



# Bird Notes

From Northeast Kingdom Audubon  
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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Birdwatching at the Supermarket

This enchanting April weather has welcomed many birds back from their wintering grounds. No doubt you have been noticing these arrivals on a daily basis, and perhaps you have a list from last year to compare the dates when they show up. I recently received this link to a nice list of arrival dates for New Hampshire birds. For the readers in New Hampshire as well as Vermont, this list provides the arrival dates of the species we look forward to seeing each year: [http://www.nhbirdrecords.org/articles/V26\\_No1.pdf](http://www.nhbirdrecords.org/articles/V26_No1.pdf).

We know about the thousands of miles that our birds travel to reach those resting and feeding places they need for their survival. We know from many bird counts done throughout the year that some birds are not returning in the numbers we have grown accustomed to. But did we know what we shop for in winter may come from Latin and South America where toxic chemicals, banned in the U.S., are used in the production of the fresh fruits and vegetables we crave? When bobolinks wintering in Bolivia were tested, signs of toxic chemicals used in rice fields were found. In Latin America, pesticide use has increased fivefold since 1980 with the growing demand for fresh produce in North America and Europe. In addition to the bobolinks, barn swallows and eastern kingbirds are declining. Migratory birds are becoming the today's canaries in the coal mines by revealing agriculture's hidden environmental problems.

With the conclusion of Vermont's Breeding Bird Atlas last year, the breeding of 180 species of birds was confirmed. Since the first such study done in the late 1970's, Vermont has acquired 17 more species, but also has increased concern for the common nighthawk, eastern meadowlark and four kinds of warblers among others. The best conservation that anyone can do comes from the knowledge we are gaining with huge surveys like this one, first started by ornithologist, Sally Laughlin of Cambridge, Vermont. Learn more about the Vermont Breeding Bird Atlas at <http://www.uvm.edu/~ebuford/vtbird.html>.

Meanwhile, back to the supermarket. Perhaps the word "organic" now brings to mind our feathered friends. When some residues remain with the food after washing or peeling, perhaps the best approach is to not take a chance. Can we be happy with locally grown (or at least US grown) produce throughout our long winters for the bird's sake? Worth a try.

Happy Bird-Friendly Shopping!

**Carolyn E. Boardman is a board member of NEK Audubon living in Brownington, Vermont. NEK Audubon is one of 8 chapters of Audubon Vermont and part of the National Audubon Society. NEK Audubon is a non -profit organization that encourages people's enjoyment of birds, wildlife and natural habitats through field trips, programs and publications. For more information about meetings, field trips and special events visit [www.nekaudubon.org](http://www.nekaudubon.org).**

**Art work by Robin Rothman.**