

# Bird Feeding

## *Backyard Habitat for Wildlife*



**Feeding birds in the spring and summer months can bring particular excitement. Many new species may frequent your feeder. Following are some hints for increasing the numbers of avian visitors:**

### **Fruit Feeding**

An offering of fruit will lure birds that normally do not frequent feeders. To attract orioles, tanagers, yellow-rumped warblers, yellow-breasted chat, wrens, and grosbeaks, as well as the more common species, try apple and grape jelly, white-seedless grapes, orange and apple quarters and raisins. Fruit may be placed on a feeding platform or in a dish placed off the ground.

### **The Bird Feeder**

Many types of feeders exist, so your best bet is to examine the kinds available and determine what suits your tastes. You should consider the location of the feeder, and whether you need to "squirrel proof." Seed is the vital choice, however, and the variety chosen will directly influence your visitors. The majority of songbirds will eat black oil sunflower seed and proso millet. The common seed mixes have less of these seeds, so many people prefer to add extra quantities. Another all time favorite guaranteed to attract goldfinches, pine siskins, and purple finches, is thistle or niger. Besides seed preferences, most birds also have preferred feeding habits: some are perchers like titmice and chickadees, while towhees, sparrows and doves prefer to scratch around on the ground. Some other species profit from a raised platform scattered with favorite seeds like millet, hulled sunflower, cracked corn, and peanut kernels. Birds found in this type of situation would include the grosbeaks, cardinal, bluejay, and most finches.

### **Nectar Feeding**

Offering liquid nectar, a mixture of table sugar and water, is a popular method of attracting hummingbirds. You can make your own hummingbird nectar by adding 1/4 cup of sugar to a cup of boiling water. It is not necessary to color the water red to attract the birds. Just place your feeder near red flowers or buy a red hummingbird feeder. Remember, sugar water will ferment when left in the hot sun, turning nectar deadly. Do not put out a nectar feeder if you are not willing to clean it at least weekly, preferably twice a week.

### **Other Suggestions**

Remember, a source of fresh water is especially important in the spring and summer. Bird baths will be used for both bathing and drinking. Dripping water seems to be particularly attractive to birds. Vegetation such as shrubs and trees is vital for cover and protection as well as food. Also, no matter which feeding method you are using, cleanliness and protection from predators always needs to be a consideration.

**For more information:**  
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**Migratory Bird Management Office**  
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**Arlington, VA 22203**  
**1 800/344 WILD**  
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