

Hey, Wyoming. Welcome to the Lawn and Garden podcast with University Extension Specialist Jeff Edwards and his co-host Jerry Erschabeck. Originally aired on KGOS and KERM in Torrington, Join Jeff, Jerry and all of their special guests as they talk all things Wyoming garden from plant variant to weather events, to pesticides, and the power on all those. Our Lawn and Garden podcast helps you improve your home garden and get a small acreage. Good day, and happy gardening. [MUSIC]

Good morning everybody. This is Jeff Edwards. It's KERM Lawn and Garden program. It's good to be here today. As always, it's a little bit of confusion mayhem. No co-host today. Jerry is off on a little bit of a road trip. But our guests today is Jacqueline Downey. And we're going to spend some time talking about birds. Jacqueline is the representative for Audubon of the Rockies. Good morning Jacqueline. Can you hear us?

Morning Jeff? Yes I can hear you.

All right. [LAUGHTER] We've got- we've got audio, we've got sound, we've got communication. Excellent. So before we really dive in let's take a few minutes and listen to some messages from our sponsors [OVERLAPPING] and we will be right back after this no.

It's that time as the snow melts, and the sun breaks. The University of Wyoming Extension has many upcoming virtual and hybrid learning programs available to you within each week for details on new events and how to make your garden flawless.

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Now, back to the Lawn and Garden podcast.

All right everybody, Good morning. This is Jeff Edwards at the KERM Lawn and Garden program along with Jacqueline Downey and a- a sidekick today I think is going to be Mr. Gun. So [LAUGHTER] for a few minutes.

Hi Jacqueline.

Hello.

Oh, there you are. Okay. Yeah. Um, I'll be filling in a little bit for Jerry Erschabeck is not here today.

Correct.

And Ryan will be here shortly as well, right? I'll be here.

Okay. Good. The other thing is I still can't hear Jacqueline.

Oh, no.

So I'm still running.

You are bereft.

I'm running deaf, so-

Okay. Well, unplug from this.

Unplug from this.

And put it back where you had it. And you should be able to hear there, but you'll- you'll have a slight delay. It's just the way technology is. It's great when it works and when it doesn't it's terrible. But we're going to be talking birds today, right, Jacqueline?

That's correct.

Awesome. Well, I've got lots of questions. [BACKGROUND] Uh, turn me down?

No, it was turned down over here.

Oh, it was turned down over there. Now he's good to go. All right then. [LAUGHTER]

Yeah we're good to go. Sorry about the technology, uh, challenges. We'll- we'll work through them and make it happen. So [LAUGHTER] it's really good to see you again Jacqueline and we have birds. Things are showing up.

Yes. It's kind of a fun time of year. I say that if you would've asked me that at Wednesday, I was just a happy place, been hiking, looking at wildflowers, hearing lots of birds. Today it is blowing and snowing and I'm supposed to go camping this weekend. So kind of a change of attitude I need to- I need to uh put on because [LAUGHTER] you know how spring weather can change and ruin plans in Wyoming. So uh it'll be fine. [LAUGHTER]

Yeah. Um, it's- it's been kind of an interesting spring. We started, uh, having Orioles show up about, I don't know, three weeks ago. And Bullock's Orioles are here and a new one which may have been here in the past, but I haven't been able to identify it is, uh, Orchard or Orioles. And so that's kinda need to have something new show up.

Yeah. We, um, so I- I operate a bird banding station, which is a station we put up next on certain days, we catch the birds, we put little, uh, identifying metal sort of bracelets, anklets on their- on their feet, and then, uh, other bands. There's other stations around the world around you know Wyoming and- and the rest of the nation

and the idea is trying to figure out you know where are birds going and how are they doing. Um, but so when we first operating the station, uh, about 15 years ago, we were seeing only, uh, Bullock's Orioles. And over time starting to see more and more Orchard Orioles. And the last couple of years we've seen more Orchard Orioles than, uh, Bullock's Orioles. So let's just kind of a- a shift, whereas we never- we never saw them either for the first couple of years. But yeah.

Are- are orchard- no, excuse me. Are Bullock's Orioles and Baltimore Orioles closely related? Are they-are they practically the same thing? [LAUGHTER]

Well it depends if you're a lumper or a sorter.

Okay. [LAUGHTER]

But [LAUGHTER] the way birding right now is going we're definitely in a, uh, sorting out and so. But the words are- are Baltimore and Bullock's Orioles we're seeing- well first off, we're seeing a lot more, um, Baltimore Orioles in our- in our state where we didn't use to see them. And now we're seeing a lot of, um, interbreeding. So you'll see a lot of hybrid Baltimore and Bullocks now as well. So-

Very interesting.

[inaudible 00:06:51] doing crazy things right now.

