

How To Attract And Keep Birds In Your Garden

Presented by <http://www.birdfeedersandsquirrels.com>

Table of Contents

FOREWORD.....	1
ATTRACTING WILD BIRDS TO YOUR BACK YARD.....	2
COMMON FOODS WILD BIRDS LOVE.....	4
SPECIALTY FOODS FOR BIRDS	6
FEEDING NYJER® SEED	8
DEALING WITH UNWANTED GUESTS	10
SQUIRRELS AND BIRD FEEDING	12
PREVENTING DISEASE AROUND WILD BIRD FEEDERS.....	14
RECIPE FOR SUET	16
PROTECTING THE THINGS YOU DO NOT WANT TO SHARE.....	18

Foreword

I know, I know, birds can sometimes be a problem with some of the fruits and vegetables in your garden, and around your buildings. But, consider the alternative; you will have more pests to fight in your vegetable and flower garden. Birds eat an enormous amount of bugs, worms and caterpillars around your yard. Many birds will eat their weight in food every day. How's that for a diet?

So what, if you have to share an occasional raspberry or tomato with a bird, that's what friends are for. The value, just in pest removal alone, is worth the price of keeping on the good side of the birds. Plus, birds are fun to watch for the whole family. It is hard to beat a combination like that.

Birds are good for the environment, too. Think of all the pesticides that would be used if birds were not on the job. Our environment is awash in many kinds of chemicals and pesticides are a big part of that. The more chemicals we can keep out of our air, water and food the better we all will be.

Our feathered friends are having a hard time coping with the same things we are. Look up Earth's Endangered Species for birds at http://www.earthsendangered.com/search-groups2_sB.html. The list contains 2,122 birds. That is appalling! Are birds the preverbal canary in the coal mine for all of us?

So, attracting birds to your garden and backyard is not only helpful to you, but can be helpful to the planet as well. Let's attract some birds.

Chapter 1

Attracting Wild Birds to Your Back Yard

Birds need the same basics of life that we do. That is food, water and shelter. Now, I know their requirements are a little different than ours, but if we provide those three things in the right way we have happy birds. And, happy birds are what we want to keep them working for us.

Food

Food for a bird can be a wide variety of bugs, worms, seeds, fruits, berries, etc. But, different birds prefer different diets. Now, a lot of birds will eat whatever is available, but to attract them to our place we want to cater to their taste buds to get them to stay with us and not the neighbors.

Food is an important discussion so we will get into that in another chapter.

Water

We all know water is necessary to life. But, we sometimes just assume birds are outside and it rains, so they have plenty to drink. Not so. Rain water quickly absorbs into the soil leaving potholes and streams that are filled with all kinds of nasty stuff for the birds to drink.

Think about it. Yards are covered with herbicides and fertilizers, roadways have all kinds of oils and fluids from vehicles, not to mention all the pollutants those vehicles carry, plus, we humans are always disposing of the things we do not want in a totally unsafe manner for us and the birds.

Having a clean, safe watering hole is much appreciated by the birds. The water needs to be refreshed often. The birds, not only, drink from the water you provide, but also bath in it and, you know, in it. What can I say, they are animals.

The cleaner the water supply the healthier the bug eaters around your place will be. And, remember to keep the water, either warm or replaced every day in the winter when it freezes.

Shelter

There could be a book written on shelter for birds. Shelter is different for different birds, so we will talk about birds in general.

There are birds who live on the ground and there are those who live in tall trees, and there are birds that live in all the places in between, some birds even nest on the ground. I guess it is safe to say birds need a wide variety of shelter.

We need to make some sense of this to provide the best living space for our particular yard and garden. We all like nice and tidy properties, but that is not always the best place for a bird. Leave a little patch of weeds in one corner of your yard, maybe behind the fence, so your neighbors can't see. Or, after trimming the shrubs, just leave a little pile of brush in an out-of-the-way place and the birds will love it.

