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BIRDERS OF ST. JAMES

Late Winter Birding in St. James



Birding Journey - Feb. 2026

My birding journey expectations for the month of February are set high. I'm prepared for an Eastern Bluebird nesting to take place in my

backyard. Last year, I purchased a sturdy Bluebird house from the St James Conservancy in May. This was a little late in the season, but we did get the house up on a post. Immediately, several birds were checking it out...just not Bluebirds. And there was a big fight!

We are new to St James, and I guess I was upsetting the long-established eco-god-knows-what system operating on Wild Azalea Way. I thought I'd never get a nesting since a Mockingbird took up residence on top of the house and it would sit for long periods of time chasing all the other birds. Then one morning, there was some action with Bluebirds in and out of the box. But it was hot! I thought they were going to cook up in the box. This was late in the season, and I didn't want to disturb them, so I never looked inside.

Later in the summer, I opened the box. There was a nest, yet no shells. Hmm...I wonder. But this year, I'm ready. I cleaned out the box and ran some sandpaper over and inside, making it look new (I've been told this is over the top). The struggling Eastern Bluebird is making a come-back due to citizen involvement with these birding boxes.

I'm glad to participate. And once I see some action this Spring with birds at the box, I will look inside and take note of the new fledglings. Can't wait!

Trish Greene

President - Birders of St. James

Speaking of Bluebirds, they are among the earliest songbirds to begin their approach to the nesting season. They've already begun scouting nesting sites, so make sure that your nesting box has the old nest, or any debris, removed. Make sure the opening faces south.

To keep wasps from building their nest here, as they often do, buy some Irish Spring soap and scrape it on the inside ceiling.

[Check out our Bird Fact Sheets.](#)



By Ernie McLaney

BIRD BRAINS: February is the USA's National Bird Feeding Month, per a 1994 Congressional Act. *Brrrrrrrr!* This February is super cold outside and even resourceful birds could use our help!

What can you do to help our birds? Well, basically it's the same thing you do anyway, Water, Food, Shelter, but winter's cold needs just take a few extra steps. While birds can spend their energy foraging for food and water, let's help them more easily find sources and save their energy for survival.

Water – Keep your birdbath from freezing by installing an electric birdbath heater or thaw your birdbath with a pot of boiling water. Do not add anti-freeze or salt to the birdbath! For an extra precaution, put large rocks in the birdbath to deter birds from bathing so they won't get wet and freezing feathers. Solar heaters are not available, so plan to run an "outdoor rated" extension cord. Lowes, Ace, Walmart and Amazon have these heaters, but they are ship-to products only.

Food – Birds need a lot of calories to increase their metabolism enough to survive the cold. High Energy Food is important for the birds as is keeping your feeders full. Check feeders late in the day

for the birds stocking up nutrition for their overnight energy requirements. Think suet, mealworms, sunflower seeds and unsalted or raw peanuts. Spend a little more on high quality seeds with less cereal. Birds will need to fill-up late in the day in order to maintain body heat throughout the night, and again in the morning. Many birds are ground feeders, so don't forget them, but be cautious about putting out too much at one time that might attract unwanted wildlife during the night. **DO NOT FEED BREAD TO BIRDS!** Bread has no nutritional value to birds and can also have some negative effects on them.

Shelter – Birds are smart enough to be in the downwind side of the tree to buffer the wind but will seek out evergreen trees and shrubs and grasses, bird houses and nesting boxes for wind protection. Make sure nesting boxes are in areas protected from predators. Don't do your spring yard cleanup yet and leave some underbrush and branches for wind breaks or even create a pile of leafy yard waste for birds to use. Winter's chilling winds typically blow from the northwest, so don't face your shelters in that direction.

Why aren't the birds freezing? Did you know that birds SHIVER? Their rapid shivering generates body heat, just as it does for us, but burns up a lot of energy which high-fat foods replenish. Remember that "fat and sassy" bluebird photo from last February? Birds do get winter feathers and fluff them up to trap warm air in their bodies, and they tuck their beaks under their wings, and they snuggle together, too. What about those skinny legs and tiny feet? Birds have a circulatory system that reheats cold blood in their legs, and feet that have specialized scales which minimize heat loss. And, birds can do Torpor, which is a temporary, hibernation-like state when they lower metabolism, heart rate and body temperature. Torpor is a vital tool for winter survival in birds. ~ [Learn more about helping birds.](#)

Trish Stewart - Board Member-Birders of St. James

Key dates during the month of February:

- February **2**: World Wetlands Day
- February **2**: Groundhog Day
- February **4**. National Homemade Soup Day (I'll be right over)
- February **11**: International Day of Women and Girls in Science (Highlights women's roles in scientific fields, including environmental research).
- **February 13-16: The Great Backyard Bird Count (This is a global event)**
- February **14**: International Book Giving Day (Often promotes nature-themed books for children). (We'll add; Make it a bird book)
It's also Valentines Day – get them something “birdy”!
- February **16**: Do a Grouch a Favor Day. (Must not be a birder)
- February **22**: The Sun begins setting after 6:30PM (Hooray!)
- February **27**: International Polar Bear Day (Raises awareness about the conservation of polar bears and Arctic habitats).
- February - “Bird walks with Hugh” Watch for details on our Facebook page.
- Nature Therapy Walks: Month long activities often focusing on mindfulness in nature. St. James is a perfect place to do this - every day.
- Environmental Awareness: Engaging with local conservation efforts and sustainability events, including topics like birdwatching, recycling & biodiversity.
- Wildlife Gardening: A great month to prepare for spring planting in support of early pollinators, nesting birds, and creating wildlife habitats.

Our next community program will be on
Wednesday, April 15, 7PM. Topic: **Hummingbirds!**

A special note regarding the Great Backyard Bird Count: This is an easy citizen science program that you can take part in. Helpful instructions, tips, checklists and more on this family-friendly activity can be found on our website: [here](#). Please take part on Feb. 13 - 16.



Discovering Great Birdwatching Locations
-Birding Hot Spots in St James-

Discover top birdwatching spots in and around St. James with our Birders Hot Spots guide. Each month in our newsletter we will feature a public Hot Spot location with a narrative, expected bird sightings, maps, and photos. Visit our [website](#) for the latest sites as members continue to update our Hot Spot locations.

Birding Hot Spot 1 – [Members Club Ponds: East Lagoon & South Lagoon.](#)



There are four ponds in the Lagoon Court area which are active bird sites all year. The first pond you see as you enter Lagoon court is active during winter months with **Mallards**. There are two ponds that border the 15th Fairway of the Members Club back nine holes. These two ponds are active all year long with **Double-Crested Cormorants, Great Egrets, Snowy Egrets, White Ibis, Great Blue Herons**.

During the winter months, **Bufflehead and Hooded Mergansers, and Mallards** are in these ponds. **In 2025, two Wood Storks and an American Widgeon were seen at these ponds.** On the golf course fairway, **Killdeer** were present in the fall, winter and spring and a **Belted Kingfisher** is seen frequently sitting in the trees around the pond. During May, June and July, **Purple Martins** inhabit the two bird houses on poles on land adjacent to the ponds. [Link](#)



Hot Spots developed by:

Pam Miller and Hugh Shaw - Board Members, Birders of St. James

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**WHILE IT IS FEBRUARY, ONE
CAN TASTE THE FULL JOYS OF
ANTICIPATION. SPRING STANDS
AT THE GATE WITH HER FINGER
ON THE LATCH.** ❄️

❄️

– PATIENCE STRONG



Click each to enlarge



By Ernie McLaney



By Duane Stewart



By Ernie McLaney



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