

# Wild Bird Chalet

*Bringing you the freshest, highest quality seed available & feeders to last a lifetime.*

A Quarterly Newsletter

Issue N° 1 — Fall 2006

**New Owner**

*Valeri Wade has stepped in and Guy Loiselles has moved on.*

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*Numerous swallows dive and swarm in what appears to be the joy of arrival after a long journey north.*

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## Wild Bird Chalet Changes Hands

*After nearly 16 years, Guy Loiselles, the founder of Wild Bird Chalet has retired and handed the business over to Valeri Wade.*

**New Owner:**

As long time bird feeder, I am excited to be able to guide the Wild Bird Chalet through what I hope will be another 16 great years. I look forward to being able to use my background in native and ornamental plants and environmental systems to help people have the best bird experience possible.

**Same Location:**

We will be staying at the same location and will continue to provide the highest quality feed and feeders that are available. Mary Siren, the "Bird Lady of St. Francis" will remain a great resource for those visiting the Wild Bird Chalet. You can see her and her dog Penny on Mondays and Tuesdays.

Our newsletters will keep you up to date with Chalet and other local news, featured birds and feeders and educational tips.

In the future, look for more bird baths, items especially suited for children and an expanded gift selection.

**Wish List:**

We've started a new gift registry for those times that you want to give the "right" gift, but don't know what to choose. Its free, easy and good for any occasion.

**Bird Feeding Station:**

After we cleaned the brush out of the bird feeding area, we noticed an almost immediate increase in visitor birds. The goldfinches have been crowded at all four finch feeders. Though they've shed their breeding season finery, they are still a pleasure to watch.

We took out blackberries, root suckers and many dead branches, then put in some native plants. The ground is now mostly clear (perfect for dust bathing),

though the hanging bath has been getting a lot of traffic too. There are new branch perches for snoozing or waiting a turn at the feeders. This little oasis has it all.

**Come and See Us:**

Store hours are still Monday through Friday 11-5 and Saturday 10-2, though we will have expanded holiday hours. Come visit us soon and share your bird, squirrel or other wildlife story. And thanks for your continued patronage.

—Valeri Wade



To see our newsletter online, visit our website at [www.WildBirdChalet.com](http://www.WildBirdChalet.com)

# Buy Local-Keep our economy strong

*All of our dollars that support local businesses help keep our area clean, green and friendly to wildlife - the kind of place we all like to live.*

## A Winter Spa For The Birds



What's a sure way to attract birds to your feeders? Offer water...especially in winter! About 70% of a bird's non-fat body tissue is water, that needs to be maintained to avoid dehydration. Because they have no salivary glands, they need water to help them digest food. Birds find some water in natural food sources - insects, berries, and even from snow - but when those supplies dwindle, the water you supply is even more vital.

Open water in freezing weather will attract as many or more birds as a well-stocked feeder. Birds use it to help keep themselves warmer in winter. By cleaning their feathers and grooming them with natural oils, our feathered friends are able to help insulate their bodies from cold.

We carry hanging or deck mount plastic baths, passive solar baths, covered to keep debris out, and plug in submersible heating units for heating bird baths made of metal, concrete or plastic.

## Suet - Why Is It So Important?



The high metabolic rate of wild birds dictates that they must eat constantly during the day in order to have sufficient reserves to last through cold winter nights. They must be able to convert food quickly to heat and energy to keep warm.

Food of high oil content is particularly important. Black oil sunflower seed, unsalted peanuts, dried corn, and suet are some of the richest, high oil content foods available & are very important throughout the cold season. Suet is by far the highest energy per bite of all these foods.

Many wild birds include insects in their diet. Since suet is animal fat, it makes sense that suet is an excellent substitute for insects in the winter and a supplement in the summer. Suet that contains nuts, seeds & fruits appeals to seed eaters and fruit eating birds. All of the woodpeckers, nuthatches & the Northern Flicker love suet.