When planning your landscape keep the wildlife in mind. Plant shrubs the birds and other critters will like to rest and hunt in. Put out some annuals that go to seed, that really gets their attention, and how about a few flowering plants that attract different birds, like the hummingbird. They are always fun to watch.

Having a landscape that attracts birds is not that hard, they are very adaptable. The main thing is to keep the wildlife in your areas in mind as you go about planning your yard, and garden and as you are working outside.

Chapter 2

Common Foods Wild Birds Love

To attract and keep our bird friends we need to provide a consistent supply of good food they like. The three main foods that people supply in their wild bird feeders are Black Oil Sunflower Seeds, Nyjer® Seeds and a variety of different premixed seed packages.

Black Oil Sunflower Seeds

Black Oil Sunflower seed is the most popular feed with birds everywhere. They prefer this food because of the high oil content, which gives them energy, and it is easy to break open the hulls on this seed.

Birds like the Cardinals, titmouse, finches, some sparrows, nuthatches, just many, many birds will go for this seed. Small and large birds will come to your feeder filled with Black Oil Sunflower seed. It is fun to watch the variety of wild birds fly in and out to the feeder.

Nyjer®

Nyjer seed is a small black seed that the smaller birds, like the finch, are attracted to. Many other birds will eat this seed, but the finches love it.

Nyjer is a thistle seed produced in Africa and India. The name Nyjer is a trademark name to identify this seed as being processed to prevent sprouting. All imported Nyjer seed is heat treated to kill germination, but this tiny shells will still build up under the feeders and can be a problem with killing the grass.

Many people like to feed Nyjer seed to attract the gold finches. If you are not familiar with it the gold finch is a beautiful yellow and black color. You will love them.

The seed is so tiny that a special “mesh” type feeder is necessary to prevent the seed from falling through the feeder.

This seed is a little more expensive and you do need a special feeder, but to see the colorful birds it attracts is well worth it.

Premixed Seed

You may not want the premixed seed you can find in most any grocery, feed or pet store. They do attract a wide variety of birds, but that is also their drawback. They attract birds you may not want in your yard, like Starlings and house sparrows. It is best to provide the different seeds separately so you can adjust the flow of birds coming to your feeders.

Other Available Foods

There are also striped sunflower seeds and hulled sunflower seeds. The striped seeds have a little tougher hull and do not have as much oil as the black seeds, but they are cheaper and the birds will still come to them. Hulled seeds are fine, there is less mess from all those hulls, but they do cost more, because of the extra processing.

Safflower seed is another alternative. It is preferred by the Cardinals, but other birds will eat it too. It is said that squirrels will leave it alone, but I will have to see it to believe it. Squirrels will eat almost anything...more about squirrels later.

Corn

You will often see corn in the mixed feed. It is mostly the bigger birds that will go for the corn and some birds you may not want, like jays. Bluejays are pretty blue, grey and black, but they can be kind of bossy with the other birds. Squirrels really like corn too. You will want to do all you can to discourage the squirrels. If you want to feed corn I would recommend feeding it in a spot by itself on a platform feeder away from the other feeders.

That's about it for the different seeds for birds. Next we will discuss specialty feeds for birds.

Chapter 3

Specialty Foods for Birds

Wild birds, like most creatures, are opportunist. They will eat most anything that is edible. Many are specialist, but that does not mean they will ever say “I would rather die than eat that”. Of course they each have their preferences, like Robins will eat a diet mostly of worms, but will consume many other types of foods.

There are birds of prey that eat meat, but I don't think you will want to put out meat to attract birds of prey. They would eat the other birds.

Orioles like fruit and can be attracted, if there are any in your area, with orange halves. They are easy to feed, just tack the orange half to a board or post with a nail.

Other foods for Orioles are sugar water, grape jelly and mealworms. The sugar water can be fed in a special oriole feeder, or even a hummingbird feeder. Mix 1 part sugar to 4 to 6 parts water. Boil the solution for a couple minutes and let cool. Be sure to change the solution to keep it fresh, every couple of days would be fine.

