

Woods of Wisconsin

Newsletter
of the
Forest Preserve
District
of the Kankakee
River Valley

"All ethics so far evolved rest upon a single premise: that the individual is a member of a community of interdependent parts. The land ethic simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants and animals, or collectively, the land ... a land ethic changes the role of Homo Sapien from conqueror of the land community to plain member and citizen of it... it implies respect for his fellow members, and so also respect for the community as such."

— Aldo Leopold, "Sand County Almanac"

Winter Chowdown For The Birds

BIRD FEEDING TIPS

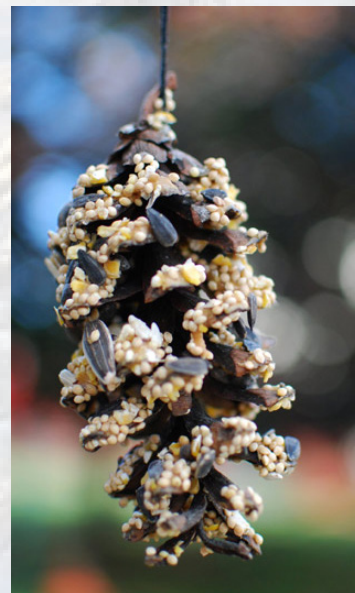
Clean out the feeders at least once a month. Give them a good washing with unscented dish soap followed up with a scrub-down with a solution of one part bleach to nine parts hot water as a disinfectant. Clean each part of the feeder, inside and out, including all feeding ports, perches, lids, platforms and reservoirs. A dirty birdfeeder will harbor bacteria, mold and other disease agents.

Use rubber gloves to avoid contamination, and use stiff brushes for thorough cleaning. Old toothbrushes are a great way to clean small parts, feeding ports and tight corners. Rinse thoroughly to remove all chemical residues, and dry thoroughly.

Keep your feeders and feeding area clean by removing old or damp seed under the feeders; rake up spilled seed and wipe off permanent feeders. After raking under the feeders, refresh with fresh mulch or gravel to cover droppings. To keep the food fresh and free of mold, fill your birdfeeders with the amount of food that can be eaten in two to three days.

Place your birdfeeders in places that are sheltered from severe winds. Have good cover nearby – feeders near low shrubs or brush piles offer protection from predators such as hawks. Cornell University suggests placing the feeders at least ten feet from shrubs or brushing piles, so stalking hunters such as cats cannot approach unseen. Placing feeders closer to the house will allow indoor birdwatching. When placing feeders to allow indoor birdwatching, it is important to take steps to help prevent window collisions. Feeders should be placed either very close to the window – no more than three feet away, or else greater than fifteen feet away, in order to prevent birds from flying into the glass. Cornell has a good article about protecting birds from window collisions here:

www.birds.cornell.edu/AllAboutBirds/faq/attracting/challenges/window_collisions



Pinecone Feeder

PINECONE BIRD FEEDER

Materials:

- Pine cones
- Twine or floral wire
- Tallow (beef fat)
- Birdseed

Choose pinecones that are good sized and easy to work with. Tallow is a much better choice than hydrogenated cooking fat such as peanut butter (especially the cheap kind which is cut with corn syrup and hydrogenated fat) or Crisco, which are heavily sticky, non-nutritious trans-fats lacking essential fatty acids. Beef fat can be bought at the meat counter; if you don't see it available, ask the butcher if he has any. You may want to mix your own seed blend, selecting those seeds that are favored by the birds you are feeding.

(continued on page 2)

Nature's peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow their own freshness into you, and the storms their energy, while cares will drop off like autumn leaves.

~ John Muir

CHOOSING YOUR SEED MIX

Prepare a bowl of birdseed, wide enough to roll the pinecones in the mix. Include those seeds that are preferred by the birds you are feeding. According to a U.S. Fish and Wildlife researcher, the two favorite seeds for backyard birds are white proso millet and oil-type sunflower seeds. Budget seed mixes will contain a high percentage of oats, wheat and the small round reddish brown milo. Milo will attract house sparrows but is not preferred by many birds. Left for last by most birds, it can remain and get contaminated by bacteria or mold, and piles of rejected seed can become a mini volcano under the birdfeeders.

Sunflower seeds are favored by most seed-eating birds; over 40 species will feed on sunflower seeds, including cardinals, tufted titmice, chickadees, house and purple finches, goldfinches, nuthatches, song sparrows, tree sparrows, white-crowned sparrows, juncos and red-bellied woodpeckers. Birds favor all three types of sunflower seeds; however the black oil seeds are the best buy, containing the highest percentage of oil and having the thinnest hulls. Safflower seed is also a favorite of Cardinals. Even birds with bills too small to crack the sunflower seeds will feast on the bits opened by larger-billed birds.

