



THE BIRD STORE NEWS  
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and more...



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## Tagged Gulls AND WHAT IT MEANS



What many folks call “Seagulls” are actually a number of different species of “Gull” that can be found in our area. Recently one of our birder friends spotted tagged gulls in our local area. We did a bit of research and this is what we found.

The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) has been doing a gull study at the Wachusett and Quabbin Reservoirs. Many species of birds (gulls, ducks, & geese) can concentrate in large numbers for an extended period of time and can have an impact on water quality.

Currently little is known about wintering gulls, and as part of the gull program the DCR is conducting research related to the movements of three species of gulls (Ring billed, Herring, and Black backed Gulls).

The DCR’s research program is set up to address three questions. What and where are the seasonal food resources for each gull species. What are the movement patterns between feeding, loafing and roosting sites? What are the population dynamics of gulls in Massachusetts? Where do they nest? What are the sources of mortality? What is their lifespan?

Initial gull trapping was done in January, February, and March of 2008. Following capture, all birds are fitted with an aluminum federal leg band. A uniquely numbered colored leg band is placed on the opposite leg of all birds. Finally, on most birds, a colored, uniquely numbered

wing-tag is attached to each wing. These wing-tags make long-distance identification possible, particularly when it is difficult to see or read the leg bands. Wing-tags are color-coded based on the capture site’s proximity to either Wachusett or Quabbin Reservoir.



DCR asks that you do not feed the gulls. Feeding gulls risks the spread of disease, threatens the health of the birds, jeopardizes the safety of the birds, and endangers drinking water supplies.

DCR is asking the public for help with this study. Wing-tags can be seen from a distance, and the numbers on the tags are easily read with binoculars or sometimes even with the naked eye. All sightings are very important to this study. Sightings have already been received from residents, birders, and the federal bird banding lab, ranging from central Massachusetts to Maine, as well as Bermuda, Manitoba, Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada.

If you see a wing-tagged bird, please try to obtain the alpha-numeric combination on the tag (e.g., A57) and report it with the date, time, and location of the sighting and the color of the wing tag using the contact information below. Common places to find these wintering gull species are at landfills, parking lots, and ball fields. Please keep a look out for any wing-tagged birds while birding, grocery shopping, or at the kids’ soccer game. DCR will be happy to provide you with capture information about a specific bird.

Please contact Ken Mackenzie at [Ken.Mackenzie@state.ma.us](mailto:Ken.Mackenzie@state.ma.us) (508-792-7423 x313) or Dan Clark at [Dan.Clark@state.ma.us](mailto:Dan.Clark@state.ma.us) (508-792-7423 x215) with wing-tag information



## Ever wonder ABOUT TREE NUTS?

Many of our seed mixes list "Tree Nuts" in their ingredients. Tree Nuts is a name used for a mixture of nuts. The following are considered Tree Nuts under U.S. law:

- Almonds, Brazil Nuts, Cashews,
- Chestnuts, Filbert/Hazelnuts,
- Macadamia Nuts, Pecans, Pine Nuts,
- Pistachios, and Walnuts.

The problem with Tree Nuts is their inconsistency. Many of the seconds come from the manufacture of candy bars so the seed houses (where our bird seed is mixed and bagged) have to make sure that the ones they purchase are not salted. Sometimes the amounts of different type of nuts vary. One lot may have mostly Cashews and Almonds and the next lot may look like there are very few of the better nuts in it.



Sometimes the sizes of the nuts are also an issue. The larger nuts may get jammed in the feeders. The seed companies have found that dicing the Tree Nuts have made it easier to create a smaller nut with a better variety in the seed mixes. And you thought it was just a nut!



## Our Summer Birds OVENBIRD

The Ovenbird is a small, inconspicuous bird of the forest floor; the Ovenbird is one of the most characteristic birds of the eastern forests. Its loud song, "teacher, teacher, teacher," rings through the summer forest, but the bird itself is hard to see.

Ovenbirds are 5.5 in (14 cm) long. They have olive-brown upperparts and white underparts heavily streaked with black; the flanks have an olive hue. A white ring surrounds the eyes, and a black stripe runs below the cheek. They have a line of orange feathers with olive-green tips running along the top of their head, bordered on each side with blackish-brown. The orange feathers can be erected to form a small crest. The eyes and the upper part of the thin pointed beak are dark, while the lower beak is horn-colored and the legs and feet are pinkish.



Their breeding habitats are mature deciduous and mixed forests, especially sites with little undergrowth, across Canada and the eastern United States. For foraging, it prefers woodland with abundant undergrowth of shrubs; essentially, it thrives best in a mix of primary and secondary forest.