Check out our many suet feeder choices.

## No Grow, No Waste



Our No-Grow blend draws the greatest variety of song birds of any mix. It contains sunflower chips, a few shelled peanut pieces and a little bit of white proso millet.

No-Grow is a perfect feed for winter because birds spend less of their precious energy on foraging. That means there is no waste, no shells to go on the ground, nothing to mold. It's a great mix for patios or other areas that may be difficult to clean. And the best part is that everything you pay for gets eaten.

Each morning, rain or shine, we put out about 3/4 cup of our No-Grow mix in a triangular tray feeder. The gold finches go crazy over it. The chickadees enjoy it too. The following morning the feeder is completely empty.

This feed works well in tray feeders, various feeders with sufficient perching room, or tube feeders with domes.



## Violet Green Swallow

*On nesting box at Dunbar Gardens in the Skagit Valley*

*By Veronica Wisniewski. A botanist by training, she has built and installed many fine houses for swallows & barn owls throughout the county.*

Morning: a mild day in the middle of March and the dervish dance of the returning tree swallows occupies the space over the meadow behind my house. Numerous swallows dive and swarm in what appears to be the joy of arrival after a long journey north. I look forward to this rite each year as it marks for me the arrival of spring. I believe I am party to it because the swallows are checking to see that the numerous nest boxes I have installed and tended over the last ten years are still around.

We are fortunate to have two species of cavity nesting swallows that will use nest boxes in Whatcom County: tree swallows and violet green swallows. In contrast to the barn swallows and cliff swallows which construct their nests of mud and line them with feathers, tree and violet green swallows weave a small cup of grass inside a cavity and line it with feathers. They are not limited to hollows in trees or bird boxes. I have seen them nest in rock crevices, hollow railings outside balconies, and gaps under roofs.

What is clear is they are desperate for suitable nesting places. A well managed nest box can provide that.

Tree and violet green swallows are similar in appearance, both greenish on the upper body with white on the face and belly. Tree swallows tend towards bluish green with the white underparts ending in a straight line through the eye across the face toward the beak. Violet-green swallows are colored as their name suggests and sport a white mask that encircles the eye in an arc beneath the green cap. The white patch near the base of the tail distinguishes a violet green swallow in flight.

Swallows contend with serious competition from introduced house sparrows, ubiquitous around town. Since a house sparrow will puncture eggs or kill an incubating swallow if encountered in a box in which the sparrow takes an interest, box design is very important. A design that tends to exclude most sparrows employs a diamond shaped hole.

It should be possible to open the box to clean out old nest material from year to year and to monitor nesting success. Monitoring instructs which bird species

uses the box from year to year and whether or not the box is occupied. Undesirable species like house sparrows or an empty box might suggest a new location is called for. A front opening is probably easiest for the purpose of clean out and monitoring.

Other species that might use the box include black capped and

chestnut backed chickadees, house wrens, and nuthatches. Boxes carpeted with woven moss, hair, fur and spider down suggest chickadees or nuthatches. Boxes full of sticks are indicative of wrens. If wrens show up, it is a good idea to have more than one box as the males fill several boxes with sticks to entice a female to choose a nesting site.



**Violet Green Swallow hatchlings and 19 days later fledglings.**

*Swallow photos courtesy of Steve Lospalluto*

Boxes can be mounted on poles, the side of a building or hung on a line from wire to make it difficult for predators to raid them. Trees are not secure due to the access they offer climbing predators such as raccoons and cats. Nest boxes offer a great way to enjoy and observe our cavity nesting swallows.

# Save 10% off All Wild Bird Seed

*Birds need a constant food supply. You can keep your favorite feathered friends coming to your backyard year round and most importantly, during the winter months when they need your assistance most. Feed your wild birds the highest quality feed available using our human grade seed. Our feed gives birds the nutrition they need, the food they prefer and is a true value in wild bird seed. Sale prices are good until October 31st.*

