



1100 W. Moana Lane, Reno, NV 775-825-0602  
11301 S. Virginia Street, Reno, NV 775-853-1319  
7655 Pyramid Hwy., Sparks, NV 775-425-4300

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## "Nature News" from Wild Birds Unlimited at Moana Nursery



### **It's Time to Share**

If you are reading this newsletter, then it's a pretty good bet that you are already a person who loves birds and nature. And the odds are that your excitement for nature was first awakened by an experience during your childhood.

For many, it was discovering and watching a nesting bird in the yard. There is magic in first seeing an egg hatch, watching a mother tirelessly feeding her young and witnessing brave chicks leaving their nest for the first time. It all makes for powerful impressions on young minds... impressions that will never be forgotten.

March is a great month to make some new impressions by sharing your love of nature with young children while also helping the next generation of birds.

Nest boxes are a great place to start. Properly designed boxes, placed in the appropriate habitat

can truly benefit the birds and also provide a focal point for children to learn about nature. They can help install the boxes and then monitor all of the nesting activity throughout the season. If the birds cooperate and do nest in your yard, then the fun has just begun!

Nothing is more compelling for young or old alike than watching a mother bird feed her young. Whether it's seeing them in the nest begging mom for mealworms or watching her bring the youngsters to your feeders for the first time...it is sure to instill a sense of wonder and excitement every time.

Visit us soon. We'll make sure you have all of the proper housing and foods to enable you to inspire the next generation to love nature, while helping the nesting birds in your yard to thrive and survive.

Jacque Lowery, Manager  
Wild Birds Unlimited at Moana Nursery

## **Seed of the Month ... No Mess Blend**

**20 lbs. \$30.99 (reg. \$34.99) for the entire month of March!**

Attract a wide array of birds without the mess - ground feeders as well as hopper and tube feeders: chickadees, finches, pine siskins, juncos, spotted towhee, California quail, mourning doves & sparrows and more. Pure seed with no waste - sunflower chips, hulled white millet and small peanut pieces.

## **Special Offers:**

- **Buy any WBU Dinner Bell ... Get Free Mealworms. Offer expires March 15th.**
- **Buy 3 Peanut Butter'n Jelly Suet Plugs ... Get 1 Free ... while supplies last.**
- **In-Store Special - - Moana Lane only: Buy a Suet Plug Feeder ... Get 3 Peanut Butter'n Jelly Suet Plugs Free ... while supplies last.**



## March High Desert Bird of the Month: Western Bluebird

Picture by Jacque Lowery

Western Bluebirds are small, stocky thrushes with thin, straight bills and fairly short tails. Males are shiny blue above with rust-orange extending from a vest on the

breast onto the upper back. Females are gray-buff with a pale orange wash on the breast and blue tints to the wings and tail. The throat is blue in males and gray-buff in females, and the lower belly is whitish.

Western Bluebirds are highly social and usually feed in flocks during the non-breeding season. They hunt for terrestrial insects (grasshoppers, caterpillars, beetles, ants and others) by dropping to the ground from a low perch. They also frequently feed on berries (mistletoe, juniper and elderberry) in trees. They rely on trees both for nesting cavities and hunting perches; they also perch on fences and utility lines.

Western Bluebirds live in open woodland, both coniferous and deciduous, and also are found in backyards, burned areas, and farmland, from sea level far up into the mountains.

### Fun Facts:

- Bluebirds can spot caterpillars and insects in tall grass at the remarkable distance of over 50 yards.
- Males may carry nest material to the nest, but they do not participate in the actual building. They spend much of that time guarding their mates to prevent them from mating with other males.
- Bluebirds have no blue pigments in their feathers. Instead, each feather barb has a thin layer of cells that absorb all wavelengths of color except blue. Only the blue wavelength is reflected and scattered, resulting in their blue appearance to our eyes.

[For more bird of the month information, visit our local WBU website by clicking here.](#)

## Local Bird Sightings by Jacque Lowery



The unrelenting snow fall earlier this week reminded me of two things - 1) Fill the bird feeders before any threatened storms, and 2) inclement weather is sometimes the best for great bird watching. Early in the morning I'm watching the finches working on the last two inches of food in one feeder, a flicker is comically trying to figure out how to get access to a finch feeder and the quail are busily scratching around under another almost empty feeder. Of course, I can't stand watching this, so on go the snow boots and out into six inches of white stuff I trudge to fill each and every feeder. Now the fun begins.

