



JONATHAN CONNER

Spring forward for best results in selling home

SPRING IS TYPICALLY the busiest time for real estate, so do not wait for flowers to bloom before getting your home ready for listing. Having some extra time to prepare can make for a much smoother listing and selling process.

If you are a potential seller, here are four things you can do now to take full advantage of the spring market.

Start packing

It may sound crazy to start packing months in advance of your move, but since you will eventually do this anyway, you might as well get organized now. I am not suggesting that you pack your kitchen and eat off paper plates, but you can sort through storage closets, attic, basement and garage to determine what you want to keep and what you do not want. Packing items will make your space look larger and neater when it is time to show your home. You can also get an idea of whether you need to rent a storage facility while your home is on the market.

Clear away the clutter

If you visit model homes or open houses that have been staged, you will never see a stack of unread magazines, children's artwork hanging on the refrigerator or a cluster of unpaid bills on a table. While everyone has clutter, buyers want to see a fantasy version of your house and one where they can envision themselves living. Once your home is on the market, you will need to keep it neat. One way to make that easier is to reduce the amount of clutter you have on your shelves and surfaces. Put away items that are regularly on your kitchen counter and pack the family photos that gather dust.

Improve your home

While you do not necessarily want to do a major, expensive renovation project before you sell, you can make minor repairs and improvements that will make your home look fresh to buyers. Try things such as replacing the caulk and grout in your bathroom, updating old and outdated ceiling fans and light fixtures, and changing switch plates, door-knobs and other hardware for a clean and neat appearance. Consider painting your front door and trim, even if your rooms do not need new paint. A buyer's first impression will set the tone for the rest of the property.

Interview Realtors

Your choice of a listing agent will make a big difference in how quickly your home sells and how much of a profit you will realize. Get recommendations from friends, and interview several listing agents to see which ones have the right experience with similar homes in your price range and area. A Realtor with a great marketing plan and deep local knowledge is extremely important. Do not simply select the one who tells you he or she can sell for the highest price; choose someone who can present you with a detailed market analysis and provide you with the personal communication style that most suits you.

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WINTER BIRD WATCH

FOR MORE INFORMATION about winter birds or birding in Morgantown, visit the Mountaineer Audubon website at mountaineer-audubon.org.

BY KAITLIN DAVIS
 For The Dominion Post

Bird-watching is a great outdoor activity that anyone can do at any time and place — even during the winter months. Residents can observe both native and migrant birds throughout the area and in their own backyards.

The 2011 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation survey reported that 66 percent of West Virginians bird-watched around the home. The survey is conducted every five years by the U.S. Census Bureau. Data from 2016 has not yet been released.

Many native and migrant birds occupy the Morgantown area.

Residents commonly see Carolina chickadees, tufted titmice and white-breasted nuthatches along with a variety of woodpeckers and house finches.

Aside from these native, year-round feeder birds, residents may see northern migrant birds as well, such as red-breasted nuthatches and pine siskins. When these migrant birds come through, they form a symbiotic relationship with the native birds to find food sources since the native birds know the area best.



audubon.org

Carolina chickadee

"Of course the one that everyone loves is what they call a little snowbird, which is a Northern Junco," said LeJay Graffious, the program committee chairman of Mountaineer Audubon, which is a local chapter of the National Audubon Society.

Northern juncos nest in higher elevations normally in West Virginia, but during the winter time they travel to lower elevations. They come in different varieties, but the dark-eyed junco is the most common type in West Virginia. They are gray birds with white bellies whose diet consists of weeds and wheat seeds. These juncos lay eggs on the ground, and weigh only about 0.6 ounces, according to Graffious.

These juncos also have a white feather on either side of their tail, which is referred to as a flash mark. Flash marks serve an important purpose for birds when being attacked by a predator because the flash mark distracts the predator when the bird takes flight, allowing for the bird to get away safely.

The Eastern screech owl also makes an appearance to the area in the winter time. With a 20-inch wing span and weight of only 6 ounces, these birds feed and call at night, and don't need much to survive. Eastern screech owls come in three different "phases" or colors: Red, gray or brown.

"They probably live in every community in Morgantown, but people don't know they are there," Graffious said, and many may not see them because they are most active during

the night and they can fit into extremely small spaces.

