A birdbath is a great way to attract birds to your yard, including some species that don’t normally visit feeders. Read how to make your birdbath irresistible to the birds!

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**Cedar Waxwing Bonanza!**
2013 may be a banner year for these popular backyard visitors! 4

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(see page 3)
Keep your feeding station clean. To make sure that seed is flowing properly, give hanging feeders a good shake before refilling. Shake out or pry out with a stick any compacted seed in the bottom. A spoon or spatula is handy for removing old seed from platform and hopper feeders before refilling. You can keep these outside, at the feeding station, for convenience.

To clean feeders, remove all the old seed residue. Soak feeders in a light water/bleach solution (9 parts water to 1 part bleach) and scrub well. A bottlebrush helps to clean tube feeders. Rinse and air-dry before refilling.

To avoid contamination, limit ground feeding directly below hanging feeders. Rotate ground-feeding areas frequently.

Rake up and remove accumulated hulls and droppings. Spread mulch (bark or wood chips) below feeders, raking it up when soiled and replacing it with new.

In humid or wet conditions, feed only from weatherproof feeders. Check frequently for mold. Put out only as much seed as will be eaten in one day.

Be sure to thoroughly wash your hands after filling, handling, and cleaning your feeders.
Celestron's TrailSeeker binoculars provide high-level outdoor performance, plus a 6.5ft close focus that makes them perfect for the avid birder. The TrailSeeker is a feature-rich binocular with superb optical quality at an economical price. Phase and dielectric coated BaK-4 prisms dramatically increase light transmission through the prism system for unrivaled image quality and views. Compared to other binoculars in its price range, TrailSeeker offers a better close focus along with a wider field of view. The lightweight magnesium alloy frame is durable and fully waterproof for use in any weather condition.

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You may not believe this coincidence, but I have the photographic proof—at least I will once the film is developed.

Friday morning, an article on cedar waxwings told me that these birds are late breeders. They wait for summer fruits to ripen before initiating breeding, the article proclaimed. Little did I know that I would learn even more about cedar waxwings before the end of the day.

Sunny blue skies and warm mid-70s temperatures enticed me and the dogs, Elliot and Kat, to sit in the backyard—me with a book and the dogs with whatever flew or scampered within range of their tethered reach. Soon I became aware of Kat’s seldom-heard barking. Pulling at her leash, she appeared eager to chase what I first assumed to be a chipmunk somewhere nearby. However, as I followed her intense glare to a nearby crabapple tree a few yards out of her reach, I noticed something gray nestled low on the tree trunk. Stepping closer, I determined that a small bird had provoked Kat’s behavior.

Upon closer inspection, this small critter appeared to be a cedar waxwing. The symptoms it showed might be consistent with injury, being lost, or—strange as it sounds—being drunk. In fact, waxwings do sometimes become intoxicated...
from eating fermented fruit.

After calming Kat, I returned to my seat in the middle of the yard about 30 feet from the bird. After watching it for a while, Kat and I both let our attention wander as we enjoyed the warm sun and gentle breeze. Glancing back toward the bird, I spotted it flying from its low perch toward the house and, then, right into the side of the house—not hard, though. It fluttered to the ground. I assumed the flowering bushes and roses would be good cover for this misguided winged guest, and so I did not venture to disturb the seemingly lost fledgling.

Glancing back toward the bird, I spotted it flying from its low perch toward the house and, then, right into the side of the house—not hard, though. It fluttered to the ground.
My guest apparently felt I was not paying him enough attention. The ungainly winged creature brushed against me while flying on farther down the yard and landing on top of a bench beneath our serviceberry tree. Now interested, I walked over to the bird, fully expecting it to take flight before I reached the bench. Yet, having moved to within an arm’s length of the stationary bird, it gave little notice of discomfort. I raced inside to retrieve my camera in hopes of getting a close-up picture.

The bird was still there patiently posing, or maybe sleeping. Moving as close as the focus would allow, I captured my guest on film. Still it ventured not. I slowly reached a cautious finger across the inches between us and stroked its feathery back ever so gently. The only reaction from the bird was a slight turn of its head and a lifted eyelid as if to say, “First you leave me unattended, then you disturb my siesta.” Intrigued by its unnerving calmness, I offered my forefinger as an optional perch, which the bird accepted, stepping gingerly onto my appendage.

Now fully enthralled by the whole experience—as if I had stepped into the rabbit hole with Alice—I wondered what was up with this unusual bird behavior. There was no sign of Cedar waxwings often pass berries to each other when a flock is feeding together.
Springtime blossoms bring flocks of waxwings.

injury. Even more surprising, my new companion remained nestled on my finger.