Yeah. So- so, um feeding Bullock's Orioles I guess, or having them show up. Uh we have an Oriole feeder, which is basically a way to suspend orange halves and then some- a dish or something to put grape jelly in. And man they're there. It's- it's crazy. They uh-they really right now are going after the grape jelly. And if the jelly runs out, then they'll go after the orange pieces. So it's- it's really fun to have them around. They're brightly colored people. You can't confuse them with [LAUGHTER] anything else really uh and really fun to have.

Yeah and then if- if you're lucky enough to see their- their nest which they do like a lot. A lot of times don't seem like cottonwoods. Uh, they make the pendant shaped, uh, sort of weaving nest which is always just really fun to see. [OVERLAPPING]

So they suspend their nests. They don't make them like a lot of birds and try to put them in there.

No, you think of like a typical, you know, bowl-shaped nests say like a robin. Now they do completely opposite and it's very beautiful and artistic to see them hanging. And you don't ever notice them and that, you know when they're actually building them or you may not, uh, because there's always all this green foliage everywhere. The leaves are kind of hiding it but in the winter time, you can definitely see them. It's like little purses hanging off of nests [LAUGHTER] off the traces.

That's- that's a really good way to describe them. [LAUGHTER]

Yeah, it's a- they're very- very interesting birds to have around, kind of, fun, colorful.

Um, Jerry unfortunately isn't with us today he- he did have some questions for you and he- he made me memorize them. A lot of a- lot of it has to do with raptors, and he wanted to talk about the eyesight of birds. Can you- can you key us in on how well they see and- and - and those types of thing?

Yeah, esp- so raptors being predatory large birds. Um, so owls, hawks, falcons, eagles, and then, um, also vultures, which are not predatory birds. But we- we include them in the list just because they have all the other- all the other characteristics which are sharp beaks, sharp eyesight, and sharp talons is, kinda, what's- which how you describe all the, sort of, the- the raptors.

So- so buzzards aren't hunters, they're more scavengers, right?

Yeah, they're scavengers, and for the most part, so are bald eagles. They- they would rather scavenge than or steal from other [LAUGHTER]- other birds than- than hunt although they do. Um, but- but typically, so the idea is- so typically a raptor is, you're actually using your talents and that you are grabbing your prey with your talents is, kinda, one of the major, sort of, indicators that you're looking at a- at a raptor, which is, kinda, really cool. And yes, so their vision is amazing. Uh, some of the- some of the raptors are- are daytime hunters, and so they have to have really great eyesight and see far distances. Whereas if you think about, like, owls, um, who are- some owls that are the night hunters, they have to have, you know, just giant, enormous eyes so they can gap- capture. And, kinda, one of the cool things about owls too is that they can't move their eyeballs in their eye sockets. Which is why they do the thing where they turn their heads to look at things is because they literally can't do a side-eye.

Really? their eyes, [OVERLAPPING] they can't move.

Yeah.

Interesting is that true for all birds or just owls?

Just owls, well, it depends on I think the bird, I'm not- actually, I don't know. I could- I don't know what the- who- who- who does and who doesn't of the bird world.

So it's probably a musculature weight type thing, right? If you don't have those muscles, that you weigh less so you can fly better.

Well, and also it's for owls anyway, it's a camouflage thing. You know, if you're trying to be a sneaky, stealthy predator, and you need to turn around to look at where you're hearing something and you make this big fast as you're moving, that's, that's no good. But if you're- all you have to do is just turn your head, then that's- that's even better.

[LAUGHTER] To be able to look 180 degrees around, right? [LAUGHTER] Completely behind you, yeah.

Completely, yeah.

That's awesome. Um, so if you're, well, I guess let's pick something, some type of a hawk and it's a daytime hunter, how far can they see?

It- it really depends on the bird, I know like, uh, red tail hawks. I know- I can't- I can't even- I couldn't- I couldn't throw out a number, but I do know that the- the red tail hawks are really, really- have the keen eyesight. You know, I mean, all of these birds are flying at a high rate of speed in the sky, and they're trying to see something that is very likely or doing it's very best to be camouflaged, trying to blend in with whatever surrounding it's going on. So you can imagine trying to do that, it's like trying to spot something. Yeah, going really fast an airplane, it's just not very- it's not very easy. So definitely eyesight is great.

Perfect, so, you know, there's a lot of bad things happening right now. Can you give us some idea of some of the things that are going on in the state or- or things that people should be aware of?

Well, right now we have the -okay, sorry, I just saw- I just looked this up.

Okay.

So that an eagle flying at an altitude of 1,000 feet can easily spot pray over an area of about three square miles. Eagles can see 3-4 times further than humans.

Wow, that's crazy, ah, 1,000 feet so about a fifth of a mile, um, that's amazing.

It is amazing, you know.

Well, I have a question [OVERLAPPING], okay, Mr. Gun.

Well, if you were talking about the birds and issues, the avian bird flu.

