

**BOB'S
BACKYARD
BIRDS**

WELCOME!



SCARLET TANAGER

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED ONLINE

**How to attract birds?
Planting/landscaping
suggestions?**

Wow, your yard is so MESSY

*with the dead tree,
the brush pile,
the plants that
have gone to seed...*

*Thanks,
it's called habitat.*



QUESTIONS SUBMITTED ONLINE

SCREENSHOT FROM BIRDS CANADA WEBSITE

**How to attract birds?
Planting/landscaping
suggestions?**

- Handout will include links to great websites by Birds Canada and Audubon
- Leave the leaves!

HOW TO USE THIS SITE TO BE A BIRD-FRIENDLY GARDENER



STEP 1

Look at our tips for how to plan your garden



STEP 2

Find your Bird Garden Zone



STEP 3

Use our Plant Selector search tool to develop a customized list of plants that are well suited to your

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED ONLINE

How to attract birds to your feeders?

- Provide cover with nearby shrubs or trees
- Water, food variety
- Timing of putting them out to capture “flyovers”
- Orioles/Rose-breasted Grosbeaks – May 3
- Hummingbirds – May 7



QUESTIONS SUBMITTED ONLINE

Several asked about squirrel proofing

- Baffle
- Ten feet from trees
- Squirrel du Soleil

Favourite feeders

- In this photo – suet, platform, seed cylinder, nyjer tube



Platform/tray
feeder with
Evening Grosbeaks



Chipping Sparrow
on landing arm



Seed cylinder with
Red-breasted
Nuthatch



Clingers-only
feeder with Pine
Siskin



Nyjer feeder with
molting American
Goldfinch



Peanut tray/roof
with Carolina
Wren



Suet feeder with
Red-bellied
Woodpecker



Upside down suet
feeder with a
female Red-bellied
Woodpecker



Speciality feeder
for orioles:
Baltimore Orioles
love grape jelly and
oranges



Speciality feeders: Ruby-throated hummingbirds

- Don't buy coloured nectar
- Don't buy too large a feeder
- Make your own, four parts water to one part sugar



QUESTIONS SUBMITTED ONLINE

Should I offer water in the winter?

- Yes! Birds need to drink and bathe even in the coldest weather
- I have a heater that keeps mine more or less ice-free

European Starlings having a drink a couple of weeks ago



QUESTIONS SUBMITTED ONLINE

Best protocol for keeping bird baths and feeders clean? Am I selfish to have feeders given risk of avian flu?

- Regularly scrub feeders and bird bath with soap and water; if moldy use a 10% bleach solution. Hummingbird feeders in particular need cleaning every 2 or 3 days or even daily if really hot and humid
- Avian flu primarily affects communal birds living in close proximity to each other – domestic poultry, waterfowl. Has not had a big impact on songbirds as far as I know
- Watch for eye disease (conjunctivitis) in house finch. It is noticeable if they have it. Stop feeding for awhile so birds disperse and not congregate, and clean feeders with bleach solution

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED ONLINE

I have a full station of feeders. This winter I have very few birds. Normally, I fill my feeders daily. Do you have an idea why this is happening?

- I experienced the same. I think it was because of the very mild start to winter, there was no snow cover to prevent birds from foraging for natural food. Even regular feeder birds don't obtain more than 50% of their diet from feeders

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED ONLINE

What causes Blue Jays to "swarm" one area? A few years ago we had over 50 Blue Jays on our lawn at one time

- Though the questioner didn't mention what time of year this was, I suspect it was during migration. Most songbirds migrate at night, but Blue Jays do so during the day in very large flocks
- One fall when I was living in Oakville I had about 25 swirling in constant motion around my yard for a few hours

Can Canada Geese be hunted in Canada?

