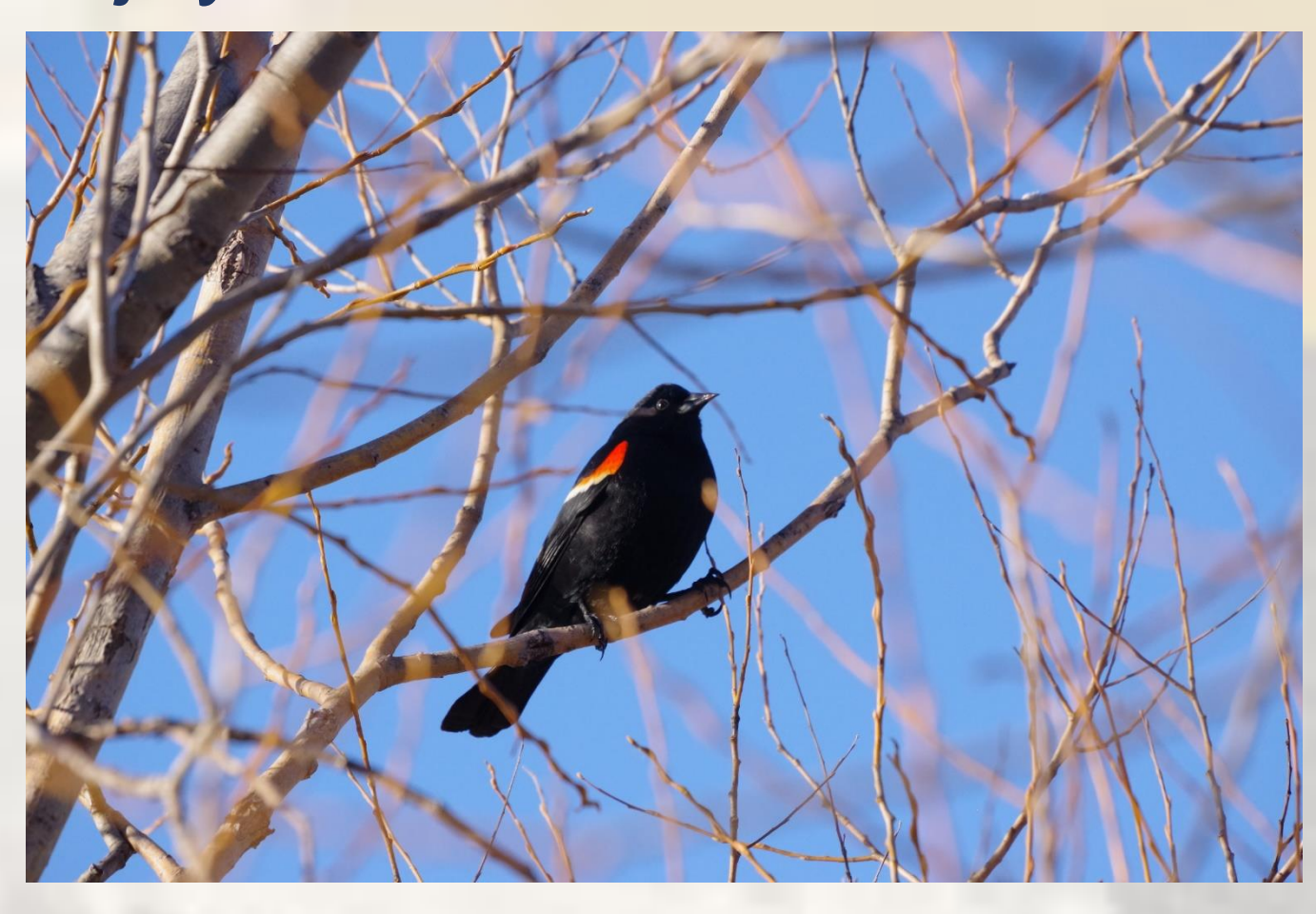


# Keeping Songbirds Safe

## What you need to know about backyard bird health!

### THE ISSUES

Songbird watching and feeding is a beloved activity cherished by Wyomingites year round. Spring is a particularly popular time for backyard birders to fill their feeders and enjoy these colorful creatures.



Providing a little bird seed to our feathered friends seems like harmless activity, but bird baths and bird feeders can lead to some unintended consequences. It's important to be aware of these issues and to know the proper steps to take to minimize the chance of disease spread.

Birds congregating at feeders have more contact with each other and therefore, are more likely to spread diseases to each other through saliva, feces, and other close interactions.

### HEALTH RISKS

Bacteria, fungi, parasites, and viruses can be spread between birds at bird feeders and bird baths. A few examples of such diseases are Salmonellosis, Aspergillosis, and Trichomoniasis.

Recent outbreaks of *salmonella* infections in songbirds associated with bird feeders have been reported in the western United States in the spring of 2021.


Birds infected with these diseases may show any of the following signs: thin, lethargic, eye discharge, ruffled feathers, diarrhea, and death.

 Can I get sick from handling dead or diseased birds and their feeders?

**Yes!** Some diseases carried by birds can be spread to humans and other animals (such as your cat and dog). Always wear gloves when handling birds and their feeders and baths, and be sure to wash your hands and arms afterwards! Also, remove dead birds from your property to discourage pets from consuming their carcasses.

### WHAT YOU CAN DO

There are many ways to continue to enjoy songbirds in a safe and responsible way!

- ❖ Clean bird feeders and bird baths once a week.  Remove all seed and wash any feces or dirt off surfaces with warm, soapy water. Then, apply a **bleach solution** (9 parts water, 1 part bleach) to all surfaces and let sit for 15 minutes before rinsing with clean water. Once dry, refill with fresh seed and water.
- ❖ If you notice sick or dying birds around your feeders and baths, remove the items, clean them as described above, and do not replace them for **four weeks** to discourage birds from congregating in a potentially contaminated area!
- ❖ Consider using hanging feeders instead of platform feeders. Platform feeders collect more feces and water, which can cause seed to become moldy.
- ❖ Plant native trees, flowers, shrubs, grasses, and vines that attract birds! For some good ideas, visit [https://wgfd.wyo.gov/WGFD/media/content/PDF/Wildlife/Nongame/Birds/WGFD\\_WYWILDSCAPE.pdf](https://wgfd.wyo.gov/WGFD/media/content/PDF/Wildlife/Nongame/Birds/WGFD_WYWILDSCAPE.pdf)



### QUESTIONS?

- Find a sick or dead bird near your feeder?
- ❖ Take note of the date and type of bird (if known)
  - ❖ Keep an eye out for any more sick or dead birds
- Find **3 or more** dead birds?
- ❖ Call your regional WGFD office: [wgfd.wyo.gov/about-us/offices-and-facilities](http://wgfd.wyo.gov/about-us/offices-and-facilities)
- If you collect any dead birds for testing (as directed by the WGFD Wildlife Health Laboratory 307-745-5865):
- ❖ Wear disposable gloves to pick up any dead animal and double bag the body
  - ❖ Keep dead animals cold or frozen until transported to a WGFD office

Thank you for caring about Wyoming's wildlife!