



Do you hear what we hear? Spring is here!

It has been one of the warmest and least snowy winters in Ottawa's history with the warm weather trend looking to continue this month.

What does this mean for the birds? Will they arrive back sooner? Start their nesting season earlier? We, too, are eagerly awaiting and preparing for what this year's baby season will bring!



Cheer, cheer!

As the weather becomes warmer and the days become longer, our year-round resident birds have started singing more. You can now hear the beloved Northern Cardinal singing "cheer, cheer, cheer, birdie, birdie, birdie" and the sweet Black-capped Chickadee whistling "cheese-burger, hey sweetie" as they use these particular calls to announce their territory and attract a mate. You will also notice that your feeder birds start to look brighter as American Goldfinches molt back to their bright yellows and bold black feathers!



Backyard Tip

It's important to clean up any fallen wet seeds under your feeders, as harmful bacteria can grow quickly in damp conditions. To keep your feeders free of germs and harmful bacteria, wash them with soap and then soak them in a 10% bleach solution and remember to rinse them really well.



Ready, set...

Long-distance migratory birds such as the Barn Swallow and Ruby-throated Hummingbird are not aware of the mild winter we have experienced in Ottawa. Their bodies are reacting to the change in daylight, signalling the time to begin their scheduled journey northward. We won't expect to see these species until closer to May regardless of how warm our spring is. Did you know that Ruby-throated Hummingbirds will drink out of sap holes created by Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers if spring flowers are scarce?



..On our way!

Shorter-distance migrants like the Eastern Phoebe can have their northern movements influenced by warm weather. This is because they will move northward as their primary food source, insects, becomes readily available. We have already observed a few flying insects around the Centre on warmer days, have you? Eastern Phoebes are a woodland bird but they also use human-built structures, such as eaves of buildings, as a preferred nest site location. You can identify these flycatchers by their raspy 'Fee-bee' calls, which they give often while sitting on a perch and flicking their tails.



Backyard Tip

Please refrain from raking and discarding yard waste until temperatures are consistently above 10 degrees Celsius. The leaf litter and dead garden plants are home to many dormant insects, larvae, and eggs which serve as a crucial food source for birds like the Eastern Phoebe upon their return from migration. By leaving the leaves, we can ensure that these emerging insects can provide a much-needed welcome home meal for our feathered friends.

End your winter hibernation and head outside!

With all this exciting bird activity happening we encourage you to get outside and welcome our feathered friends back to your neighbourhood and your favourite trails. You can download and print this pocket ID guide to help you identify common birds in the area and identify signs of birds in the forest! Here are a couple of printable pocket guides to help get you started:

[Backyard Bird ID](#)

[Winter Bird ID](#)

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