- Yes

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED ONLINE

Concern about how expensive seed has become

- Inflation has greatly impacted the price of everything, including seed. The war in Ukraine certainly impacted the supply chain
- When buying seed, you are paying by the pound. Wild Birds has “No mess” seed (already shelled), such that 100% is consumed. It is more expensive, but is it really, when you see the mounds of sunflower shells under your feeders? A big mess, and you paid for those uneaten shells!
- Caution about buying seed in bulk. Must be stored in airtight containers or seed, especially if shelled, as it could either become desiccated or moldy
- You might get moths in your seed. Don't hurt the birds, just extra protein, but you don't want them in your house!

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED ONLINE

There were several questions about droppings attracting rats and squirrels

- When you offer mixed seed, you essentially have two feeders going at the same time. Some birds, like Blue Jays, love to sort through seed for their favourites and can make a big mess down below
- You want to minimize this “search activity” and reduce flicking and tossing:
 - Use large tray feeder, less likely to have spillage over sides
 - Use a specific feeder for each type of seed you offer; birds not interested in that seed won't go to it
 - Use “No-mess” chipped sunflower seeds
 - Put catch trays under your feeders
- Clean under your feeders frequently
- Get some Wild Turkeys!



QUESTIONS SUBMITTED ONLINE

If you have a rat problem:

- Be very careful of unintended consequences if you are considering using bait boxes to poison them:
 - Chipmunks or squirrels getting into them
 - Raptors eating a poisoned critter
- Strongly suggest you go in to Wild Birds Unlimited in Burlington to seek advice

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED ONLINE

What to do with pigeons (and doves) at your feeders:

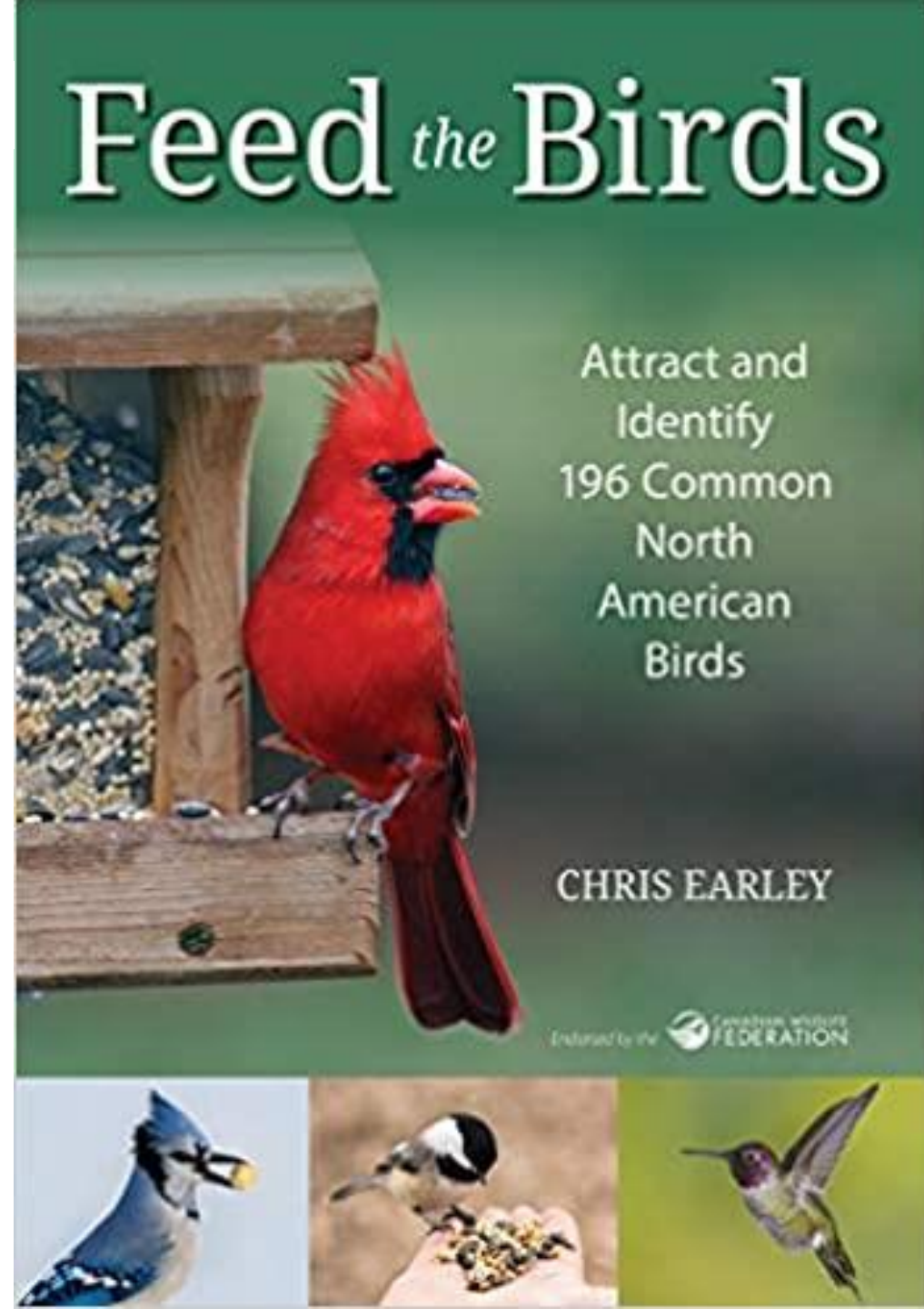
- Pigeon guards
- Cages around feeders that smaller birds can fly through



