Bird Feeding Tips: Expert Advice

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

Feeding wild birds is not only rewarding, but it supplies them with a much-needed source for energy, especially when natural food sources are limited. When you offer local birds a place to dine, you're sure to catch a glimpse of species that you may not see otherwise. These are a few helpful tips to help you enjoy feeding wild birds even more.

Birdseed, like all food, has an expiration date. Before refilling feeders, remove any old, moldy, or clumped seed. A good shake generally dislodges any clumps from tube feeders or try our Feeder Mop to get those hard-to-reach areas. Use an old spatula or spoon to clean off clumps or messes from platform feeders.

Introduce enthusiastic children to wild bird feeding with suet. Prepackaged suet cakes easily install in feeders, they're the perfect size for little hands, and make very little mess.

Before you buy a feeder, consider where you want to place it. You'll want to be able to see it and easily add seed when the weather is bad. You will also want to place it in an area where discarded seed shells and droppings won't be a clean-up problem.

Leave your hummingbird feeders filled with nectar and visible for two weeks after you see your last hummingbird. This allows hummers to replenish their demanding energy needs during their migration south.

Our Premium seed blends are triple cleaned and offer a generous assortment of seeds, nuts, and real fruit chunks and contain no fillers. Vitamin and mineral supplements are added to promote proper wild avian nutrition and development.

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If you offer just one feeder and one type of seed, make it a tube feeder with sunflower seeds. You'll attract chickadees, cardinals, nuthatches, finches, siskins, and more. Metal ports around the seed dispensers will deter squirrels and house sparrows. Hang it at least 5 feet off the ground.

To prevent leakages in stopper-style hummingbird feeders, place the stopper inside the feeder, leaving about 1/4 of its length outside the feeder. Also, push the feeder straw completely through the stopper, so it sticks out a little inside the feeder.

Feeders with protective metal barriers keep hungry squirrels away from your birdseed. Squirrels cannot squeeze through or chew the durable metal bars to destroy the feeder.

When placing suet in your yard, locate the feeder at least 5 feet off the ground and near a tree trunk. This not only tempts cling feeders to eat the suet, but it also protects the suet from the elements.

The cost of a quality squirrelproof feeder is easily justified: Simply add up the seed squirrels eat and the feeders they've destroyed.

Spring and summer are the most stressful periods for our wild bird population. During this time they define and defend their territory, go through spring molting, mate and construct nests, and care for their young. All of these activities require energy and energy requires food; make sure feeders are full of high-energy food at these times.

Are house finches overrunning your feeders? Try removing the perches from some of your tube feeders. This will discourage house finches, but won't stop goldfinches, chickadees, and titmice from frequenting feeders. There are also a variety of mesh-style feeders available which discourage house finches.

Clean your feeders regularly and rinse thoroughly. This will ensure that your feeders are free from disease and mold, and ensure that your birds have a safe and healthy place to eat. An effective way to thoroughly clean bird feeders is to use a long-handled bottle brush and a bird safe cleaner. This type of brush works wonderfully to get into those hard-to-reach areas.

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Looking for an easy way to remove waste that falls from your feeders? Place a piece of porous landscape cloth beneath them. This will catch seed waste and may prevent rodents and predators from visiting. Simply pick up, shake out into the garbage, and use again. An even easier way to prevent seed scatter under feeders is to use a seed saucer to catch seed debris.

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