

Wild River Audubon Current

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Sept 2008

President's Column

The great fall migration is underway, a more subtle event than its spring counterpart. The fall trek begins earlier than most people know. Some species, particularly Arctic breeders, leave their summer homes as early as July!

I spend the few weeks of August on Lake Superior's south shore, where we frequently see early migrating shorebirds on the beach. They appear alone or in small groups of two to five birds. I come upon them foraging in the lap of the waves in the early morning as I head for my before-breakfast swim.

Recently, I had a chance to observe a Baird's Sandpiper, a life bird for me. It poked about on our beach for most the afternoon, often coming within ten feet of where we sat reading, our dog dozing at our side. The bird was a juvenile and it took me the better part of an hour to assure myself that my identification was correct.

Baird's Sandpipers are part of a group of shorebirds known collectively as "peeps." These small brownish birds all look similar at first (or second) glance and take careful sorting out. I "nailed" the ID when the bird came close enough to me that I could see that what I had thought was the tail were actually wingtips folded over its back and extending far beyond the tail. This particular characteristic (the first one mentioned in my field guide, by the way) was the most telling—along with its black legs and bill.

The little sandpiper seemed to be drawn to us

and when it got about twelve feet away, it tucked its head under its wing and briefly napped. Although it had hatched only weeks before up in the Arctic, it was not even halfway to its destination. It has miles left to travel.

Sue



Sept 9	Rain Gardens Casey Thiel 7:00 p.m. Chisago Lakes Library
Sept 27	Fall Festival Booth- Bird Seed Coupons Central Park in North Branch
Oct 14	Wildlife/Bird Photography
Oct 25	Bird Seed Sale Lindstrom- Corner of Hwys 20 & 8 at the stop light North Branch- Peterson Mill
Nov 11	Winter Migrants Mark Martell from Audubon MN
Dec 20	Christmas Bird Count

Free and open to the public
Chisago Lakes Library, Chisago City
7 pm

Casey Thiel Speaks on Rain Gardens

My daughter announced “pea soup” when she returned from canoeing on one of our local lakes. Too many nutrients are reaching our lakes resulting in a heavy growth of algae and weeds. Rain gardens can help remedy this. A rain garden is a planted depression that is designed to absorb rainwater runoff from impervious areas like roofs, driveways, walkways, and compacted lawn areas. This reduces rain runoff by allowing stormwater to soak into the ground. Native plants are recommended for rain gardens because they generally don't require fertilizer and are more tolerant of one's local climate, soil, and water conditions.

At our September 9th meeting Casey Thiel of the Chisago SWCD will speak on the nuts and bolts as well as benefits of creating rain gardens.

Baird's Sandpiper

The drab little Baird's Sandpiper is an easily overlooked traveler through Minnesota. A member of a group of similar-looking shorebirds collectively known as “peeps,” it migrates through the state in spring and fall, on its way to or from its summer breeding grounds in the Arctic. It nests in the northern tundra from Siberia to Greenland.

The sandpiper can be distinguished by its black legs and bill and its small size (seven and one-half inches.) It has particularly long wings that when folded extend beyond the tip of its tail feathers. This long wing gives the bird a slimmer appearance than the Least or Semipalmated Sandpiper, other peeps with which it associates on migration. The feathers on its back have a light-colored edge, giving them a noted scaly look.

The birds feed on a variety of insects: grasshoppers, ants, cutworms, beetles mosquitoes and flies, dragonfly nymphs, snails; and also sedge seeds, plants and rootlets. They are often seen foraging at the water's edges in a mixed species flock, but are also known to frequent upland sandy knolls.

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Vote Yes

The Clean Land, Water and Legacy Amendment is your chance to protect the Minnesota you love. This amendment asks if you want to amend the Minnesota state constitution to have long-term, dedicated funding for the things we value. The amendment will provide funding to protect and restore our lakes, rivers and streams. It will also preserve natural areas for wildlife habitat. The amendment also ensures statewide access to arts for kids; and preserves our parks and trails system. We need to protect these things before we lose them forever. This fall, you have the opportunity to pass on the Minnesota you love to future generations. To find out more about the amendment and how to get involved, go to www.yesformn.org. On November 4th, Vote Yes MN!