Yes.

It's affected a lot of domestic is it affecting the wild birds? And how contagious is it? Do you need to get rid of your bird bath? Did it- what kind of fee do you need to separate your feeders?

Did- did the bird flu start in wild population?

Um, I- I- I actually don't know the answer to that question.

Okay.

Um, but it's- originally, it was thought that we didn't have to worry too much about the wild bird population, that it was all going to be in, you know, these sort of farmed, you know.

High- high density.

High-density populations. Yeah, and starting over in- at least in the United States, starting over in the East Coast and, kinda, moving its way over. And this comes on

the heels of another, sort of, outbreak of conjunctivitis that some of the wild birds were already dealing with last year. Uh, you may have heard of- of a lot of different bird deaths that were happening because of that. And then- yes, so then this year, the hope was that it was not going to be, you know, affecting the wild bird population. And yet here we find that it is affecting, it's affecting, yeah, our raptors for sure, some of our water birds. And in Wyoming, we've definitely seen it so the- the question that we get a lot of- ah, asked a lot is, okay, so what do I do with my feeders, I'm I supposed to take them down? And initially, we were saying, "No, it's fine." But now that we're seeing it in wild bird populations, there are- there are questions of whether we should be doing that. Um, ultimately, the- your- your- you need to be cleaning your bird feeders and bird baths diligently all the time, every time. And of course, if you see birds that look like they're- they're sick, then you should take them- take down your feeders for awhile.

Jacqueline.

If when in doubt, just take your feeders down for a while, clean them, and then you can put them back out again, um of course.

Okay, when you go to clean them, clean them with what?

You can do a bleach solution, that- that is helpful. Um, I think, what is it? One part to four parts is what they're recommending.

One part bleach to four parts water.

Yeah, I'll- I will double-check on this, I want to make sure to get that right.

Okay.

Um, you can also do- so if there's parts that are immovable that you can do with- in your dishwasher, if they're dishwasher safe. Not a lot of them are, but some parts and pieces can be washed in the dishwasher and that's fine. If it's something that can be boiled, of course, you can do that. But generally speaking, getting a spray bottle with the solution in it, spraying it down inside and out, letting it air dry in the sun is really great because that will- that even- that helps- perhaps helps even more, but you can also do it inside.

Some research.

Hey Jacqueline, while you're doing that, uh, let's go ahead and take a break and listen to our sponsors-

Okay.

- and we'll be right back after this.

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All right everybody. This is Jeff Edwards at the KERM Learning Garden program. We're with Jacqueline Downey today at- she is from Audubon of the Rockies. We've been talking about birds. Before we get back to Jacqueline, I have a comment that I'd like to make about last week's show, where a gentleman called in and he was asking about, uh, is the invasive grass in waterways which is called Phragmites related to pampas grass. And yes, it is, it's in the same family but the pampas grass is considered to be, uh, non-invasive or less invasive than the Phragmites grasses that gets into waterways. So yes, they're related, don't behave the same so that's why it's a decorative versus what's there. So- needed to get that information out. Thanks for bearing with us. Uh, sorry Jacqueline, uh, but he stumped us last week I couldn't answer off the top of my head. Uh, if you have questions for Jacqueline, phone number is 532-2158, and we'd be happy to take phone calls from those of you who are listening to us today. And so, Jacqueline, when we left, you were looking up the ratio of bleach to water for cleaning out bird feeders and I'm assuming the ratio would be the same for bird baths as well. Is that correct?

Yeah.

Okay.

So I was- I was off. It was not 1-4 it is 1-9.

One to nine. Okay. All right.

Yeah. Then spray, uh, and let it sit for 10 minutes and then you can let it dry.

So that would be considered a 10 percent solution, right?

Yes,-

Yeah.

-10 percent solution.

Okay.

Yeah.

Yeah. So again, spray it, let it sit for 10 minutes, make sure it's completely dry. Was that correct?

Yeah-

Okay.

-that's correct what you said, yeah.

Okay. Perfect.

And like I also looked up some recommendations, uh, for what- who should take down their feeders and who should be concerned. [OVERLAPPING] And what I found here is that if you've got, uh, domestic poultry, if you have, uh, corvidae, those are things like jays, crows, ravens, magpies if they're often at your feeders. Um, if you live on an act of waterway or a wetland, and if you live in an area with significant transmission rates.

Okay. So all of those feeders and birds should be removed in those locations.

Yeah. Or you know, just not filled.

Oh, okay. Sure. Yeah.

You can leave them [inaudible 00:20:48] that's- this- this recommendation and, uh, that I'm seeing right now.

Okay. Perfect. Uh, before we left or- or well, during the break, I guess, Mr. Gun was asking some questions that he wanted to ask you and it kind of revolves around hummingbirds. I know that there's a lot of hummingbird folks that are- again, I prefer the orioles, lot of people prefer hummingbirds, everybody has their favorite, right? So, uh,-

Yeah.

