Winter Feeding Tips: What to Offer

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

Feeding wild birds in the fall and winter ensures you entertainment, and offers your non-migrating backyard birds cold weather sustenance when fresh food is less abundant. Feeding your backyard birds in the winter may also bring the added bonus of nestlings in the spring. The breeding parents will be assured that your yard is the place to be for food.

When to start feeding

If possible, start feeding in the early fall, because that is when the bird population will be the most numerous, including the fledglings of year-round inhabitants and migrating birds. Migrators especially need the fat that seed provides for their journeys south. Autumn is also the season that many birds are replacing their feathers and need extra nutrition.

Be patient

Birds don't always know where a new source of food is located. You may wish to scatter bread or cracker crumbs on the ground in the immediate area of the new feeder. Birds will soon find the source of the really good eats!

What to feed

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Because winter is the season when food is least abundant and birds need extra calories to survive the weather, make sure the food you feed gives the most energy for the quantity. This means leaving food with a large percentage of energy, such as sunflower seed, corn, and even suet - for insect-eating birds. The following is a chart of foods you should consider having available if you want to attract particular wild birds to your yard.

Look through our unique, top quality feeders - and birdbaths - that will fit your yard's atmosphere. And don't forget to check out our line of premium seeds and nuts. Your backyard visitors will taste the difference and you're sure to have a more diverse variety of avian wildlife.

FEED TYPE	BIRD SPECIES											
	Blue Bird	Blue Jay	Cardinal	Chickadee	Evening Grosbeak	Gold Finch	House Finch	House Sparrow	Mourning Dove	Purple Finch	Tufted Titmouse	White Throated Sparrow
Gray Striped Sunflower		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Nyjer Thistle						X	X		X	X		X
Black Oil Sunflower		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Red Millet			X					X	X			X
White Millet		X	X					X	X			X
Cracked Corn		X						X	X			X
Peanuts (Shelled)		X	X	X			X	X	X		X	X
Peanuts (in the Shell*)		X									X	
Safflower			X						X			X
Sunflower Chips		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Mealworms	X											
Suet	X	X		X							X	

*Peanuts in the shell are also favored by nuthatches and woodpeckers.

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