online at www.birdsource.org/gbbc.

Your efforts help answer many questions:

- How will this winter's weather influence bird populations?
- Where are the "irruptive" species that appear in large numbers during some years?
- How will the timing of birds' migrations compare with past years?
- Are any birds undergoing worrisome declines that point to the need for conservation attention?



Celebrate National Bird Feeding Month in February

Cupid isn't the only winged object that people need to watch out for this month. In 1993, the United States Congress proclaimed February to be National Bird Feeding Month.

Backyard bird feeding is enjoyed by over 41 million North Americans. And while February is National Wild Bird Feeding Month, with the right provision, people can enjoy a wide variety of backyard birds all year long. The Great Backyard Bird Count is fun, educational and helps us learn more about the abundance and distribution of bird species. The average backyard is visited regularly by 15 or more different bird species. People can increase the variety of birds that visit their backyards by providing the appropriate food in the right location.

There are three common backyard bird feeding categories: ground-feeding, elevated feeding and

a combination of both. For example, goldfinches prefer to eat Nyjer (thistle seed) from a tube feeder, whereas doves generally eat millet on the ground. Stop by one of our three Wild Birds Unlimited stores within Moana Nursery and let us show you how you can attract feathered friends to your backyard!



February Bird of the Month - Junco

Dark-eyed Juncos are neat, even flashy medium-sized sparrows that flit about forest floors of the western mountains and Canada, then flood the rest of North America for winter. They're easy to recognize by their crisp, though extremely variable, markings and the bright white tail feathers they habitually flash in flight. The Oregon Junco has a dark gray hood, rusty back and pale peach flanks. The Slate-colored Junco has a pink bill and overall color which varies from pale brown to dark gray with little or not contrast between head and body.

Dark-eyed Juncos are birds of the ground. They hop around the bases of trees and shrubs in forests or venture out onto lawns looking for fallen seeds. During the summer, about half of the Dark-eyed Junco's diet is made up of insects and other arthropods, the other half consists of seeds; the young eat mostly arthropods. In winter, their diet shifts more to seeds and berries. Juncos will readily eat Dove & Quail blend and Deluxe blend from ground feeders

Fun Facts

- According to Project Feeder Watch, Juncos are sighted at more feeding areas across North American than any other bird. Over 80% of those responding report juncos at their feeders.
- Dark-eyed Juncos are often called "Snowbirds," possibly due to the fact that many believe their return from their northern breeding grounds foretells the return of cold, snowy weather. Another possible source of the nickname may be the white belly plumage and slate-colored back of the junco which has been described as "leaden skies above, snow below."
- Dark-eyed Juncos are flocking birds with a distinct social hierarchy. They forage on the ground in these groups, scratching with their feet to find food. A flash of white tail feathers serves as an alarm to other members of the flock.

For more bird of the month information, visit our local WBU website by clicking [here](#).



Local Bird Sightings by Jacque Lowery

Great Backyard Bird Count time is upon us! Every year on President's Day Weekend (February 18-21 this year) Cornell Lab of Ornithology and several partners, including Wild Birds Unlimited, ask all bird lovers and enthusiasts to become citizen scientists. For as little (at least fifteen minutes) or as long as you wish, tally the highest number of each bird species seen together at any one time in the area you have chosen.

For a fun family outing, take the kids or grandkids to Virginia Lake, Oxbow Nature Study Area, Swan Lake, Damonte wetlands, Davis Creek, Washoe Lake - you get the idea. So if your passion is ducks, pick a river or lake location. If mountain birds are your favorite, head that direction. This is a great opportunity to hone your identification skills; bring along a field guide

so you can quickly tell if that was a White-breasted or Red-breasted Nuthatch that was going head first down a tree. These citizen science projects are so important to monitor bird populations and dispersal. For instance, five years ago it was very rare for a yard in the Truckee Meadows to host Mountain Chickadees. Now they are showing up from the foothills into Spanish Springs and beyond. Researchers study report data submitted by you and me, combine that information with weather patterns or degradation of habitat data to determine why this may have occurred and what the long range effects will be for chickadee populations in general. There are so many species of birds, and so many issues involving climate change, habitat degradation, pollution, pesticides and herbicides that can and do affect numbers and health of birds. There are not enough scientists and researchers out there to gather all the pertinent data, which makes you and me, Citizen Scientists, very important to the future of all our feathered friends.

All the information you need, including checklists, is available at www.birdsource.org/gbbc. The regional checklist is greatly improved and easy to work with. Be sure to check out the other fun things on the website, including the photo contest and maps showing results from previous years. In 2010 there were only 125 checklists were submitted from the Reno-Sparks-Carson area. I am issuing a challenge; let's make that 200 checklists in 2011!

February Hobby Essentials - Click [here](#) for the February Hobby Essentials Flyer

February Nature Happenings

- Feb. 2: Groundhog Day
- February is National Bird Feeding Month
- Black Bear cubs are born at the beginning of the month.
- Time to put up a bird house or clean your existing ones.
- Red-shafted Northern Flickers, our largest woodpecker, begin drilling holes for spring nesting.
- Bluebirds are searching for nesting cavities or nest boxes. Insects and berries can be scarce; offering roasted mealworms, wax worms, dried fruit or suet snacks can be a life-saver.
- Owls are the earliest nesters after beginning courtship in December and January. Listen for their nightly courtship serenades.
- English House Sparrows and House Finches begin early nesting activity.
- Bobcat mating season.

Participate in Project Feeder Watch

Join the thousands of FeederWatchers across North America who count the birds at their feeders from November through early April. The 2010-11 FeederWatch season began November 13, but there's still time to join for this season, which runs through April 8, 2011. [Click here to join!](#)

Lahontan Audubon Society Upcoming Field Trips

- Sunday, February 6, 2011 - Raptors in the Nile Valley, Lovelock
- Saturday, February 12, 2011 - Riverview Park, Carson
- Saturday, February 19, 2011 - Winter Waterfowl Tour, Fallon
- Saturday, February 26, 2011 - Annual Dipper Day, Reno

For more information on the Lahontan Audubon Society, click [here](#).

Stillwater National Wildlife Refuge Events

- Winter bird count for kids & families! Click [here](#) for details.



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