

Chip Notes



Eye Candy:

Painted Bunting
(*Passerina ciris*)



Those Amazing Birds...

Beauty is in the Eye of the Beholder

And birds' eyes are a beautiful thing! Vision is their most important sense, which may be why they have the largest eyes in relation to their overall size within the animal kingdom. And they see more than you and I do. We have three types of color receptors in our eyes allowing us to see combinations of blue, green, and red. Our feathered friends have at least four types of color receptors which allow them to see beyond our visible range into the "near ultraviolet" part of the spectrum. Songbirds see things very differently than we do. You may be able to readily tell a male Northern Cardinal from a female. Great! How about the same distinction in Black-capped Chickadees? While the males and females look identical to your eyes, to the birds the difference is obvious, thanks to the way ultraviolet light reflects off the black and white patterns of their plumage. Using their vision, females are able to judge the fitness of a particular male for parenthood.

Interesting? Yes. Important? Yes. Several published studies suggest that this same

unique visual acuity is used in foraging for seeds, insects, and fruits by a variety of different bird species. At Aspen Song, we have maintained that a mixture of seeds is always a better choice for attracting birds to a feeder than is a single seed offering. Our seed-eating songbirds discover food sources with their eyes! The varied colors, textures, sizes, and shapes of seed mixes create contrasts that catch their eye more readily. Recognize that seed-eating birds normally forage on nature's bounty of native seeds. We attempt to lure them to our feeders for easy viewing. What in nature does the typical bird feeder look like? Nothing. But if that odd metal and acrylic contraption is filled with a seed mix that registers "Potential Food!" in the bird's mind, they are much more likely to check it out. We will have to wait for science to tell us which of the various seeds we use in mixes are the most appealing to the avian eye. **In the meantime, try a bag of Premium Blend instead of that bag of oil sunflower, or Finch Mix instead of nyjer seed. Your birds will be glad you did.**