- launch away with your questions.

With the, of course, with the avian bird flu and then the recommendation to take down your feeders of the seed, what about the hummingbirds? And, uh, what do you feed them? I know there's some stuff on the market that you can purchase but I've- also thinking you can make your own. What do you- what do you have for that?

Yeah. So I- I will say that, um, for me I find hummingbird feeders to be the most cumbersome thing without even thinking about, um, you know, any disease that may be there. Uh, it's just- they're just- it's just a little bit more finicky considering the fact that hummingbirds, well, so much more appreciate having, uh, you know,

native or- or similarly, um, suitable, uh, nectar type plants for the- for the hummingbirds. And is- no main- maintenance. It's great for the hummingbirds, great for bees, all these different types of things. Uh, so I always say start with the plants and then you can have your- your hummingbird feeders second. Or at least if you- at least work towards having, uh, this really great hummingbird, uh, friendly, uh, garden would be is- is always what I recommend. So having things like, uh, penstemon or, um, similar like tube flowers that- that are- are, uh, red. They really like, um, having the different, uh, salvia species. Uh, all of these will be just- just so good to have in your- in your garden. And you'll see everything else likes too because as you start planting things and, um, you know, you start creating a place for- there's going to be lots of insects which means that the birds that eat insects are going to be happy. It's just this whole thing that you can create in your backyard that's good if you start with that. Um, but they are not recommending right now as far as I know, uh, to take down your hummingbird feeders. Um, you can make it yourself, um, again, I like it this trigger thing. It's really easy. You can do it in the microwave, you can do it on your- on your, um, on your stove, um, and it's just sugar and water. And you don't want to, uh, add red coloring, you don't want to use honey, uh, you just simply want to use, uh,- okay, this is what I got. It's one part sugar and four parts water.

Okay [OVERLAPPING] [LAUGHTER] Your ratio was correct just the wrong item. [LAUGHTER] [OVERLAPPING]

Basically it's going to dissolve the sugar in the water and then you can cool it and then- and then use it. And a lot of people what they'll do is once it's dissolved and they have the sort of sugar to start mixture, they put it in their refrigerator and they keep it that way. And so it's easy in like a little, um, you know, [OVERLAPPING] and they could just fill them up that way every time cleaning your feeder in between, of course so-

So you mentioned that, uh, hummingbird feeders are the most finicky things. And- and part of the reason why I prefer the oriole feeder is because it's pretty simple. Um, because I'm a simple kind of guy. And, uh, hummingbird feeders every single one that I've ever had I broke. Uh, so, um, either cleaning it or filling it or something. So, uh, I prefer to plant flowers that the hummingbirds come to, don't worry about feeding them. I- they still show up. So uh, probably not the numbers if we had a feeder but they're still around. So, uh, it's- I still get to enjoy them. [LAUGHTER] [OVERLAPPING] Even though I'm not feeding them.

I certainly don't- if- if people would love to do the hummingbird feeders, do it. If you don't find it cumbersome, of course, don't go. Make your own sugar water, um, and- and they will love it, of course, you know. But if you're- if you're a lazy burger, like me, [LAUGHTER] just plant some pollinator plants and-

Let's- let's call that passive, not lazy. [LAUGHTER]

So uh, Jacqueline, there's always- there always seems to be some type of, uh, activity going on around the state. Um, we might have missed it, but there are

national bird counts and- and uh, uh, um, it- it's- I wanna say students science but there are scienti- science projects that are open to the public to monitor and count birds. Are those types of things still continuing?

Oh, yeah. Um, right now, there is, uh- it's the- it's what they call the big- there's big- the Big Bird Day where you can go out and you can participate in, um, birding. This weekend is one. Um, and uh, right now Audubon Rockies was just having a birdathon, you know, basically your- it's kinda like birding, uh, uh, how many birds do you see? And that's how- how much, you know, money you get per bird. It's kinda one of those things. Um, and then, um, I mean, all right now I just- I- I can't recommend enough, uh, if you're out and about taking your phone with you and downloading the Merlin Bird App. And- um, there's a new function where it is- um, you can tell with it- it's a- it'll li- literally listen to what you're listening to and tell you the birds that you're seeing. And you kinda have to be discretionary, obviously. I know mine told me that I was hearing, um, pheasant. I don't have pheasant here. I'm- [LAUGHTER] it wasn't a pheasant. But- but you know obviously you kinda- you kinda get it- you kinda get an idea and kinda- and it really just opens- it opens up, you know what your- because you can't see every bird. You know, sometimes they're just there and you're like, I hear this bird and it's annoying me. And you try to describe it to somebody. I did- I definitely people call me, There's this bird and it's making this sound. And sometimes I can get it but most of the time it's like I- I have no idea. [OVERLAPPING]

Only if they're really good mimics, right?