Of course hummingbirds are fond of sugar water. They, also, eat insects, too. It has been said that hummingbirds only eat the sugar for the energy to chase bugs.

Egg shells are a good thing to put out for all the birds. Crushed egg shells provide calcium for birds. Birds need “grit” to help them process what they eat. Ground egg shells help them to “digest” their food in their gizzard. Put the ground egg shells in a dish or platform feeder separate from the other feeders, so birds can choose what they need.

You can also try peanuts, popped corn (without salt and butter), meal worms, etc. As stated in the beginning, birds will consume most any food if they are hungry, and birds are always hungry.

One exception is to not feed bread. Experts warn that feeding bread to birds gives them too many calories, which causes the wings to not develop as they should and the birds cannot fly properly. So, bread is bad.

Meal worms are a popular food, according to the latest bird poll. Many birds will eat meal worms, dead or alive. The worms can be purchased from a bird food supplier or you can just raise your own.

The most important source of food for birds is Mother Nature. Even when we feed the birds they still get most of their diet from nature, just as they are supposed to do. As we said, birds are opportunist; they will eat what is most available. If you go on vacation they will eat what they can find or just fly over to the neighbors. Some birds go on vacation too.

Chapter 4

Feeding Nyjer® Seed

Let's talk a bit about Nyjer® seed before moving on. Nyjer is a speciality seed that you may want more information about.

Nyjer seed is from the African daisy. It is a tiny seed that finches dearly love. It is not a thistle seed as most people believe. It is grown in Africa and India.

The seed was trademarked as Nyjer to identify it as coming from sources in those countries and has been heat treated to prevent sprouting.

Nyjer is an oil seed that gives the birds energy and the main reason they love this seed. It provides:

- 35 percent fat
- 18 percent protein
- 18 percent fiber
- 12 percent moisture

With the high fat content this is a good energy source for winter feeders. The seed is tiny so requires a mesh type feeder to limit waste. The seed and hulls that fall to the ground can kill out grass. To prevent this place a platform feeder under the mesh feeder to catch spillage.

Birds you can attract with Nyjer seed are:

- Finches
- Sparrows
- Pine Siskins
- Mourning Doves
- Juncos
- And many others

This seed is higher priced than most other types of seed, but can be very beneficial to the birds. Plus, you may be able to enjoy seeing the colorful finches come to the feeder.

Chapter 5

Dealing with Unwanted Guests

Sometimes it is hard to keep peace in the neighborhood. You have your feeders out and plenty of beautiful birds making regular visits, but there's a rough bunch moving in. What can you do?

There are different tactics for different problems. Let's take a look at a few of the most common.

Starlings and Black Birds

Starlings and black birds can be a nuisance. They usually come in a herd, they can empty a bird feeder faster than an elephant sucking down peanuts and they are not, shall we say, tidy. What can we do?

Take note of what you are putting in your feeders. If you are feeding a seed mix from the store it probably has cracked corn, Milo and other seeds that the bigger birds prefer. Try refilling your feeders with Black Oil Sunflower seed. Many of these birds prefer the grain type feed and will look elsewhere.

If that does not do the trick stop filling the feeders for a couple of weeks. The birds you desire to have will return when you start filling the feeders again, and, many times, the undesirable will not.

Blue Jays

Some people hate Blue Jays and some love them. If you do not want them bothering your other birds you can hang out smaller feeders to keep them from the feed and keep the fallen seed under the feeder cleaned up. Blue Jays are big opportunist and will go where it is easiest to find food.

House Sparrows

Field sparrows are cute little birds that stay in the yard and garden areas, but house sparrows live up to their names. They try to build their homes in every nook of your house, and other buildings, making a mess where they defecate on the walls, walks and every thing else they can find. They are also noisy, and if one finds your place friendly they invite all their friends.

House Sparrows, especially the English Sparrow, like the small grain mixes, but not the sunflower seeds. Stop feeding the premixed seed mixes and put in Black Oil Sunflower seed and they should leave. Keep a watch for nest building in the spring if you have them visit in the winter. Keeping them from nesting will cause them to leave too.