Stock Up On Bird Seed

October 25th has been set as our date for the fall bird seed sale in Lindstrom. We will be at the same location, by the spotlight and the same time 9:00 to 12:00. We are hoping you will buy your winter supply from us. Our menu will be the same as previous years. We don't yet know this year's prices, but should be able to tell you in next month's newsletter. This is our only fund raiser for the year, so we need the support from our membership. We hope to see you October 25th.

Dayle DeClercq

Seed Type	Unit Weight
Black Oil Sunflower	50 lb bags
Niger Thistle	10 lb bags
Peterson Mix	25 lb bags
Sunflower Chips	10 lb
Safflower	10 lbs
Cardinal Mix	25 lbs
Suet Cakes (assorted)	

Baird's Sandpiper continued from page 2

The Baird's Sandpiper is a long-distance migrator, traveling up to 4,000 miles in its migration from the North American arctic to winter grounds in northern South America. Some individuals fly down the Pacific coast of South America, as far as Tierra del Fuego. Their migratory path is through the middle of North America. Juvenile birds have been known to wander afar, to either coast.

The population status of this species is believed to be secure. It is one of the most common sandpipers on the great plains during spring migration.



Did You Know?

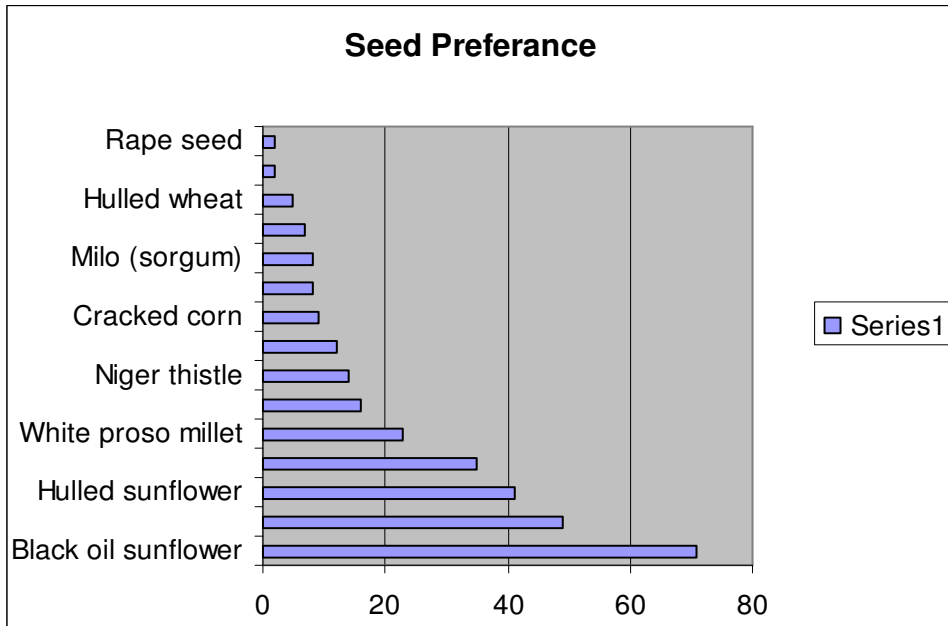
If you can buy only one kind of seed make it black oil sunflower seeds. It attracts the greatest variety of birds.

There is an important difference between the black oil and striped sunflower seeds. The striped seeds have a thicker shell that is more difficult for many smaller birds to crack. Chickadees, purple finches, pine siskins can easily crack the black oil seeds.

An active feeder will eventually have an accumulation of sunflower hulls under it. When you clean under it, the hulls should not be disposed in your compost or garden. The hulls contain a plant growth inhibitor that could disrupt the growth of your garden plants.

Selecting Types of Bird Food

There are so many choices of bird food available a bird lover can easily become confused and overwhelmed. A big breakthrough in knowledge about bird food preferences came with the publication of a report called "Relative Attractiveness of Different Foods at Wild Bird Feeders" by Aelred D. Geis (1980) of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Ten bird species were chosen to make the chart shown here: northern cardinals, black-capped chickadees, evening grosbeaks, purple finches, American goldfinches, house finches, blue jays, tufted titmice, white-throated sparrows, and mourning doves. It indicates the relative preference of seeds to desirable native birds; scored from 1 to 100 with 100 points being most preferred by birds.



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