[inaudible 00:27:26] Yeah, yeah. [LAUGHTER] So I can't recommend it enough.

And- and I've downloaded the Merlin App and I use it and- I- I'm usually not quick enough to see them, uh, but this sound recording capability, uh, it's pretty slick.

It is.

Uh, we, uh took a trip south here recently and um, I used it quite a bit to identify some of the birds and- and uh, it- it- it'll record I think up to two minutes or a minute and a half and then it'll identify or give you all the possibility of the birds that are there. It- it's- it works really well.

Absolutely. And then you can- talking about the citizen or community science then, when you're out and you know what you're looking at and you know what you're hearing, then you can, um, put that into eBird, which is the citizen science tool where you can put your list of what you're hearing. Um, and for me here in the Northeast corner of the state. Um, there's- we get so many birds that- because, uh, the Black Hills are kinda like we get a little bit of the Eastern, we get a little bit of the Western, and we get some birds that we- that the whole areas around us don't get. Um, and so being able to say, Oh, actually we really do get, you know, Harris's sparrows. I see them all the time here, where even some of the guidebooks don't know that because no one's reported it, no one knows that they're here or no one knows that there's- this other birds nests here. Um, sandhill cranes occasionally will

nest here. No- you know, people don't know that. So you can actually contribute to that once you start to see and know what you're looking at. And- and apps like the Merlin App can help you do that. Oh, I like Audubon's app as well. Once I use Merlin step 1, then I go to Audubon's and find out more information about what I'm looking at and like double-check that that's what I'm hearing.

Okay. Yeah. There- there's a lot of interesting tools out there that help- will help you become a better birder. If you ha- are- if you're half interested [LAUGHTER] uh, it- it's good way to- to um, uh, learn more about them and what you're seeing and what's coming through and those types of things. My wife and I went on a fishing trip last year in the- the winter overs. And I think we were about 9, 000 feet and there were a pair of sandhill cranes up there. I believe that they were nesting. Uh, it's just amazing where you'll run across things and uh- and see them.

Yeah, absolutely. And I- I tend to like also, you know, plants. So I like to use iNaturalist. And so I'm- I'm using all these things all the time. I'm looking down at what I can identify on the ground but then I am listening over here, what's happening, there's a lot. There is uh, uh, a joke about naturalists and when they go out, you know, they may go three feet, you know, as opposed to, you know, and see all of these things and experience all these things but you know, when you take someone who's used to actually just hiking- for hiking. And you know they're zooming by. And uh, - those are two different people. You don't want to put those two types of different hikers together. [LAUGHTER]

Yeah, no kidding.

They'll be so bored waiting like what are you doing? [LAUGHTER]

I'm- I'm listen- [OVERLAPPING]

Over here.

I'm listening. Just- just wait. [LAUGHTER] Now, that's great. Uh, so we've talked about feeding, we've talked about the care. Um, we haven't talked- well, we talked a little bit about habitat for hummingbirds. Um, are there- are there plants that we can plant in our home landscape, uh, to attract birds specifically?

Absolutely. I know we talk a lot about flo- flowers and- and I think because that's where a lot of gardeners maybe start but we're really learning about how important it is to have trees and shrubbery, um, just for the pure insect, uh, you know, farming [LAUGHTER] than it does.

Sure.

Uh, when you think about um, birds who are nesting and to have um, um, a whole, you know, nest of- of chicks, um, fledglings, they have to, um, be able to feed them and- so when they're doing that, it's like this amazing number of- of um, grubs, worms that are soft bodied insects, the larval stages. It is so important they need that, they absolutely need that. So it's great for you to provide the food for the

adults, the seeds and you know, the jellies and the- the peanuts and all these type- different types of things to sew it, but when they're on nests it's the insects that they need and it's really hard for you to- to replicate that. You need- you can put up maybe some meal worms but ultimately, that's a natural process that has to happen. You have to have the insects who were- who were laying eggs and it's emerging at the time, especially the time that that bird needs those soft bodied, um, larval stages.

Yeah. I- I'm really hopeful that the moths that are showing up in everybody's yard and house at this point in time will encourage the birds to stay around. [LAUGHTER] Because there's a glob of them here. [LAUGHTER]

Absolutely.

Right now too, is when the swallow start to show up, and that's just because right now, er, insects are really starting to show up and be in any great numbers. So swallows are one of the last to arrive at one of the first to [BACKGROUND] leave because they can only have [BACKGROUND] [NOISE] the, um, insects. They're just aerial insect eaters. So they have to have- they have to have those flying insects.

You must have a birdie there that's needing some attention. [LAUGHTER]

Always when I'm on Zoom. [LAUGHTER]. Always, every time.

Mr. Gun, do you have any additional questions?

Well, yeah. Actually, her cat brought it up.