QUESTIONS SUBMITTED ONLINE

Favourite bird ID book and or tips for ID when you only have a brief sighting?

- Chris Earley works at the University of Guelph's Arboretum - he wrote a blurb for my book

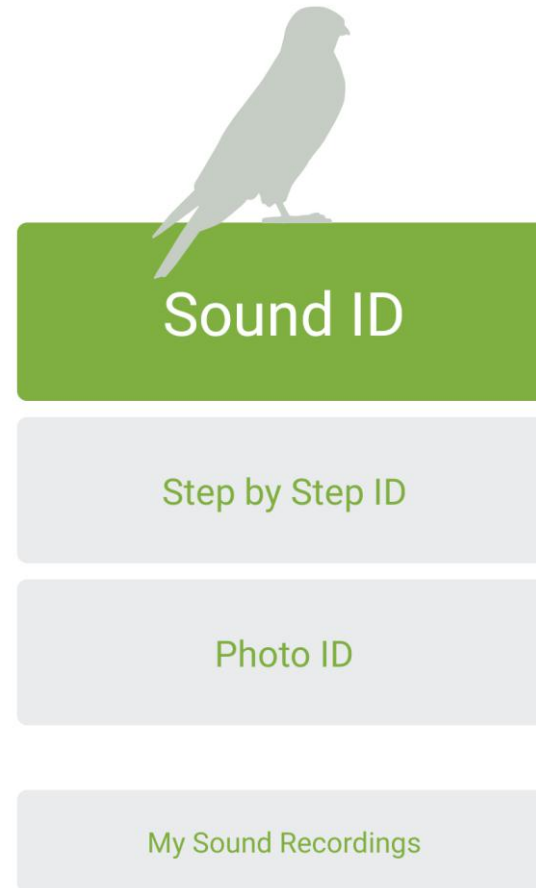


QUESTIONS SUBMITTED ONLINE

Favourite bird ID book and or tips for ID when you only have a brief sighting?

- Cornell Lab of Ornithology's free Merlin app – 3 different ways to ID a bird
- iBird Pro is a full field guide on your phone

TheCornellLab
Merlin[®]



Identify

Explore

Life List

Settings

4:59

83%

iBird
GUIDE TO BIRDS **PRO**

Mitch Waite Group's
Field Guide to Birds of North America
for the Android Smartphone & Tablet

WINDOW COLLISIONS

Though no one asked about this, it is important to address:

- Bird/building collisions, primarily with glass, kill about one billion birds in North America annually
- Vast majority occur in daylight and under 3 storeys or so
- Window treatments that make birds realize the window is an obstacle are very important. I recommend Feather Friendly, with treatment patterns maximum of 2 inches by 2 inches
- If you don't have window treatments, best to have your feeders closer to the house, to give less space for birds to get up to high speed if startled by a raptor