"They can squeeze into an amazingly small spot too," said Katie Fallon, the vice president of Mountaineer Audubon. "...They can fit right into your pocket."

While Fallon loves the screech owls, Fallon was excited to see common loons in the area this season, which are native to the Maine and the North Woods areas. Being an obligate water bird, they need a long stretch of water to land on and to take off from, which causes many injuries during the winter because common loons confuse ice, wet fields or wet pavement with water.

In order to help the birds during this time of the year, residents can put out suet for the woodpeckers or black-oil seeds or nyger seeds to feed many of the other birds. Black-oil seeds are good for several types of birds, but nyger seeds target house sparrows and starlings. Residents also need to be aware of the importance of green spaces, and how run-off and fragmentation break up birds' habitats.

Observing your backyard can be a great experience as you begin to see what passes through your own environment.

"It's a spiritual thing really... The idea of seeing a bird in flight, there's a satisfaction of knowing freedom, travel and adventure," said Larry Schwab, the Conservation Committee chairman of Mountaineer Audubon.



allaboutbirds.com

Eastern screech owl



birdnote.org

Tufted titmouse



climate.audubon.org

Common loon

FOR SALE	PRICE	AREA	BROKER	MLS#	PRICE	AREA	BROKER	MLS#
NEW LISTINGS on the MARKET	\$169,900	E. Brockway Avenue	Century 21 AYS	10112646	\$322,000	Hidden Hollow Road, Dilliner, PA	Vickie Jenkins	10112581
	\$89,900	Pennsylvania Avenue & Short Street	Howard Hanna	10112571	\$17,500	Valley View Drive, Reedsville, Lot B	Vickie Jenkins	10112615
	\$123,900	Stewart Lane	Howard Hanna	10112582	\$289,900	Sundance Drive	Vickie Jenkins	10112603
	\$200,000	Brownstone Drive	Howard Hanna	10112558	\$199,900	Sixth Avenue	Vickie Jenkins	10112609
	\$229,900	Villa View Drive	Howard Hanna	10112587	\$289,900	September Drive	Vickie Jenkins	10112607
	\$247,000	Scenery Drive	Howard Hanna	10112649	\$267,000	September Drive	Vickie Jenkins	10112605
	\$263,500	Augusta Pines Drive, Fairmont	Howard Hanna	10112561	\$95,999	Hundley Street, Masontown	Vickie Jenkins	10112543
	\$435,000	Castle Court	Howard Hanna	10112637	\$95,000	S. Main Street	Vickie Jenkins	10112499
	\$65,000	Brewer Road	Pat Stewart	10112630	\$449,000	Irish Ridge Road, Arthurdale	Vickie Jenkins	10112523
	\$192,000	Donna Avenue	Pat Stewart	10112671	\$240,000	Cadet Court	Old Colony	10112471
	\$895,000	Poplar Woods Drive	Pat Stewart	10112453	\$989,000	Tyrone Road	Old Colony	10112383
	\$135,000	Gilmore Street	Pat Stewart	10112464	\$153,750	Greenbrier Village	J.S. Walker	10112370
	\$29,900/ea.	Sapp-Weaver Road, Lots 1-10	Pat Stewart	various	\$345,000	Suncrest	J.S. Walker	10112376
	\$107,000	Creekside Drive	Snider Realty Group	10112657	\$139,900	Eagle Drive	Coldwell Banker Alliance	10112532

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ABSOLUTE REAL ESTATE AUCTION
 Tuesday, February 14th at 4:00PM

2048 US-33W Weston, WV
 3 Bedroom, 1 1/2 Bath Home on 5 Acres
SELLS TO THE HIGHEST BIDDER

REAL ESTATE AUCTION
 Wednesday, February 15th at 4:00PM

1018 Ashton Drive Morgantown, WV
 4 Bedroom, 4 Bath Home in Ashton Estates

ABSOLUTE LAND AUCTION
 Thursday, February 23rd at 4:00PM

Auction at Randolph Co. Courthouse
 46.62 Acres with mineral rights near Elkins
SELLS TO THE HIGHEST BIDDER

REAL ESTATE AUCTION
 Wednesday, March 1st at 4:00PM

405 3rd Street, Nutter Fort
 3 bedroom, 1.5 bath brick home
 Very well maintained