Ovenbirds forage on the ground in dead leaves, sometimes hovering or catching insects in flight. This bird's diet is mostly insects consisting of crickets, ants, spiders, caterpillars, aphids, earthworms, moths, slugs and beetles. The Ovenbird walks on the ground of woods turning over leaves with their bills. A few seeds and fruit such as mulberries are also eaten. They build their nest, referred to as the "oven" (which gives the bird its

name), on the ground. The nest is a domed structure neatly formed of grasses, both inside and out, arched over with a thick mass of the same material, covered by leaves, twigs, and grasses. A small aperture is left on one side, just sufficient to admit the bird.



## BABY BIRD REMINDER

It is the nesting season and every year we receive numerous calls about baby birds that are on the ground. Please be kind, these little fuzz balls are fledgling birds and the parent bird is usually around and will continue to feed the baby on the ground as well as helping it learn to fly. If you think the baby bird is in jeopardy take a basket, fill it with grass, then place the baby in the basket and hang the basket on a tree branch close by but away from danger. The mother bird will find and feed the baby. Don't take it home, to us, or the vet. The baby is usually fine (it just hasn't quite got the hang of flying yet) and the mother bird will be quite upset if her baby goes missing.





## BECAUSE YOU ASKED

### Q: Is Nyjer seed pressed for oil?

**A:** The Nyjer (*Guizotia abyssinica*) seeds contain up to 40% oil and in Ethiopia, India and Myanmar (Burma) it is an important oilseed crop. Nyjer supplies 50% of the vegetable oil used in Ethiopia and 3% in India. It is also heated and made into a paste and eaten directly. The meal left after oil extraction is used as a livestock food. It is a useful crop in the tropics because it is relatively pest free and can be grown in clay and waterlogged soils. However in North America and Europe it is used primarily as a bird food and is not pressed. Just like black oil sunflower, the high oil content of Nyjer makes it an energy packed food that is highly desirable for any bird adapted to eating small seeds.



Goldfinches are one of the birds most attracted to the Nyjer seed. Goldfinches have their young in late summer. Instead of the typical insect diet goldfinches feed their young a seed mash which is why there is an abundance of finch activity on the Nyjer feeders in August.

### Q: Are Brown Thrashers in decline?

**A:** Brown Thrashers have shown a significant negative decline over the past twenty years based on a decreasing proportion of routes that the species has been observed in the Breeding Bird Survey. This may be due to the decline in the presence of fruit-bearing trees for foods, thorny shrubs for appropriate nesting habitats, and potential applications of pesticides within the breeding habitat that may have effect on the availability of both vegetable and insect food sources.



The Brown Thrasher breeds throughout most of the eastern temperate deciduous forest, generally east of the Rocky Mountains from southern Alberta to the northeastern United States, southern Quebec, to southern Florida, and east to Texas. The general breeding

habitat of the Brown Thrasher is forest edges, shrubby woodland growth in agricultural areas, second-growth forest, shrubby fence rows, and garden shrubbery.

During the breeding season, the Brown Thrasher is primarily an insectivore and consumes a variety of insects, spiders, and worms. During late summer and during the non-breeding season, food also consists of fruits, mast, and waste grains.

### Q: Do rodent electronic sound repellents affect birds?

**A:** Rodent sound repellents do not affect birds as the ultrasonic sound waves in the units are in the 45,000 Hz range, birds generally do not hear in frequency ranges above 20,000 Hz. Humans hear in the 20,000 Hz range while dogs and cats hear frequencies up to 27,000 Hz. So if you are using an electronic pest control repeller it will not affect the birds in your yard or at your feeder.

### Q: Why aren't the Orioles coming to my feeder now?

**A:** When the Orioles first arrive in the north each spring they are looking to set up breeding territory and attract a mate. One the nesting has begun the Orioles seem to us the feeders less. Don't take them down if you don't see your Orioles for a while. Chances are they are busy nesting and feeding the young. Be patient and after a few weeks you will be rewarded with the return of the Orioles along with their babies. It's always a treat to watch the young birds try to figure out the jelly.



## BLUE HEADED MALLARD DUCKS?

Have you ever seen a Blue headed Mallard Duck? Usually we see green coloration on the heads of our male Mallards. But did you know that the feathers on a Mallard's head are neither blue, nor green. Instead, they are yellow, with the structure of the barbs and barbules in the feathers reflecting blue. Yellow plus blue equals green. Therefore, it stands to reason that a feather on the head of a male Mallard that is lacking (or has a reduction in) yellow pigment would only show the blue, structural color.



## ARE YOU GETTING THE LATEST UPDATES?

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Click on the link at the top of our web site.

Or go to <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Sturbridge-MA/The-Bird-Store-and-More/167543219923504>



## EYES ON NATURE WALKS



Make sure you check our web site

[www.thebirdstoreandmore.com](http://www.thebirdstoreandmore.com)

click on events or sign up for our email updates to get the latest trip information. You will also find our bird walks and events listed on our FACEBOOK page. We hope you will join us on one of our events! Exploring nature doesn't cost anything and it's healthy for you too!



FREE DELIVERY within 10 miles!



**Bird Store Hours:**  
10:00-6:00 Monday - Saturday  
11:00-5:00 Sunday

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