Okay.

All right. A lot of homeowners have cats, dogs, and they- the birds and of course in the cats are not the best of friends and sometimes the dog as well. How do you keep your cat from harassing the local birds short of, you know, keeping the cat in the house, which probably has the best answer.

That's really the- that's- I mean, that there's the answer for sure is to keep your cat in-doors uh- [OVERLAPPING]

A long heavy chain would work on a cat too. [LAUGHTER]

Yeah, you can try to harnesses, harness training. I've heard that that can go okay. But for the most part, uh, they just don't appreciate that whatsoever. You know, people talk about putting a bell on the- on, but the thing is that it maybe it'll work for a little while, but once the bird, not the bird, the cat kinda figures out that that makes a noise and it can be a little bit more, you know slinky and stealthy and make that. And also they're just fast so, um, and they can be opportunistic. So it doesn't matter if there's a bell on the, um, collar if you're talking about a fledgling who's trying to learn to, uh, fly and isn't gonna be able to get out of the way.

And wildlife will become habituated to certain sounds and, uh, other stimuli. So it

might work for a while, but there's other things going on.

Yeah. So and it's- and it's hard, you know, and especially in Wyoming and so many of us live rurally and we have our uphill buildings and we've got an a rodents and, you know, it's a job that we're giving those cats to- to kinda control that. But, um, it's, you know, you'd really have to weigh if- if you're gonna be someone who's- who's do- putting in all the effort to make your backyard be really, uh, you know, always is for wildlife and birds, then- then you- you shouldn't be having your cats outside. They're just gonna have to keep them indoors.

Sure.

Or do the opposite and, you know, don't- don't do those things so-

Excellent. Yeah. So Mr. Gun, more questions?

[LAUGHTER]. I've got a passel of grackles that have been hanging around the house last few days. Besides being obnoxious and a bit of a bully, uh, how many varieties of the grackle are right, the ones I see are kind of a- a green headed one, black, but when they turn their head to the- when the light catches it they're iridescent with a green. Do they accompany other colors besides that one.

And now they're would be all kinda that black color with that iridescence. Um, and, but we have, I think it's called the great, the- the boat tail or I can't remember which there's, so there's the- the common grackle than there's the one that has the giant tale. Um, [NOISE] I can't think of what that, the specific name for that one is. Those are the two that we- we typically get them in Wyoming. And I mean, first off, they are absolutely gorgeous birds when they are in the light and so I mean, I hear you and I know about them being these, you know, mob birds that come in, they completely terrorize your feeders. When that happens, the- the simplest solution is to take down your feeder until they move along. Um, but, ah, they're really smart. They're the kind [BACKGROUND] that, you know is- is one of the more and more intelligent birds. So you know, got to kind of give them credit for that. But, um, yeah, they could be really-

Are they truly a passel of grackles since it's a- since a group of crows is a murder. Do we know what a group of grackles are.

An attempted murder.

[LAUGHTER]. I almost got a little tongue tied to [OVERLAPPING].

Maybe that one crow [LAUGHTER]. Just one crows is an attempted murder?

Yes.

Yeah.

Maybe a group of three [LAUGHTER]

No. Okay. I just looked it up they are referred to a plague, [OVERLAPPING] a plague of grackles.

Plague of grackles. Now, I stop feeding the feeder wants the grackles showed up after they decimated and I left it. I said, okay, I'm not gonna feed them. And yeah, they have left the area. But I'm afraid if I- the minute I'm gonna put the food back out, which I'm not going to do now unless I clean my feeders first, er, they're gonna come back. So how do I keep them away as best I can, noise makers, cat, something to help keep them away.

No, so as far as your feeders, if your- if your feeders go, you know, one of the ways to keep those larger birds out is to have one of that like, sort of like they have like the netting, not chicken wire but even sort of that kind of- that kind of wire that you can put around the- the bird feeders so that the little guys can still get in. But uh, you know, the grackles can't. I mean, there's still gonna do all the things that are gonna hang on it and they're gonna try and shake it because they- they are so smart. So it's almost like maybe you can create some sort of maize for them and- and entertain yourself see how smart and, you know, if they can outwit you, how fast it takes them to do that? [LAUGHTER]

Because they are a plague. [LAUGHTER].

The next question is into the- the wildlife birds, like the turkeys, it is turkey season and people are getting their turkey's right now.

Yes.

They're out there shooting them, taking care of business. What do you look for? How do you tell if the bird is good to go with the avian bird flu? If the bird has got it, for- for example, a turkey gets it. How do you tell? And is it harmful to humans?

Well, with the avian bird flu, they're just gonna die. They'll be dead. Because it's, I think it's- it is like 100 percent mortality rate. So birds who gets that particular flu is gonna die. So if it's alive then likely it does [OVERLAPPING] not have it.

