“The Magic of Spring”
Spring has always been my favorite time of the year. Anticipating the return of our migrating songbirds has only made it more special! Note: Many of the birds mentioned below may be seen on our spring bird walks, see back page for more information.

Probably the most often mentioned bird of spring – **The Ruby-throated Hummingbird**. These tiny birds can be attracted with special “sugar-water” feeders. The most important thing is to keep the nectar fresh, which means changing it approximately twice per week. These birds aren’t afraid to come close to your house so place the feeders where they can easily be seen from either inside your house, on your deck or in a garden.

**Baltimore Orioles** it doesn't get more spectacular than a visit from a bright orange & black bird to your yard! Try putting out orange halves the first week in May. They also love grape jelly.

**Gray Catbird** – not as flashy as the oriole, but a more common backyard visitor who also enjoys oranges and grape jelly.

**Rose-breasted Grosbeak** males are one of the most striking birds to see at your feeder. They look like a "waiter with a red scarf " as one of our custom- ers put it. Females are brown with white streaks but also have the heavy, whitish bill like the male. Uses similar feeder & seed as Cardinals.

**House Wrens** can be attracted with a bird house, either hanging or post mounted. Our smallest bird to nest in a bird house, they only need a 1” entrance hole but will use almost any house. Nesting begins as soon as they return, generally in early May. A wonderful addition to any yard, quite com- mon in almost any area of the state.

**Indigo Buntings** occasionally visit tube feeders in early May that have white millet in them or at a Nyjer (thistle) seed feeder. The male is totally blue and similar in size to a House Finch, the female is mostly brown.

**Warblers** usually don’t visit feeders but many nest here or migrate through our state. These small, colorful birds primarily eat insects. We see a variety of them on our bird walks but they rarely stay still for very long.

Make sure to get your Hummingbird & Oriole feeders up by the last week in April!
Black Birds of the Backyard

Starlings & Common Grackles love lawns, agricultural areas, farms, urban areas and bird feeders. If you live in the woods you may be one of the few reading this who don't have them visiting your feeders on a regular basis. Cowbirds, Blackbirds & Grackles are fairly closely related but Starlings are actually in a different family, but for this article I will refer to them all as “blackbirds”, although I guess it should really be “black birds”.

Starlings and grackles are a bit like potato chips, you can't have just one. Although a few of our customers say they love all birds that come to their feeders, the majority are a little more selective. During migration you may see hundreds of blackbirds on your lawn or at your feeders (and they may be mixed with other species such as Red-winged Blackbirds and Brown Cowbirds). Here are a few things you can do to lessen their numbers but remember, it is almost impossible to attract only the birds you want.

How to keep them from monopolizing your bird feeders?

The only fool-proof way is with a “Caged Feeder” where the only birds who can physically get in are small such as chickadees, tufted titmice, nuthatches, wrens and finches. This eliminates larger birds so we recommend using safflower in another feeder that allows larger birds such as cardinals to feed. Starlings & grackles are not too fond of safflower although they may eat some, especially if they are very hungry. I use the Aspects “Big Tube” feeders with safflower almost year round. The cardinals love it (it was designed for them), as do Rose-breasted Grosbeaks who are here from late April to October. Other birds who readily eat safflower are chickadees, titmice, House Finch and Mourning Dove.

Pure Suet (the kind that has no nuts or seeds) is also not well-liked by blackbirds. However, it gets soft in hot weather (I use it in the shade and it has done okay even in the summer). I have found the caged suet feeder to work fairly well too, although it does not completely keep them from getting to the suet, it does make it more difficult.

"So remember to look up at the stars and not down at your feet. Try to make sense of what you see and wonder about what makes the universe exist. Be curious, and however difficult life may seem, there is always something you can do and succeed at. It matters that you don't just give up. While there is life, there is hope." -Stephen Hawking
Spring Optics Sale
Saturday May 5th to Sunday May 13th
Best prices of the year on all binoculars & spotting scopes!

Top of the line Swarovski binoculars & spotting scopes are the best of the best!

From top to bottom Vortex Optics offers a great line-up of binoculars & spotting scopes to fit any budget!

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Come in to try out any of the many binoculars and spotting scopes we stock!

New Products
"Birding In Connecticut"
by Frank Gallo
A guide to where, when, & how to find birds here in CT!
Join us on Saturday May 12th for a bird walk led by Frank to East Rock Park, and a book signing at the store afterward.
Coffee & snacks provided.
Price: $28.95 / Arriving May 1st!
To pre-order a copy of the book head to: www.fatrobin.com/BirdingInCT.html

Dean Crouser is an artist from Oregon with a love for wildlife & the outdoors. Mugs, plates & other items!

Custom Puzzles are back in stock!
These were such a big hit over the holidays that we re-ordered the Sleeping Giant & New Haven street scene versions. Along with adding a new puzzle, "Sunflower Heaven" by Ryan Zipp!
$21.95 ea / 3 or more $19.95 ea

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Spring Bird Walks - Sat Mornings (April 28th - June 2nd)
Meet at the store between 7:25 - 7:40am, we leave promptly at 7:45am.
The walks are at Brooksvale Park in Hamden or East Rock Park on the Hamden/New Haven line. The first walk will be at Brooksvale Park, join us for coffee & snacks after.
Bird walks are $2 per person, binocular rentals are available for $4. Rain cancels.

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Lowest prices of the year on all binoculars, spotting scopes & tripods!

Book Signing - Saturday May 12th
"Birding In Connecticut" by Frank Gallo
We’re lucky to have Frank leading our walk that morning at East Rock Park and then coming back to the store to sign copies of his new book!

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