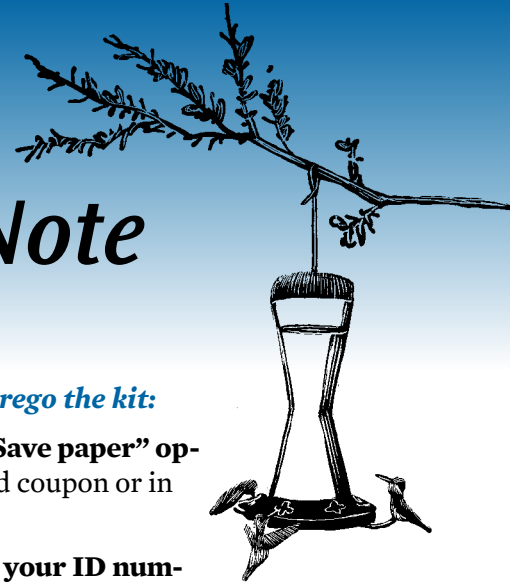


2018–19 Project FeederWatch

End-of-Season News Note



Thank you for another successful FeederWatch season! See inside this letter to read articles about orioles at feeders and new advances in deformed bill research and to read a poem written by a participant to honor Project FeederWatch. As we begin to analyze the data from this past season, you can see initial results in the Explore Data section of our website. Look for more details in *Winter Bird Highlights*, published in the fall.

Time to renew

Please take a moment to renew your participation for next season. With each additional year in the project, your counts become more valuable to researchers studying the distribution and abundance of feeder birds. Thank you for your continued support. **Please renew your FeederWatch membership today by following the instructions on the back page of this letter.**

Why renew so early?

Renewing now will allow us to save paper on future reminders and will help us better plan for the upcoming season. FeederWatch is supported almost entirely by you, the participants, and renewing early helps us keep our expenses low and make the most of your financial support.

Save paper—skip the kit

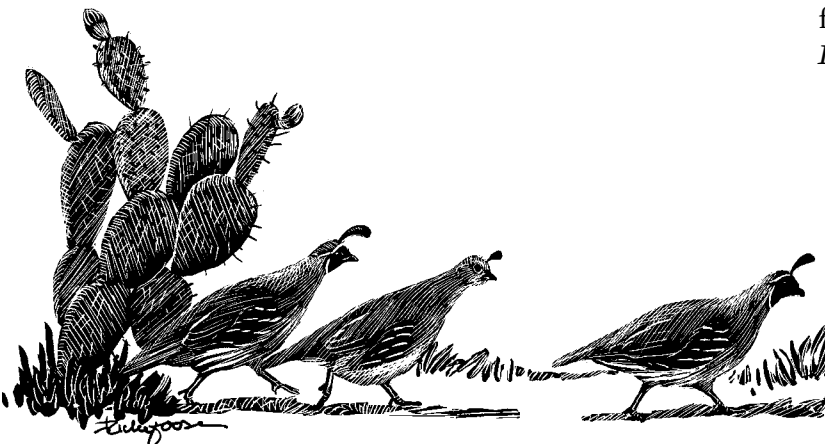
All renewing participants receive a kit with a calendar and *Winter Bird Highlights* unless you choose the option to save paper.

If you would like to forego the kit:

- ◆ Please **select the “Save paper” option** on the enclosed coupon or in our online store.
- ◆ Please **write down your ID number** (printed near your address on the renewal coupon) and save it.
- ◆ Please **note that next season starts on November 9.**
- ◆ Please **maintain your electronic newsletter subscription** to get the latest updates and reminders. **Otherwise, you may not receive any communication from Project FeederWatch.** If you think the newsletter may not be reaching you, subscribe by clicking the “Sign up for eNews” link in the top-right corner of our home page (there’s no risk of double subscribing) or learn more about the newsletter on our website: feederwatch.org/about/enews-archive. Note that spam blockers may prevent you from receiving this newsletter. Set your spam filter to allow email from feederwatch@cornell.edu.

Submit your counts

April 5 marked the last day to count birds for the 2018–19 FeederWatch season. If you have already submitted your counts, thank you! If you still have counts to report, please submit your data today. Counts reported by the end of May will be included in this fall’s *Winter Bird Highlights*.

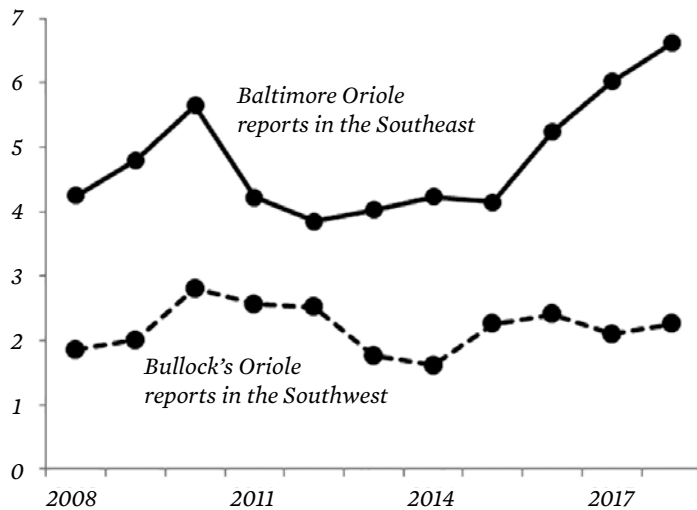


FeederWatch reports show rarity of orioles at feeders

There aren't many birds as striking and surprising in winter as an oriole. Baltimore Orioles in the East and Bullock's Orioles in the West sometimes visit feeders in winter, bringing with them a splash of orange color and an enthusiasm for jelly, fruit, and even sometimes suet.

