Suet Feeder Overview

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

Energize them year-round

Get the skinny on suet

Suet was once something we stocked our backyard feeders with only in the winter months. Present day suet use is much broader - and more beneficial to birds. In spring, it meets the increased energy demands of nesting birds. In the summer months, it provides a good substitute for insect-eating birds, especially in years when insects are not very plentiful. In fall, suet helps wild birds store fat to prepare for migration or the coming winter. And of course, in winter, suet replenishes depleted stores of energy and nutrients, to help birds survive the long, cold months.

Bird suet is made from fat - oftentimes rendered animal fat. This doesn't exactly conjure up a picture of healthy dining. But, fat plays a very important role in both human and avian diets. Along with protein and

Suet Placement

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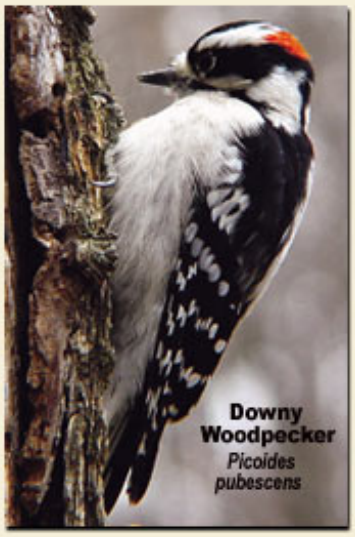
avian diets. Along with protein and carbohydrates, fat is one of the three dietary sources of calories - or energy. Fats are concentrated forms of energy and, per unit weight, provide more than twice the caloric energy as protein or carbohydrates of equivalent weight. This is very important for birds because their metabolisms are extremely accelerated. Fat energy helps them sustain activity levels longer between meals. So, bring out the suet!

Plus, today's suet is formulated with much more. It offers ingredients such as seeds, fruits, and insects. You can even get melt-resisting varieties for less mess in summer or suet made from vegetable fat, which tends to resist rancidity better than animal fat varieties. These diverse blends make suet more palatable to a greater variety of species, and they also provide better overall dietary benefits than rendered animal fat alone - any time of the year. Find suet in the form of cakes, balls, or logs.



Locate suet feeders at least five feet from the ground and close to a tree trunk. Most birds that enjoy suet are cling feeders; they cling to tree trunks in search of insects. The close proximity to the tree not only encourages suet feeding, but also protects the suet from the sun's heat - a very important factor in summer months when suet quickly becomes rancid in the hot sun. Since suet is a coveted item, it is eaten rapidly once birds discover it. You will need to refill often, especially in the winter. Present suet in a cage feeder or specially made feeder. You can also place it inside a mesh bag, or simply rub it directly onto tree trunks and branches. You can even put suet balls on a fruit spike or skewer. Birds will find it. Before long, you'll see a steady stream of chickadees, woodpeckers, warblers, titmice, kinglets, nuthatches, jays, wrens, and other birds eagerly visiting your suet feeders.

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