White millet is a small, round, golden-brown and shiny seed that is a favorite seed of fox sparrows, white-throated sparrows, and chipping sparrows, Juncos, towhees and quail also like white millet. Together, black oil sunflower seeds and white proso millet will attract more birds than any other type of seeds that you can offer.

There is a benefit of spending a bit more on a better quality bird seeds mix; European starlings and house sparrows don't favor sunflower seeds, so these invasive species are less likely to visit your birdfeeders. A mix that includes cracked corn will also attract starlings, cowbirds, and house sparrows.

PREPARING THE TALLOW

The tallow is melted over low heat until it just barely melts... you don't want to overcook it or get it hot enough to splatter. Turn it off and allow it to cool a few minutes so it is not quite liquid and not quite solid; just enough to allow you to spread it on the pine cone. The tallow will quickly get too solid to work with, so you will want to have the seed mix ready.

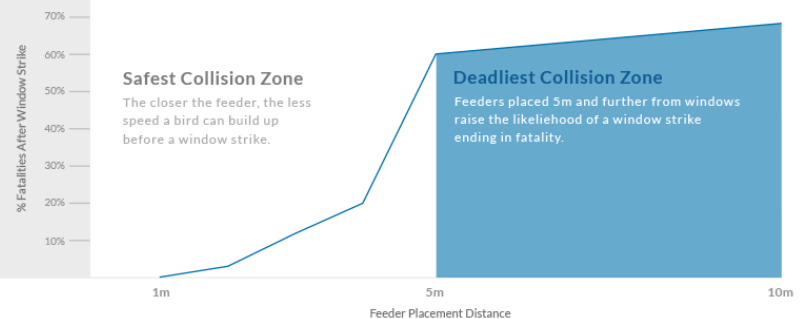
LOADING THE PINECONE

To have a way to hang the pinecone onto a tree branch or shrub, attach a loop of twine or floral wire; this is easiest done before you add the tallow and seeds. Coat the pine cone with the tallow, turning it so it is completely covered with the tallow, making sure to get some down into the scales of the pinecone. Roll the coated pinecone in the seed mix, pressing the seeds down into the scales.

Some prefer to use the tallow raw, saying that the birds prefer the raw suet and will go to that first. You can reduce the time spent by chopping it up and mixing it with the seed mix, and either pressing it into the pine cone, or loading it into a suet feeder or a mesh bag such as contain oranges

How far from your home should you place your bird feeder to prevent deadly window strikes?

Closer than 5 meters to your home, ideally less than 1 meter.



Source: Klem et al., Wilson Bulletin, 2004

and onions at the grocery.

Lay the coated pinecones out on wax paper to firm up, then hang out for a feast for your winged friends.

A NO-PINECONE ALTERNATIVE - A SUET CAKE

If you don't have pinecones handy, you can use the same ingredients to make a simple seed cake. Simply follow the steps for the pinecone feeder, and instead of spreading the



Suet Feeder

melted tallow on a pinecone, pour it into the bowl of seed mix and mix well. Spread the concoction into a deep, flat pan and allow to harden.

Cut into suet cakes and place out in wire suet feeders, or into a mesh bag saved from vegetable mesh bags such as those that contain onions and oranges at the grocery.



Suet Sock



A Winter Day

By Lucy Maud Montgomery

The air is silent save where stirs
A bugling breeze among the firs;
The virgin world in white array
Waits for the bridegroom kiss of day;
All heaven blooms rarely in the east
Where skies are silvery and fleeced,
And o'er the orient hills made glad
The morning comes in wonder clad;
Oh, 'tis a time most fit to see
How beautiful the dawn can be!

Wide, sparkling fields snow-vestured lie
Beneath a blue, unshadowed sky;
A glistening splendor crowns the woods
And bosky, whistling solitudes;
In hemlock glen and reedy mere
The tang of frost is sharp and clear;
Life hath a jollity and zest,
A poignancy made manifest;
Laughter and courage have their way
At noontide of a winter's day.

Faint music rings in wold and dell,
The tinkling of a distant bell,
Where homestead lights with friendly glow
Glimmer across the drifted snow;
Beyond a valley dim and far
Lit by an occidental star,
Tall pines the marge of day beset
Like many a slender minaret,
Whence priest-like winds on crystal air
Summon the reverent world to prayer.