During the Great Backyard Bird Count less than 2 weeks ago, my yard was strangely

empty of birds. I probably had half the normal winter species show up anytime during the count days. Now, the yard is so busy and so noisy! A normal pair of White-crowned Sparrows is now at least ten individuals; House Sparrows and House Finches number at least a dozen each.

A glimpse of the cottonwood tree next door reveals a Red-tail Hawk that looks like she isn't going anywhere soon. A flock of Robins lands in trees in the back yard. There's not much to eat for them, but they do enjoy drinks in the creek and squabbling with the Starlings. I start to count finches flying to and from feeders, the bird bath and the trees-finally estimate 50 to 60 Americans, Lesser and Pine Siskins. Some were even eating on the ground under feeders because there was no room for them on the feeders. The Flickers have finally settled on the suet feeder where they have no competition for food.

Earlier I had heard Red-winged Blackbirds somewhere in the area. In the early afternoon a mixed flock of at least 25 blackbirds, mostly Red-winged, descended on the hopper feeder and the ground beneath. What a noisy crowd; they fought for room at the feeder, they squabbled on the ground. They would feed for a minute or two, then rise as one and fly to the top of a tree; in a minute down they would come again. This behavior was repeated until the feeder was completely empty of seed. The Red-wings were a very nice treat that I might have missed if I had not taken the time to see what shows up on a snowy day!

**How to Attract, Feed & House Bluebirds . . . if you're lucky enough to live in an area where bluebirds might live.**

Protection from predators and proximity to food and water are a bird's primary consideration when choosing a nesting site. If bluebirds choose to nest in your yard, you can observe them as they build nests, lay eggs and feed their young. And when it's time for the fledglings to leave the nest, they'll likely learn to feed at your feeders and bathe in your bird baths.

[Learn more](#)



## Looking for some fun things to do with the kids?

### Kids' Activity Helpful Homemaker

**Most birds have to build a nest before they can raise their families. Even the birds that have never made a nest before know what shape to build and what materials to use. You can help your birds with their homemaking needs by providing materials that will make their jobs a little easier. Then watch as your feathered visitors stop by, and see what materials they are using.**

#### What you will need:

- \* Several shallow dishes
  - \* Wet mud
  - \* Moss
- \* Small twigs
  - \* Straw
- \* Short lengths of string
- \* Short lengths of knitting yarn

**1. Locate an open space in your yard (near the edge of the lawn is best) so birds can find them. Place the materials in the dishes. Be sure to leave the dishes alone for at least 24 hours so your birds have time to find and use them.**

**2. Watch your feathered guests from indoors or from an outside hideaway. Note who carries the materials off - the male, female or both?**

**Never disturb nesting birds during breeding season. Observe them from a distance, but never go near their nests.**

## March Nature Happenings

- \* March 1 - 31: Project FeederWatch continues
- \* March 8: Full Moon, March 22: New Moon
- \* March 11: Daylight Savings Time - "spring forward"
- \* March 20: Vernal Equinox - almost equal amounts of day and night
- \* In a heavy snow year, meadowlarks can be seen eating mealworms along with cracked corn.
- \* Wildflowers might begin to bloom if snowfall is light. You might see western trillium, bitterroot and larkspur.
- \* Meadowlarks can be heard singing.
- \* Male American Robins can often be heard before dawn defining their territory and calling for amate. They are also the last birds calling in the evening.
- \* Sandhill Cranes can be seen returning from the south.
- \* Check bird houses for damage and clean them before spring birds arrive.
- \* Male flickers can be heard as they drum trying to attract a mate.
- \* Bears emerge from hibernation this month.
- \* Red-tailed Hawks pair up for breeding.
- \* Peak of Bald Eagle migration.
- \* Great Horned Owls are sitting on their eggs.
- \* Red-winged Blackbirds, Killdeer and Great Blue Herons return.

## Lahontan Audubon Society Upcoming Trips and Events

Saturday, March 3, 2012 - Winter Waterfowl Tour, Stillwater NWR

Saturday, March 24, 2012 - Sierra Valley Expedition

- For more information on the Lahontan Audubon Society, [click here](#).

