



# Bird Notes

From Northeast Kingdom Audubon  
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## For Immediate Release

### Lessons Learned

These are the things I have learned recently: cedar waxwings are exotic year round fruit-eating birds in the north country, black bears will take advantage of humans, and hummingbirds do not prefer white flowers.

This summer's great abundance of swollen berries and cherries are giving the flocks of cedar waxwings something to twitter about. The fruit-eating specialists just can't seem to get enough. This gorgeous forest dweller does venture out into open spaces when fruit trees and bushes are laden. My cherry tree in the middle of the field is a waxwing magnet right now. To add protein to their diet, they will display flights of aeronautic delight to catch insects such as mayflies, dragonflies, and stoneflies over rivers and streams. Fortunately for us, they are also known to feed by picking scale insects, spruce budworm, and leaf beetles from vegetation. We have only seen cedar waxwings since the 1960s in the northeast and southern Canada, and only occasionally do we see their closer relative, the Bohemian waxwing, in their company. The more we use ornamental berry trees in suburban landscapes, the more we will see both waxwings species taking advantage. One disadvantage to the fruit diet...overripe berries ferment and produce alcohol that can intoxicate or kill the birds. A final note about the fruit diet. The color of the fruit tinges the "wax" on the bird's wing. Interesting.

No longer do I believe that black bears will bother bird feeders only in the spring after they come out of hibernation and there is not much food available for them. No longer do I think that they will shy away from places where dogs have made their mark, or homes are well lit and busy with people comings and goings. No longer will I feed the birds in my traditional, greased-post-raccoon-proof way during the summer. Black bears rule. In fact just today, an article about how smart black bears can be caught my eye. Search [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com) for black bears to read this intriguing story. But most of all, do not underestimate what a black bear will do, or when they will do it. They are driven. The birds we love to watch will just have to find others sources of food. To some that may sound cruel, but think about it. They will be fine. We just have to go out and find the birds somewhere else.

Sorry Don and Lilian. My Stokes hummingbird feeder doesn't work. Out of all feeders I offer, the birds did not use this one. I watched all three styles of feeders that I have out and kept them all filled. Then it finally dawned on me. We all know that ruby-throated hummingbirds prefer RED. I have planted red monarda (bee balm), cardinal flower and salvia. I even painted my Adirondack chairs red. The flowers on the feeder were...white! So in theory when I paint the flowers red, the birds will return. We shall see. It's just a theory.



Happy Smart Birding!



**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 everyone'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.**