In summer, Baltimore Orioles delight bird enthusiasts throughout much of the East, but in winter they are typically only found in coastal regions or in the

Percent of FeederWatch sites visited by orioles



Very few participants are lucky enough to host orioles in winter, but in the Southeast, reports are on an upswing.



TINY A GEHRKE

Bullock's Oriole

deep south. Similarly, Bullock's Orioles can be found throughout much of the West in summer but only the deep south in winter. Interestingly, in the Great Plains, where their breeding ranges overlap, Bullock's and Baltimore Orioles frequently hybridize. At one time they were considered subspecies of the same species, but genetic research indicated that they are not even each other's closest relative—unusual for species that hybridize regularly.



BOB VUKINIC

Baltimore Oriole

Your FeederWatch counts give us an idea of just how rare oriole visits are in winter. In the Southwest, Bullock's Orioles show up in around 2 percent of participant count sites (the dotted line in the graph). In the Southeast, Baltimore Orioles visit around 5 percent of sites and appear to be slightly on the rise in recent years (the solid line in the graph). Thank you to everyone who reports their orioles, and to everyone else who watches for them but doesn't see them. It is because of all your reports—including reports from those of you who never see orioles—that we can see just how rare these species are in winter. Enjoy them if they appear because they are very special visitors!

Deformed bill researchers closing in on a cause

FeederWatchers have been reporting birds with deformed bills for many years. This season one of the winning entries in the BirdSpotter participant story contest was a story from Ann Walsh of Cannington, Ontario, who shared her observations of a Black-capped Chickadee with a deformed bill at her feeders (see the blog story at feederwatch.org/blog). Her story prompted us to check for updates in deformed-bill research, and we found that the research has progressed another step from when we last reported on it in 2016.

A dedicated team of researchers at the Alaska Science Center of the U.S. Geological Survey have been studying bill deformities since 1999. Alaska has been hit the hardest by this deformity with more than 3,000 chickadees identified with deformed bills since the study began. In 2016, the researchers discovered a new virus, Poecivirus, in birds with bill deformities. This year they found that the virus was present in 100 percent of the 28 birds with deformed bills that they tested and in only 9.4 percent of the 96 birds with normal bills that they tested. These compelling results, reported in the *Virology Journal*¹, are the strongest clue yet to what is causing the deformity. The researchers are now studying the virus to determine how it might be causing the deformities. You can read more about the ongoing research in the Learn section of our website at feederwatch.org/learn/articles/deformed-bills-alaska.

¹Zylberg, M, C Van Hemert, CM Handel, and JL DeRisi. 2018. Avian keratin disorder of Alaska black-capped chickadees is associated with Poecivirus infection. *Virology Journal* 15:100.



ANN WALSH
Black-capped Chickadee with a deformed bill that visited Ann Walsh's feeders in Cannington, Ontario.

Participant honors FeederWatch in verse

FeederWatcher Harold Shaw sent us this poem written by his wife, Sue Shaw, a poet in Penobscot, Maine. Sue gave us permission to share her lovely celebration of FeederWatch with all of you.

A winter morning—cold and stark—
The coffee's hot, but it's still dark!
With pad and pen I sit and wait
Write down the time—write down the date...

And there—as daylight lets me see—
There in the shrubs—a chickadee!
And then the juncos, finch and dove...
Those feeder birds that we all love.

The morning light grows ever stronger...
The species list grows ever longer!
Sparrows—white throat and the tree...
There's a titmouse—two...no, three!

The peanut butter log and suet
Draws woodpeckers—they come to it
Along with nuthatch...red and white...
The cardinal's here—that bright delight!

My list goes on—and you might ask...
Just what is this listing task?
It's FEEDER WATCH—you can play too—
It's fun and helps the Cornell crew!

And as the days and weeks go by,
I'll watch the feeders, trees and sky...
Knowing what I watch and see
Is better in "reality"
....than any program on TV!

Citizen science—it's NOT too late
Sign up now—participate!



Three easy steps for renewing your FeederWatch participation

Step 1. Select a renewal option

- ◆ **Send me the calendar and *Winter Bird Highlights*.** With this option we will send you a letter, *Winter Bird Highlights*, and a Bird-Watching Days calendar in the fall.
- ◆ **Save paper—I do not need a calendar or a print copy of *Winter Bird Highlights*.** With this option, we will send a message with a link to a PDF of *Winter Bird Highlights* in the fall to the email address printed on the renewal coupon. Please use the provided line on the coupon or contact us by phone or email to correct your email address if needed. We recommend that you **keep track of your ID number** (printed above your address on the enclosed coupon) and **maintain your eNews subscription** (see electronic newsletter information on the front page of this letter).

Note: Renewing FeederWatchers do not receive the FeederWatch Handbook & Instructions or the Common Feeder Birds poster, so be sure to save them from your first kit.

Step 2. Send \$18 (\$15 for Lab members) annual fee

- ◆ **Over the Internet.** Sign up using a credit card (VISA, Mastercard, DISCOVER, or American Express) over our secure server at feederwatch.org by clicking on the **Join or Renew button** on our home page.
- ◆ **By mail.** Indicate your renewal option on the enclosed renewal coupon and return the coupon with your personal check or credit card information in the enclosed envelope.

Note: A tax-deductible contribution to FeederWatch above your \$18 renewal fee will help fund bird research and conservation at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Thanks for your support!

Step 3. Renew by May 31

Your early renewal helps us plan how many kits to print and saves us the cost of sending another reminder. We will transfer the savings into research and project improvements.

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology
Project FeederWatch
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