

## Our Feathered Friends- Feb. 13

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This time of the year is pretty exciting to us bird lovers as there is always the possibility that some rare species will show up at our bird feeders. Several offerings of different seeds keep my little lunch counter overflowing. Goldfinch, Housefinch, three different species of Woodpeckers, along with the more common birds share my backyard habitat. There were more than 25 Morning Doves looking like miniature vacuum cleaners moving back and forth sucking up every morsel of seed from off the ground. My other ground scratchers were Song Sparrows and a pair of Carolina Wrens. I take a biscuit, cut it in half and lay it on the window sill where the Wrens wear it out. I can be in the kitchen and all of a sudden "whap-whap-whap" draws my attention to one or both of them pounding on the hard, dried-out biscuit.

Bird feeding has become a lucrative business for many seed companies. Millions of dollars in sales mark this as much more than a simple hobby. There is one thing you should take care to check: dates. I have a bag of Nyher seed that the Goldfinch will not touch, and most of you know how expensive some of the seed has become. I put it aside and purchased a new bag which the Goldfinch absolutely love. I tried to trick them and put the other seed back in the feeders. There must be a certain smell to it because they turned their noses, or beaks, up and refused to partake of it. I guess that I will scatter it on the ground for my doves, as they'll eat most anything if it doesn't move too quick.

Nyjer seed is not related to the thistle plants, but originated in Africa where it was called the Niger plant, in reference to the country of Nigeria. The name was trademarked in 1998 and changed to Nyjer. Import taxes and the sterilization of the seed to keep it from germinating are what keep the prices so high. Its a shame it can't be grown here in the U.S.A.

Some companies put the packing dates on the bags, others do not. It can be hard to see if your seed is fresh. Black Oil Sunflower seed, especially when purchased at Tractor Supply Company, has their own label "Royal Wing" and it will have the pack date printed on the sealing end tab of the bag. At the previously mentioned superstore on South Cumberland St., I found

some Safflower seed with some insect activity showing through the clear plastic bag. At some of these stores, there is no telling how old some of their seed may be, without dates on the bag.

I also like to feed peanuts from one of my feeders, purchasing a couple of jars of dry roasted peanuts, unsalted works best, and my Woodpeckers like the energy from eating this. Raw peanuts in the shell also gets comical as my little Tufted Titmouse will grab one and fly somewhere away from the competition to finish it off. I also place the raw peanuts on my window sill for the smaller birds.

I received a call from **Roy Garr** asking if I would like to do a seminar on Bluebirds and Purple Martins again this year. We set the date for March 9, beginning around 10 or 10:30 in the morning at Garr's Rental and Feed located on Hwy. 70 in Mt. Juliet. There have been nice crowds show up, and it is always nice to meet new people. Bluebirds are easy to deal with, as long as you have the right area for them. Don't expect to find them in deep wood situations. Martins are more finicky, and require open spaces free from House Sparrows and Starlings. Come join us and maybe **Karen Franklin** will be there also, hint, hint.

We would love to hear from you as to what's lurking about in your neighborhood and at your feeders. You can reach Karen at [This e-mail address is being protected from spambots. You need JavaScript enabled to view it](#) and you can write me at 606 Fairview Ave., Lebanon, TN, 37087, or e-mail me at [This e-mail address is being protected from spambots. You need JavaScript enabled to view it](#)

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