Owls of Winter

Great Horned Owl

Wintertime is a good time to look for our native owls that winter over in our area. I often hear the local Great Horned Owl at two in the morning on a cold winter night. Occasionally she can be seen perching in the neighbor's big tree, now bare of leaves which easily conceal even a large owl in the warm season. She waits, seeming unmoving as she scouts nearby yards and the cornfield - well-populated with scavenging mice and other small mammals feasting on the fallen corn kernels left by the Fall harvest - across the road.

The Great Horned Owl mates in early winter, nesting and rearing their young by February. They don't build their own nests, but move into nests built by other species. The call is less distinctive than that of the Barred Owl, and is often a soft *whoo-whoo-whooooo*. These big raptors will eat most anything they can catch and carry away, including squirrels and skunks. In captivity, they have lived to be 30 years old.

Barred Owls, often called "hoot owls", are distinguished by a call that sounds like "*who cooks for you? Who cooks for you-aaallllll?*". Barred Owls feed mostly on mice, but will include birds, reptiles, fish, insects, spiders and crawfish when they are available. The Barred Owl can be distinguished from the Great Horned by its lack of the feathered "ears" so that the profile of the head is round and smooth, and the very dark eyes in contrast to the big yellow eyes of the Great Horned Owl.

Screech Owls are also common in local parks and suburban areas, looking about the same size as the Great Horned but only weighing about a pound. They are mostly feathers! Their call sounds like a high whinny. They prefer nesting in tree cavities, and lose their nesting areas when yards, parks and woodlands are cleared of standing dead trees. However they will use nesting boxes provided by homeowners. Screech owls have two phases, a reddish brown and a grey stage. They have a wide diet, feeding on small birds and mammals, insects, reptiles and amphibians.

Here are some good websites to compare the calls of our most familiar owls:

www.learner.org/jnorth/tm/spring/OwlDictionary.html
www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/great_horned_owl/sounds

Many backyard birders also post birds on YouTube, another good place to go looking up bird sounds.

More information on Illinois owls can be found at these sites:

www.illinoisraptorcenter.org/greathorned.html
www.poweredbybirds.com/my-owls-of-illinois/

WINTER GREEN



Photo credits: commons.wikimedia.org

Gaultheria procumbens

Wintergreen is also known by a number of local names, including Checkerberry, Eastern teaberry, Teaberry, or Creeping Wintergreen. It is a small, low-growing plant that loves well-drained dry woodlands and clearings, especially acidic, frequently poor soil under conifer trees. It is listed as endangered in Illinois, native from Newfoundland to Manitoba and south to Georgia. It is hardy from USDA zone 3 to the cooler upland areas of Zone 7.

It is a creeping plant (procumbens means "lying flat"). The stems rise 3 to 7 inches above the ground, with leathery, oval leaves up to two inches long clustered near the top. The leaves are a dark glossy green, turning red or bronze in the fall. White or pinkish flowers appear in late summer, and the ¼ inch round red berries.

Wintergreen was once the key ingredient for wintergreen oil to use in chewing

gum, candies and spice. Later, Black Birch was used as a substitute. Now, commercial wintergreen flavor is produced synthetically. Native people used infusions of the leaves as a medicinal tea for colds and as a treatment for pain.

Many herbal remedies are very powerful and may be toxic in some forms. Any herbal remedy needs to be carefully harvested and prepared. Always consult a knowledgeable herbalist before using herbal remedies. The active ingredient is methyl salicylate, similar to aspirin, and all cautions that apply to aspirin also apply to wintergreen. The leaves are irritating to the stomach and should never be swallowed, and the oil of wintergreen should never be taken internally.



Look at the trees, look at the birds, look at the clouds, look at the stars...
and if you have eyes you will be able to see that the whole existence is joyful.
Everything is simply happy.

Trees are happy for no reason; they are not going to become prime-ministers or presidents
and they are not going to become rich and they will never have any bank balance.
Look at the flowers - for no reason. It is simply unbelievable how happy flowers are.

~Osho

FOREST PRESERVE SITES

Shannon Bayou Environmental Education Center and Administrative Office

This 46-acre preserve is located at 3301 Waldron Road in Aroma Park, along the Kankakee River. The Center provides space for programs about natural history, ecology and preservation of open space in the Kankakee River Valley. The walking trail area features plantings of many native trees and plants, including native tallgrass prairie species, a butterfly garden of native plants. The site includes $\frac{3}{4}$ mile asphalt and fine gravel walking trail, a picnic shelter, and picnic tables.

