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## "Nature News" from Wild Birds Unlimited at Moana Nursery



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### Bird Feeding: the Cure for Cabin Fever

Have you had your fill of winter? Need a prescription for that cabin fever that won't seem to go away?

Well, say "hello" to March, a great month to get outside and begin preparing your yard for the upcoming spring bird action. Start by cleaning your feeders, bird feeding stations and baffles, repairing any weather damage and raking up any debris under your feeding stations.

You may start seeing different birds at your feeders, as winter begins to loosen its grasp. Some birds, such as finches, may start to bring new color and life to your yard as they begin the process of molting into their vibrant breeding plumage... [LEARN MORE](#)



### March Bird of the Month - American Robin

The American Robin is a member of the thrush family, which also includes bluebirds, solitaires and wood thrushes. It can be found throughout North America at some time during the year. Male robins have a dark gray to almost black back and tail with a rust/brick colored breast. The female is paler all over. Juvenile robins have a spotted breast. Robins live on average about 1 ½ years, but can live up to five years.

#### Fun Facts:

- American Robins living in the western states tend to be paler in color and often lack the white markings on the outer corners of their tail.
- While they eat a variety of insects and berries, it has been noted that robins can eat up to 14' of earthworms in a day!
- Robins don't find earthworms by hearing or smelling them. Robins find earthworms by cocking their head to one side, independently using each eye to look for visible signs of worms.

Robins can be attracted to a feeding station by offering mealworms, fruit and a birdbath. It's especially fun to offer mealworms during nesting season when the robins can stop and pick up a mouthful of tasty worms to take back to their babies. They will fill their mouth until you think nothing else could possibly fit inside and still continue to try to pick up more, dropping some in the process and then trying to pick those back up. It can be very entertaining!

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



Great Horned Owls by Jacque Lowery

### Local Bird Sightings by Jacque Lowery

As a very snowy, cold February flows into March, my mind is dreaming of Spring. It's too early to accomplish much in the garden and backyard birds aren't nesting yet. But there is one very early nester - the Great Horned Owl. Some of you may be lucky enough to have this owl in your neighborhood and hear their soft hoo-hoo hooooo courtship calls during the winter. By February most have paired up and are actively nesting. They may use old raven or hawk nests; but will also use tree cavities, deserted buildings and artificial platforms.

For the past two years a pair has nested inside the nursery section of the Home Depot in Spanish Springs; hopefully they are back this year. There is one to five eggs (most commonly two) and average incubation is 30 to 37 days. The eggs are incubated by the female and the male provides her food. The young start roaming from the nest onto nearby branches at six weeks, when they are called "branchers". They do not fly well until 9 or 10 weeks old, but will remain loosely associated with their parents until the next breeding season. Territories are maintained by the same pair for many years; however, these owls are solitary in nature and only stay with their mate during the nesting season.

Great Horned Owls are nocturnal hunters. They have amazing binocular vision allowing them to pinpoint prey and see in low light. Their eyes are nearly as large as those of humans and are immobile within the bone sockets. Owls can turn their heads 270 degrees to see in almost every direction. An owl's hearing is as good as its vision and it has better depth perception than humans. Specialized feathers on their wings give them the advantage of totally silent flight, which makes them deadly hunters. Like other owls, these birds have an incredible digestive system. They may swallow smaller prey whole, while larger animals are carried off and eaten piecemeal. The owls will later regurgitate the indigestible bones and fir in the form of pellets. Great Horned Owls list of acceptable prey is long and includes small to medium size mammals including skunks; birds including songbirds, water birds and raptors; reptiles, amphibians, fish and even insects. In addition, they have been known to prey on domesticated cats and small dogs. These birds have 200-300 pounds per square inch of crushing power in their talons (an adult human has about 60 pounds per square inch)! This owl can also capture and fly with prey that weighs as much as he does.

The Great Horned Owl is the most widely distributed owl of the Americas, occurring year round in all but the most northern latitudes. A long-lived owl, captive birds have been known to live 29 to 38 years, while 5-15 years is the average in the wild. Their only natural enemies are other Great Horned Owls and possibly some of the larger hawks. Most of their mortality is related to man - shootings, traps and electrocution. I hope many of you get a chance to observe a Great Horned Owl and maybe see owlets in a nest. Be careful, though, as they can be extremely aggressive when protecting a nest.

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

## March Nature Happenings

- March 1 - 31: Project FeederWatch continues
- March 13: Daylight Savings Time - "spring forward"
- March 14 - 20: National Wildlife Week
- In a heavy snow year, meadowlarks can be seen eating mealworms along with cracked corn.
- Killdeer call for their mates and can show up in the most unlikely places seeking out suitable nesting sites.
- Townsend's Solitaire are often seen on their favorite food source - Juniper berries.
- Male American Robins can often be heard before dawn defining their territory and calling for a mate. They are also the last birds calling in the evening.
- Male Red-shafted Northern Flickers can be heard throughout the day defining their territory and showing off for potential mates.
- Sandhill Cranes can be seen returning from the south.
- Check bird houses for damage and clean them before spring birds arrive.
- Male flickers can be heard as they drum trying to attract a mate.
- Bears emerge from hibernation this month.
- Red-tailed Hawks pair up for breeding..
- Peak of Bald Eagle migration.
- Great Horned Owls are sitting on their eggs.
- Red-winged Blackbirds, Killdeer and Great Blue Herons return.

## 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

- Saturday, March 5, 2011 - Winter Waterfowl Tour, Stillwater NWR
- Saturday, March 26, 2011 - Sierra Valley Expedition

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

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