WINDOW COLLISIONS

Far more collisions occur than you might be aware of:

- You might not be home to hear it
- It has been shown that even with a rigorous program of inspecting buildings for collision victims, only about 30% are found. Why?
 - Wounded birds often fly away only to perish later
 - Carcasses often get scavenged quickly

ROAMING AND FERAL CATS

- Pet and feral cats in North America kill more birds every year than buildings, power lines, and wind turbines combined - about 2.4 billion birds in the USA every year, and another 196 million in Canada
- This time of year lots of ground-feeding sparrows such as juncos are highly vulnerable
- Both Hamilton and Burlington have by-laws that cats may not roam off your property, but don't seem to be enforced
- Indoor cats average lifespan is 14 years, outdoors 2 to 5 years
- US study showed that 20% of urban coyote's diets consist of cat



BIRDING IS HEALING

- Upon retirement, I quickly discovered the therapeutic benefits of birding as a wonderful coping mechanism for dealing with my chronic pain
- I wrote a book about my journey from Lyme patient to avid birder titled *“Out of the Lyme Light and into the Sunlight: Birding as Therapy for the Chronically Ill”*
 - Locally my book is available at Wild Birds Unlimited, A Different Drummer Books, and King W. Books (pictured)
 - 8 Urban Nature stores across the GTA
 - Online from Hancock, Amazon, or Indigo
 - Algonquin Park Visitor’s Centre and Point Pelee gift shops



APARTMENT BIRDING

- There are feeders that attach to windows
- Since you don't have to worry about squirrels, if you have a balcony you could put a tray feeder on a table
- Provide some greenery with potted plants



APARTMENT BIRDING

- Some apartment buildings may not allow putting out seed
- Try a hummingbird feeder