It's healthy. [LAUGHTER]

[LAUGHTER]. But, um, as far as some of the other diseases, one of the big tell-tale is they get the really gunky eyes and they're- they're like if they've got nares it will be kinda gunky around there as well. Um, [NOISE] so I mean you can- you can visually see that the bird will be sick. Um, they act weird, um, they don't act like- the- if they're- if they're acting like the rest of the birds that they're around and they're probably fine. So yeah.

So Jacqueline, back to feeders. If I am feeding orioles in one place, should I try to- try different types of feeders in other locations so that the birds aren't competing or being harassed by different more aggressive plague of grackles? [LAUGHTER]. Is that, I mean, is that a strategy where you can have multiple feeders in different locations in your yard to- to-

Yeah. I mean, you can replicate sort of, um, where the bird is gonna- like what's its habitat? So, you know, putting sewage feeders near conifer trees. Um, you know, putting your- your- your other types of seeds, you know, where- where what's make sense that that bird is gonna be hanging out anyway. Um, you- you know, you can definitely lower them to your house by just having it on a clothesline type thing and, you know, they'll just see it and I'll come to that. But you can also, you know, strategically place them, um, where that kind of bird likes to hang out.

So you might not only be ah, blurring them to feed them, but you might also be creating if- if it's habitat that they like, they might nest there as well and just end up staying there.

Yeah.

Okay. All right. Very good. So if you do have someone as an individual who's interested in a citizen science project, how do they get involved in those?

Well, um, [NOISE], excuse me. There's a number of, uh, organizations in the state. I mean, almost every, um, [NOISE] organization, um, agency in the state has some sort of project and- and what it is, it really just sort of helps like, you know, if you're the Game and Fish Department and you need to check for the aquatic invasive species. Yeah, they do have folks that they pay seasonally, but it is great for them to- to just sort of extend their outreach and being able to catch these types of invasive species if they have more people, and so there are people who can voluntarily get trained. The Game and Fish will train them, and then they will, um, you know, they'll be able to help with that project. Um, you know, we think about the storm spotters, but, you know, um, if that's which you're really into, then the National Weather Service appreciates that you take this course and then- then you can help, especially living in rural Wyoming. Um, you know, here's what's happening in, you know, Torrington right now, and here's this thing that's coming and, you know, they can have eyes everywhere, you know, they're all- their syst- systems only are so accurate. So that's really helpful for those things. Um, if you're in Laramie, there are so many projects that are going on there um, with- with different organizations. Um, you know, the Biodiversity Institute is one of our big partners and they have loose days and they have, you know, the salamander crossing. [LAUGHTER]. When it rains to help them get across. Um, there's the catchment for the toads and frogs in the state. So really kind of cool projects that are there, if you're there. I know the Nature Conservancy has a lot of like wildflower pollinator type programs that you can get involved with. [NOISE] Of course, Audubon, we've got our bird banding stations. We have a bunch of different sort of projects throughout the year that we always use help with.

So if-

You really, all right go ahead.

-so if you would use your search on the Internet, right? For citizen science projects in Wyoming?

[NOISE] You could and, um, you can also just go to Audubon Rockies and we have a community science page there that kinda has some ideas-

Okay.

-for that. Um, if you really love this type of work, we have a program in Wyoming with the Game and Fish, with state parks, with Biodiversity Institute and Audubon, um, the Wyoming Naturalist program. So you can actually go through the project we're just finishing up this weekend is what we have our- our weekend event. You get all this training from professionals in the state on natural resources things like Botany and Geology and birds and amphibians and ecology, all these different things, and then it's kind of the Master Naturalist program or a- a Master Gardener Program.

Okay.

And then your service projects throughout the year and you are- with a lot, you know, a lot of like-minded folks who like to do these projects and then you hear about some really neat projects that other people may not know about and the general public may not be able to help with, you know, like the Wyoming toad project or the, um, natural ca- was it natural trap cave that I can't think of what that's called [LAUGHTER].

That's okay.

Projects that the general public doesn't get a chance to do because they don't have specific training and this project program helps you to get that training.

Okay, perfect. Very good.

Yeah.

I have a question about goldfinches. What do they like to eat?

Seeds.

Well, [LAUGHTER] let's get a little more specific.

They love, um, oh my gosh, I just got eaten out of house and home with the goldfinches just recently. They love the sunflower, the- the, uh, the black oil sunflower seeds, love those, um, and they also love the- the Niger seed the thistle seed, which I guess is not really a thistle, I don't know, I don't know what's the deal there, but they're called Niger thistle seed- Niger thistle seed. Both of those they would love- they love. I absolutely discouraged getting the bird seed mixes. It's nothing but trouble and they [LAUGHTER] you know, create mess. The birds only eat what they like, which is the thistle and the black oil sunflower seeds in Wyoming. I mean, there's other places where the birds really like millet. But for the most part- most of our birds don't like millet and so they're just going to throw it out, and there's other seeds and they're just gonna- it's gonna be on the ground and that's

where you get issues with bears or maybe deer, squirrels or rats or whatever they don't. That's how that kind of creates a problem there.