There are other pest birds in different areas. If you are having a problem do some searching online, or contact the writer of this booklet, for help in solving your dilemma.

Chapter 6

Squirrels and Bird Feeding

Squirrels deserve special recognition. They can be the most enjoyable little creatures to watch, or the most destructive critter on the planet. If you are feeding birds and you have squirrels nearby keep reading.

Squirrels Pets or Pests

Squirrels fun to watch. They run and jump, climb the tallest trees, chase each other, dig for nuts in the yard and hold their food in those cute little paws. But, they can empty a feeder faster than a nanosecond. Once the feeder is empty, or if they can't get into the food fast enough, they will destroy it – completely. There are ninja squirrels out there.

If you enjoy watching squirrels as much as you enjoy having the birds around there are some thing you can do. If you just want to get rid of them I am sorry that is probably not going to happen.

Keeping Squirrels Out of Bird Feeders

A lot depends on how much squirrel pressure you have. If you are in a heavily wooded area with lots of squirrels you will have to go with squirrel proof feeders. Now, the ads say squirrel proof, but that is not necessarily true. If a determined squirrel is a hungry squirrel it can be tough to stop them.

Many of the fancy mechanical feeders you see advertised often do not work or do not work for long. It is best to start with a study feeder that has a cage type covering that lets birds in and keeps squirrels out.

It is recommended to place a shield on the line above the feeder and keep the feeder far enough away from trees, shrubs and building that a squirrel cannot jump on the feeder. And, keep it high enough that the little bugger cannot jump from the ground to the feeder.

There are feeders made to shut off the feeding ports, but be careful that the ports cannot be reached from the top or bottom of the feeder. Squirrels will hang by one leg and eat with the other.

Whatever you decide to do not buy a cheap feeder thinking you are saving money. That feeder will be gone by breakfast.

Feeding Squirrels

One way to ease pressure on wild bird feeders is to feed the squirrels. Squirrels like corn, nuts, peanuts and they will eat sunflower seed too.

Some folks like to put ear corn on a spike nail through a board nailed to a tree for them to chew on. If you want a feeder it is best to go with a metal feeder, as squirrels like to chew. (a.k.a. the problem with the bird feeders)

There are many squirrel feeders on market. Just check around for one you like.

Chapter 7

Preventing Disease Around Wild Bird Feeders

When people herd together in the winter they pass colds, flu, etc back and forth, birds are similar. When they flock around the bird feeder it is easy for them to come in contact with other birds that are diseased. Diseased birds will come to feeders because they are weak and can feed themselves easily.

We want to help our feathered friends and enjoy their company, but we do not want to contribute to health problems. With a little care we can feed the birds and keep them healthy.

Common Diseases of Wild Birds

House Finch Eye Disease is a disease finches can contract. Birds will have red, swollen or crusty eyes. They can become blind. Infected birds will be seen rubbing their eyes, sitting by themselves, not wanting to fly. Some birds will survive, but others will die from starvation or predators.

Avian Pox may not have any outward signs, except the bird is listless and not doing well. They can have swollen skin, but that is hard to detect. Some form of the pox is common among a wide variety of birds.

Salmonella is also very common. The only sign may be a dead bird. It is very likely if you find a dead bird that salmonella is the cause.

The above are only a few of the most common diseases and then there are parasites that plague birds as well. All these problems are spread by contact. That is bad news and good news. It is bad because the birds will naturally congregate around the food source, but it is good because we can take positive action to cure the problem.

Ways to Prevent Disease and Parasites

You have heard the old saying “cleanliness is next to Godliness”. Well bird feeders fit there too. Here are several steps you can take to do your part to protect the wild birds that is presented by the National Audubon Society in the following article

http://web4.audubon.org/bird/at_home/bird_feeding/feeder_maint.html. The information below is from their article.