Straight upper bill

PURPLE FINCH

Distinctive facial pattern

Reddish wings and back

Little to no brown streaking



HOUSE FINCH

Curved upper bill

Plain facial pattern

Grayish-brown wings and back

Dense brown streaks

DOWNY VS HAIRY WOODPECKER

- Females, Downy on left
- Differences:
 - Size
 - Bill
 - Tail spots



COOPER'S VS SHARP-SHINNED HAWK

CAPPED

BIG HEAD RELATIVE TO BODY

**14-20" LONG,
SIZE OF A
CROW**

**THICKER,
SHORTER LEGS**

**TIP OF TAIL IS
ROUNDED**

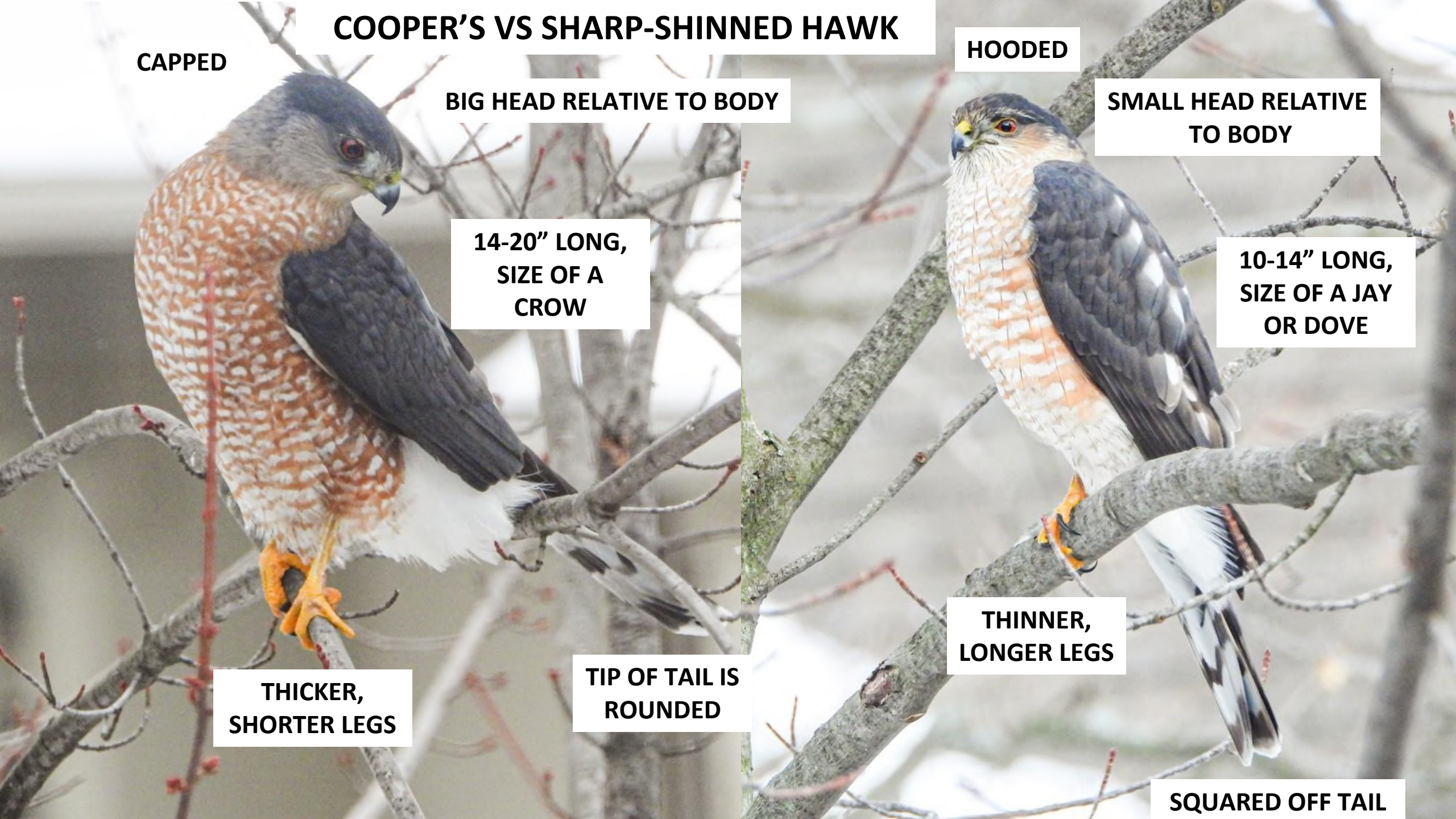
HOODED

**SMALL HEAD RELATIVE
TO BODY**

**10-14" LONG,
SIZE OF A JAY
OR DOVE**

**THINNER,
LONGER LEGS**

SQUARED OFF TAIL



ONE LAST THING ABOUT BIRDS

- Birding is a hobby that makes you feel good to be alive, in the moment, and sharing your time and planet with these amazing creatures
- It gets your mind off your worries
- Birding is the gateway drug to environmental awareness
- It teaches us to value and care about birds
- When you care about birds, you care about their habitats, the environment, and climate change



SCARLET TANAGER

CARING ABOUT BIRDS - BIRD ADVOCACY

- Bird Friendly City Hamilton Burlington – a Nature Canada initiative
- I was a member, charged with public outreach and education
- A process was run to name a city bird for each – Trumpeter Swan and Peregrine Falcon
- Nature Canada certified both cities as bird friendly but the work continues and more remains to be done
- I am now co-chair of a new, independent bird advocacy group focused solely on Hamilton, called Birdsong Hamilton. We work with local council to promote bird friendly measures
- Dealing with issues such as lights out during migration, window treatments, bird friendly building standards, roaming cats
- Some of these issues will be touched on briefly in the answers to submitted questions which follows shortly