3301 Waldron Road
Aroma Park, IL 60910
41°04'47.61N
87°48'44.31"W

Aroma Land and Water Preserve

One of the best sites in the area for woodland wildflowers, this 140 acre site is located on Hieland Road, 1.4 miles south of Highway 17 East. A 1.2 mile walking trail winds through several different types of natural areas, including high quality forest, prairie, and wetland ecosystems. It also has nearly $\frac{1}{4}$ mile of Kankakee River frontage, and the associated floodplain forest. There is ample parking in the parking lot on Hieland Road, and a playground, maintained by the Kankakee River Valley Park District, for children.

In 2008, the District added a 30-acre piece of property adjacent to the Aroma Land and Water Reserve (Aroma LWR). This area has been seeded back to prairie species indicative of the dry sand prairie found within the current preserve. The Forest Preserve mows a loop trail that branches off the existing 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ mile trail that meanders through the main body of the Aroma LWR. In the summer of 2011, 49.5 acres of mixed pine and hardwood forest was added.

Approximately 40 percent of the Aroma Preserve is a wetland and lies within the flood plain of the Kankakee River. In the spring, the wet oak forest gives a spectacular wildflower display while the wetland and sand prairie are the most colorful in the summer.

1578 South Hieland Road
St. Anne, IL 60964
41°06'02.90"N
87°45'24.08"W

Gar Creek Trail and Prairie Restoration

Approximately 85 acres, this site is located about one-half mile east of Route 45 on River Road adjacent to Kankakee Community College. The 16-acre restored tall grass prairie was planted in 1992. A 2.5 mile trail, suitable for hiking, bicycling, and cross country skiing, is a cooperative project with the Kankakee Valley Park District. The trail begins at the prairie, winds along Gar Creek, through oak woodland, and down to the banks of the Kankakee River.

At river's edge, the trail connects with the Kankakee Riverfront Trail Project, which will start at the Aqua Illinois property at Hawkins and Water Streets, go through Shapiro Developmental Center, Kankakee River Valley Forest Preserve, Kankakee Community College, and connect with River Road Park and Splash Valley, of the Kankakee Valley Park District.

501 River Road
Kankakee, IL 60901
41°05'30.84"N
87°51'32.78"W

Waldron Arboretum

Located 1.1 miles south of I-57, this site was once a landscape nursery. On this 90 acre site there is a fine gravel hiking trail suitable for bicycling and cross country skiing. The trail winds through 30 acres of woods, including a small prairie restoration area.

In the winter of 2008, the District acquired an additional 60 acre parcel which had been primarily in agriculture. Future development plans are pending based on the districts needs and funds available through federal and state grants.

2755 Waldron Road
Aroma Park, IL 60910
41°05'36.28"N
87°49'26.51"W

Strasma Grove

Nestled in a neighborhood on in Kankakee, this site is 2 acres of mature native trees.

Duane Boulevard
Kankakee, Illinois 60901
41°06'28.33"N
87°50'43.56"W

Limestone Reforestation Site

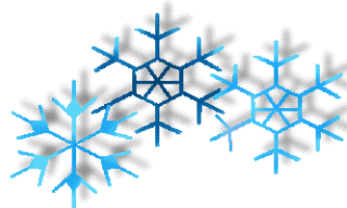
This site is a 30 acre preserve and reforestation site, with mixed trees and grasses.

County Road 3750 West
Kankakee, Illinois 60901
41°08'38.96"N
87°56'51.08"W

Zeedyk Meadows

This is our newest Forest Preserve site, consisting of four acres of trees and grasses.

Warren Street
St. Anne, Illinois 60964
41° 06' 24.92" N
87° 44' 35.77" W





Kankakee River Valley Forest Preserve District

3301 Waldron Road • P.O. Box 13
Aroma Park, Illinois 60910
815-935-5630

web address: www.krvfpd.org
e-mail: forest@krvfpd.org

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ON TRAIL...

For information about current nature programs at your forest preserve, please call Jean Hurrle at 815-549-9072. You can also find our programs in the outdoor section of the Daily Journal, or check out the programs page on our website: <http://www.krvfpd.org>.

If you would like to subscribe to this free Newsletter, or to send an article, contact the Nature Center at 815-935-5630

But when I consider that the nobler animals have been exterminated here - the cougar, panther, lynx, wolverine, wolf, bear, moose, deer, the beaver, the turkey, etc., etc. - I cannot but feel as if I lived in a tamed, and as it were, emasculated country... I listen to a concert in which so many parts are wanting... for instance, thinking that I have here the entire poem, and then, to my chagrin, I hear that it is but an imperfect copy that I possess and have read, that my ancestors have torn out many of the first leaves and grandest passages.

- Henry David Thoreau, *Journal*, 1856

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