- **Disinfect your feeder and birdbath:** To keep pathogens at bay, immerse your seed feeder or birdbath in a nine to one water-bleach solution, rinsing it thoroughly, one to two times per month (for tips on cleaning hummingbird feeders, [click here](#)). In the presence of outbreaks, disinfect twice as often.
- **Empty water from your birdbath every day:** Brush or wipe it clean and rinse, then refill the birdbath with fresh water.
- **Discard old seed and hulls:** When you clean your feeder, get rid of the old seed. Rake or sweep up any uneaten hulls on the ground. The disease-causing Trichomonad protozoan, for example, can live for up to five days in food and several hours in water.
- **Avoid overcrowding:** If possible, provide more than one feeder and spread them out. Crowding only expedites the spread of disease, so give the birds variety and plenty of room.

Chapter 8

Recipe for Suet

Sure, you can buy suet cakes in all forms from a store, but why not save a little money and have some fun, too. Making suet cakes for wild birds can be a family project for a cold winter's day. The birds will appreciate it too, as suet gives them a lot of energy to ward off the cold temperatures.

Who Eats Suet?

The first bird many think of when mentioning suet cakes is the woodpecker, they love suet. Other birds who will come to your offering of suet are chickadees, titmice, nuthatches and many others. I have read that whole seeds are not good in the mix, because the fat makes the outer shell on seeds hard for the birds to get through. So, let's take a look at our recipe.

Suet recipe

This recipe was found in Birds and Blooms Magazine:

2 cups quick-cooking oats
2 cups cornmeal
1 cup flour
1/2 cup sugar
1 cup lard (or beef suet from the grocery)
1 cup crunchy peanut butter

Directions:

1

Melt the lard and peanut butter together, either on the stove or in the microwave.

2

Combine all of the dry ingredients.

3

Add the dry ingredients to the melted fats.

Pour into a square pan about 2 inches deep, or spreading onto tree limbs.

You can even make your own suet feeder. If you will do a search online you can find instructions for building one.

Chapter 9

Protecting the Things you do not want to Share

The biggest downside to having birds in your garden and yard is that you will be sharing what you grow with them. This means that if you have raspberries, strawberries, currents, fruits, or any other flower or garden produce you want just for yourself you will need to protect it from those hungry critters.

Birds do not know you are going those beautiful red raspberries for your enjoyment. They are designed to find what they can where they can. So, it is up to you to decide.

Bird Netting

One of the best ways to protect your plants and shrubs is with bird netting. Bird netting has been around a long time and used successfully during that time, but listen to the voice of experience.

Only put the netting on when you actually need it. If netting is left on a plant for a long period of time it will grow up through the netting and be a real pain to extract. Depending on the size of the plant or shrub you can also place metal hoops over the plant area to hold the netting above the plants or form a trellis that will keep the netting off the plants. Doing this will make life much easier.

Some fruits like grapes, apples, peaches, etc. the netting can safely be draped over the plants without much stress in removing the netting, use your common sense.

Also, make sure you have the edges secure to the ground. If not, critters can get under the netting to the fruits of your labor.

Just remember, the simpler the better.

Closing

Well, we have taken a look at why we want to attract birds into our yard and garden. Birds can be very beneficial to your property. They are great little bug catchers and consumers. Some birds can eat their body weight in food every day.

Having a pest eater in your garden can make a big difference in the pest you must deal with. This can provide you with better and more produce that is healthier for you and your family.

Without birds you must use other means to grow produce and fruits. The number one way we do this, in our society, is get out the sprayer and a can of chemicals and start spraying everything in sight. This does harm to your little corner of the planet by killing everything, not just the bugs on your plants.

Chemicals also get into the ground, the water runoff and ultimately in us. You can do your part in protecting your family and the environment by using the least amount of chemicals that you possibly can.

Wild birds are part of the ecosystem, which will stay in perfect balance without man's interference. If we let Mother Nature do her job we will be much better off.

The side benefit if getting to enjoy watching all those beautiful and interesting birds go about their daily activities in our yard. I hope you make the decision to invite the birds to visit you home, and hope this booklet will be your guide to making and enjoying that decision.