Just like picky little kids, I'm not eating broccoli. I'm gonna eat what I like and throw the other stuff away.

So on the [OVERLAPPING] on the sunflower seeds, shelled or unshelled?

That's- that's really your choice. Do you wanna mess underneath your feeder or- or not? It's definitely more expensive, um, er, what is the terminology for a seed who makes it toxic for other seeds to grow? What's the [OVERLAPPING].

Little pathy?

Yes. Thank you and so some flowers or that and so sometimes that can discourage other things from growing. If you get that, growing in your- in your garden, so a lot of people don't like it for that reason and they just don't want to mess. There's another one. So it's kinda just giving them- it's just like you- here's one thing, you know, think about when you have pistachios and you'd have this shell pistachios, you're going to eat a ton more because you don't have to take this time [LAUGHTER] to undo it and do all that kinda stuff. So it's like how fast do you want them to go through your seed that is another question to ask.

Less work, more eating.

Yeah, That's right. [LAUGHTER]

Very good. [LAUGHTER] Hey, Well, Jacqueline or any final thoughts that you have for the day. I know we're getting close to wrapping up our program.

Er, I guess clean your feeders right now, it's really important to do that. Plant some wildlife and bird friendly plants in your backyard, um, and you'll definitely reap the benefits you around, and do a solid for the birds. Download the Merlin and the Audubon apps, participate in community science projects, even just by yourself using apps like iNaturalist and ebird, and, um, it'll just really make your summer fun. Share with kids, um, getting them out there to see that it's- it's fun when you can take someone out there and they can discover themselves what it is that they're looking at or hearing or seeing. Um, and I think all of us need to get outside more especially-

And if you want to impress people, if you have the Merlin app and you're recording the sound of birds, you could say, hey, this thing is a Cactus Wren. Like Okay. [LAUGHTER]. Very good. Okay. Well, we are- I don't know, do we have time to take that call?

Its for me?

Oh, it's okay. We don't have a call.

We have a call for sure.

We do have it. [OVERLAPPING].

We do have a call.

Okay. All right,.

Here we go.

That's the wire. Let's have let's have- well, good- good morning. Welcome to the show. Let's have your question.

Are there are really many hummingbirds around here in Torrington area and around the country? I haven't seen one for 15 years.

Yes. So we have hummingbirds at our place every year. I'm sure Mr. Gun has hummingbirds at his place. They are here. They need specific habitat and I'm probably answering for Jacqueline, but they will show up.

You have a lot of trees around your place and I only have a few. Does that make a difference?

Jacqueline?

Well, it's not so much the trees, but it's- it's the flowers that they're really interested in. We do have about four different types of hummingbirds, but they're only here for a short period of time, some of them. You know probably the rufous, the calliope, um, oh now I'm- I'm losing all the different types.

Blank. [LAUGHTER].

But we assuming that you'd probably see they're in Torrington, um, and I would recommend you go to the Audubon Rockies webpage. We have a whole, um, site or a whole section just on hummingbirds. What can you plant? What will attract them? Um, when I suggest starting with that, you can put out a hummingbird feeder. But I did that before and I never saw a hummingbird because we don't have- I don't have a mismatch right here in my house either. But I planted a few pollinator plants in a container, a small container that's, you know, I don't know, maybe two feet wide and I am not joking. I put it- I planted everything in one day and the next day, I'm having coffee and this hummingbird buzzes by me and scares me, scares the hummingbird because I jump, of course. So I think if you plant it, they will come, [BACKGROUND] um, and we definitely do. So go to the Audubon Rockies website, look up the hummingbird page, and- and there's lots of resources there.

Very good. All right, thank you for your call, and we've really got to wrap up. Thank you, Jacqueline for being with us today. Uh, we appreciate you being here. Always glad to, uh, talk to you about birds and- and other things so good to see you and thanks for being with us.

Yes, thanks. All right.

Our guest next week is Jane Dorne. She'll be joining us and talking about, um, shrubs and those types of things, er, well I think she will be, um, we'll find out what she's talking about. Um, but Jerry should be back, and also a final reminder, it is tick season, so be watching for ticks out there. Check your pets, check yourselves. With that, thank you all for joining us this week, er, and we'll be back next Friday. Thank you.

You've been listening to Lawn and Garden with the University of Wyoming Extension specialist, Jeff Edwards [MUSIC] and co-host Jerry Erschabeck, presented by KGOS and KERM Radio in Torrington and by the University of Wyoming Extension where are growing people, knowledge and communities by extending the land-grant mission across the great state of Wyoming. Good day and happy garden.