## Animal Ark Upcoming Events

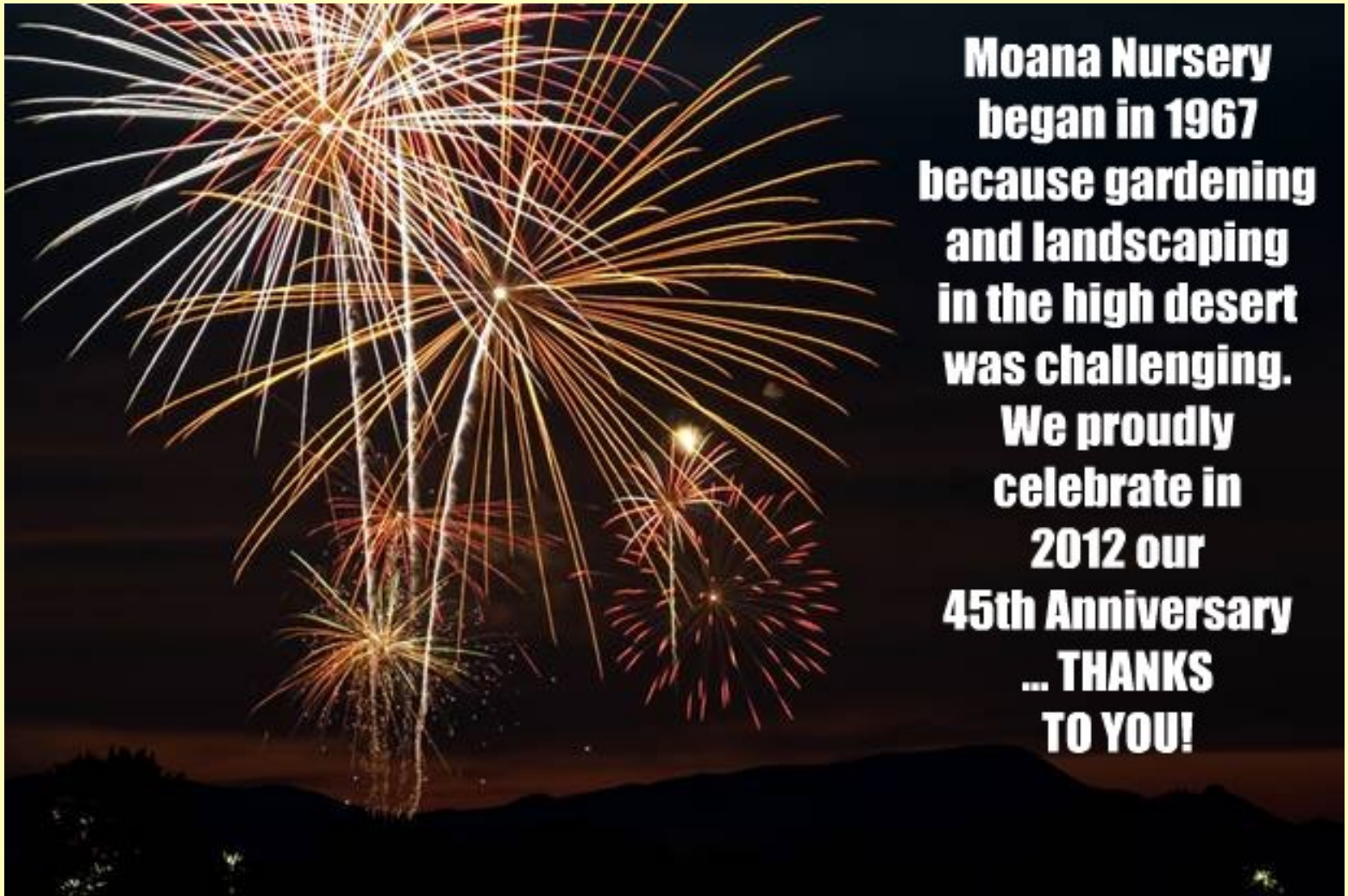
### Opening Weekend!

Saturday, March 31, and Sunday, April 1 10:00 am - 4:30 pm

Regular admission prices.

Our gates are open for the season after the long winter break and we look forward to welcoming visitors! Come help us celebrate Animal Ark's 31st year

[For more information about Animal Ark click here.](#)



Early Spring Anniversary Sale ... On ALL Outdoor Plants ...  
45% off in March ... 35% off in April  
Great time for Home Improvement and Birdscaping!





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Moana Nursery | 1100 W. Moana Lane | 11301 S. Virginia St. | Reno | NV | 89509