TOP 6 WAYS YOU CAN HELP BIRDS



Learn
About Birds



Buy
Bird-Friendly



Support
Conservation



Keep Cats
Indoors



Welcome
Birds Home



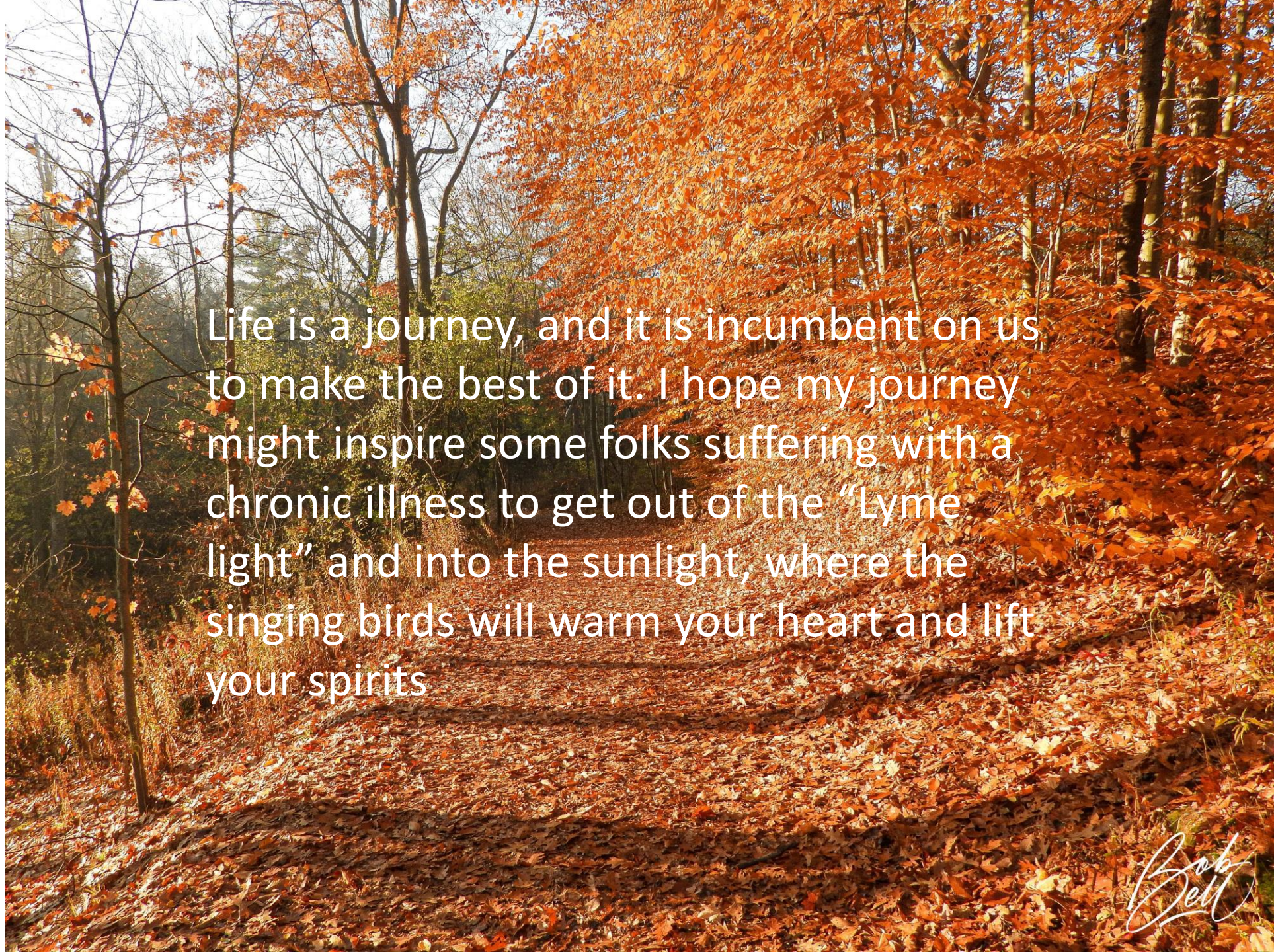
Prevent
Collisions

Birding helps to cope with chronic pain and illness

Here's to good birding, and to good health!

These are the final sentences in my book

Thank you!



Life is a journey, and it is incumbent on us to make the best of it. I hope my journey might inspire some folks suffering with a chronic illness to get out of the “Lyme light” and into the sunlight, where the singing birds will warm your heart and lift your spirits

Bob Bell