



FEEDING OUR FEATHERED FRIENDS

Discover the joy of owning a bird feeder. It is fascinating to watch the colourful variety of birds silhouetted against winter's blanket of white. For a very modest investment you will enjoy many hours of entertainment as you watch these wonders of nature survive the elements.

Feeding birds is also a solid commitment - one that many people cannot, or should not make. During a hard, cold spell with snow, you will hold the lives of many birds in your hands. In fact, it is better not to operate a feeding station at all than to attract a dependent following of birds into the winter and then to abandon them - even for a few days. During the cold weather, the birds' metabolism races through food, and birds need regular meals to keep their bodies warm. Food is fuel.

Heavier birds, weighing from 4oz. to 2-1/2 lbs. need a lot of food. Every day they eat the equivalent of 5-9% of their body weight in food. Birds under 4oz. might eat up to 30%. During winter, they struggle to maintain their body temperatures. Their hearts beat faster to provide more energy and with fewer daylight hours and little natural food available they are under constant pressure to find sufficient calories during cold weather.

Birds also need water during the frozen months. They will eat snow if they have to, but they prefer water. They also need it to stay warm. A birdbath heater, properly wired, totally submerged, will do the job. Birds use the oil from their preening glands to waterproof their feathers after they have washed them off. DO NOT put antifreeze or glycerine in the water: it destroys the oil-based waterproofing. For dry bathers such as sparrows, provide a pile of sand, earth and ash mixture in a sunny corner.

Birds need one more thing: True grit. Provide tiny pebbles and coarse sand near a feeder for when the ground is snow-covered. Birds use this extra roughage as a digestive aid. The demand for food varies with the weather. Make sure you fill, or dust snow off, the feeders when the weather is stormy. That is when the birds most need help.

WHAT TO FEED YOUR BIRDS

Wild bird seed

American Goldfinch, Common Redpoll, Cardinal, White-throated Sparrow, White-Crowned Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Tree Sparrow, House Sparrow, Mourning Dove.

Sunflower Seeds

American Goldfinch, House Finch, Purple Finch, Pine Siskin, Blue Jay, Cardinal, White-winged Crossbill, Red Crossbill, Pine Grosbeak, White-throated Sparrow, White-Crowned Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Tree Sparrow, House Sparrow, Mourning Dove, White-breasted Nuthatch, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Black-capped Chickadee, Downy Woodpecker.

Peanut Heart

American Goldfinch, House Finch, Purple Finch, Pine Siskin, Blue Jay, White-winged Crossbill, Pine Grosbeak, Evening Grosbeak, White-throated Sparrow, White-Crowned Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Tree Sparrow, House Sparrow, White-breasted Nuthatch, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Black-capped Chickadee, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Junco.

Cracked Corn

Common Redpoll, Blue Jay, Cardinal, Pine Grosbeak, Evening Grosbeak, Sparrow (White-throated, White-Crowned, Song, Tree, House), Mourning Dove, Northern Junco.

Mille

Common Redpoll, Sparrow (White-throated, White-Crowned, Song, Tree, House), Mourning Dove.

Niger Seed

American Goldfinch, House Finch, Purple Finch, Pine Siskin, Common Redpoll, Mourning Dove.

Suet

Common Redpoll, Sparrow (White Throated, White-Crowned, Song, Tree, House), White-breasted Nuthatch, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Black-capped Chickadee, Downy Woodpecker.