After I walked back across the lawn, I searched the serviceberry tree for a remaining berry to no avail. We then walked—well I walked, the bird came along for the ride—over to the blueberry bushes, finding one half-ripe berry. Apparently blueberries are not on this bird’s diet or the berry was just not ripe enough. After that, I settled in my chair and resumed petting the bird as though it were a household pet. Swatting a small insect on my arm allowed me to offer my guest something with a bit more protein. Resting the insect on my palm was enough of a dinner bell for the bird that pecked it out of my free hand. I imagined the waxwing saying, “Thanks, now how about five or six more?”

Nearly an hour since my guest’s initial appearance, I stepped into the house, bird and all, to check the time. No hint of distress. Then, after about 30 minutes resting on my finger, the four-and-a-half-inch bird flew from my finger over to the grapevine. I had hoped my friend would stay until Barbara came home so I could reassure myself that I was not dreaming the whole time. However, I was glad the bird realized this might be the wrong house, and I might not be its cousin after all. I hope it matures into its wild and cautious nature.

I think I will write to the publisher of that article to advise them that not all cedar waxwings have a sweet tooth for berries. I can attest to that first hand, thanks to my brave, if somewhat intoxicated, visitor.
CEDAR WAXWING Range

Above: A waxwing makes an aerial dive for a lower branch of a serviceberry bush. Below: A meal for an entire flock of waxwings.
CEDAR WAXWING
—Bombycilla cedrorum

What to Look and Listen For—The cedar waxwing is a silky and sleek brown, gray, and yellow bird. On its 7 ¼-inch-long frame, it sports a short bill and a flat-lying crest that droops over the back of the head. It has a pale brown head, yellow belly, black facemask outlined in white, mostly gray wings with a few red droplets, and white undertail coverts topped with yellow-tipped gray tail feathers. The waxwing’s song is a series of soft and high-pitched notes with an irregular and slightly trilled rhythm.

When and Where to Look—The cedar waxwing is found year-round in the northern half of the United States, while some waxwings spend the summer in southern Canada and the winter in the southern United States and in Central America. If you have backyard fruit trees, you are in luck. The cedar waxwings can survive for months on an exclusively fruit diet. They are generally found in open woodland habitats that have plenty of berries; however, they also enjoy eating insects, flower petals, and sap. The cedar waxwing is also a highly social bird—one you are likely to see in flocks year-round.

Nesting Behavior—Cedar waxwings typically nest in late summer on the fork of a horizontal branch anywhere from 3 to 50 feet off the ground. Using twigs, cattail down, string, blossoms, horsehair, pine needles, grasses, etc., the female cedar waxwing takes five to six days to build her 5-by-3-inch nest, which she fills with two to six eggs. The male sometimes helps to construct the second nest of the season.

Attracting Waxwings—Attracting cedar waxwings to your backyard is as easy as planting native, fruit-bearing trees or shrubs, such as cedar, serviceberry, dogwood, juniper, winterberry, and cherry. Serviceberries—one of cedar waxwing’s favorite foods—have done especially well in 2013, which may lead to a boom in cedar waxwing numbers this summer. —Melanie Hendershot
Sum-sum-summertime!

Solve this puzzle of clues related to summertime in the backyard!
(Answers on page 32.)
ACROSS
1. In addition to drinking, birds use backyard water features for this
3. Sneaky nest predator
4. Baby bird equivalent to a dirty diaper
6. White, thin-shelled, conical seed, popular among cardinals
8. Warbler named after a U.S. city
10. Bad neighbors for cavity nesters
12. American warbler, sometimes painted
13. North America’s most familiar backyard thrush
17. Small, tame, bibbed feeder bird
21. Small, fruit-bearing tree, attractive to waxwings
22. A wren and a chickadee both bear this name
23. Bird that suggests, “Drink your tea!”
26. Birds use this to aid in digestion
27. A young bird still bound to the nest
28. Hummingbird fuel for the southward migration

DOWN
2. Wears its finest “canary” yellow in summer
3. Nocturnal raptor frequently heard in late summer
5. Large, common hawk that hunts larger feeder visitors
6. Only North American bird with “summer” in its name
7. Mimic named for its mewing call
9. Common drillers of sap wells
11. Colorful waterfowl that will use nest boxes
14. Winged nest parasite
15. A traveling bird
16. Competes with woodpeckers for nest sites
18. Weaves a hanging nest from fine fibers
19. Erect white gourds to house these popular swallows
20. Required maintenance for bird baths
24. Downy’s bigger lookalike
25. Sure sign of nesting activity

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—A. J. R. Roberts
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