

Bird Feeder Basics

All Ages

Feeding wild birds is relaxing, rewarding and a great source of entertainment. A word of caution - it can lead to a habit of bird watching, which creates a strong desire to learn more about birds, which leads to learning about trees, then plants, and insects Feeding wild birds can be the beginning of a rich, lifelong connection to nature.

Getting started: Feeding birds can be as simple as tossing your toast crumbs out the window, but a little investment in feed and a feeder will bring greater rewards.

When: Year round. Each season brings a new reason for wild birds to appreciate a backup source of food.

Where: Choose a sheltered spot in your yard that is easy to watch in comfort. To reduce window strikes, place birdfeeders within a half metre from your windows. Birds cannot build up enough momentum over such a short distance to injure themselves should they hit a window. Close to your window is better for the birds and your viewing.

If the feeder must be outside the safe distance, consider making your windows bird friendly. See the *Window Wise* activity for ideas or visit <https://flap.org/>

No backyard? Your porch, balcony or windowsill will do.

Make regular trips to a nearby green space and feed the birds there. They will soon learn to anticipate your visits.

How: While you can simply toss food on the ground, a raised feeder is safer for the birds and tidier for you. A good feeder keeps the food clean and dry. It is easy to fill and keep clean. There are all sorts of feeders available and even more DIY ideas.

When starting out keep it simple. A basic hopper style feeder is practical. They can be inexpensive, easy to fill and simple to clean. Hoppers usually



have a lid that lifts or opens for easy filling and keeping the seed dry. Clear sides or windows allow you to see when refilling is needed. Gravity ensures the seed is available at openings or on a tray at the bottom of the feeder. Wood or metal feeders last longer and are a better environmental choice. (The log cabin hopper pictured here has been in daily use for 13 years)

As you learn about the birds in your neighbourhood, you can modify your feeder style. See the chart on page 2 for suggestions on the preferences of different bird species.



What: What to feed the birds? Start with black oil sunflower seeds. This will entice most wild birds to your feeder. The seeds are easy to hull, high in fats, protein and fibre.

Different species favour different seeds or food. As you become familiar with the various birds visiting your feeder you can tailor the menu to suit their needs. See the page 3 for suggestions.



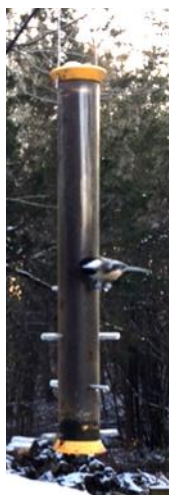
Tip: Download the *Be a Birdwatcher* activity for tips on identifying birds. Also see *Pinecone Feeder* and *Make A Suet Ball*.

Bird Feeder Basics

Type of Bird	Favorite Food	Type of Feeder
Chickadees , Finches, Small birds that feed in trees	Black oil sunflower seeds - easy to crack open, high in fat, protein	Tube - has multiple openings and perches long the length of the tube, - best with a single type of seed, mixed seed can jam openings
Cardinals, Grosbeaks, Mid-sized bird that feed in trees	Cracked corn** high in protein - Striped sunflower seeds	Hoppers - Has a lid to keep seed dry, a tray or openings at the bottom, gravity keeps seeds available - single seed type or mixed seed
Woodpeckers, Nuthatches, Birds that feed on insects on or in trees	Suet - is rendered animal fat - peanut butter	Suet - cage like feeders designed to hold different shapes or cakes of suet (solid fat often with seeds, dried fruit, nuts or insects), spoils in hot weather - suet balls, cakes, plugs
Sparrows, Doves, all sizes of birds, Ground feeding	White Millet *- High in protein & calcium Black Oil Sunflower	Platform - simple tray like feeder with a mesh bottom for drainage. Any sort of seed, peanuts, dried fruit
Goldfinches, Siskins, Small birds that feed on flower seed heads	Niger/Nyjer seed - tiny, easy to hull, rich in fat	Niger/Nyjer - similar to a tube feeder with tiny openings or a fine metal mesh tube or mesh fabric "sock" - only Niger/Nyjer or Thistle seed
Hummingbird, Oriole, birds that drink nectar and tree sap	Nectar or sugar-water (1:4 - 1:3 sugar to water) high energy food	Nectar - specially designed feeders that dispenses nectar or sugar-water, (woodpeckers like nectar feeders too) -warm weather only as nectar freezes



Tube Feeder



Niger Feeder



Hopper Feeder



Suet Cake Feeder



Platform Feeder



Nectar Feeder

Each of these feeder types come in many different styles and sizes. Be sure to choose a model that is easy to clean. Keeping your feeder clean is essential to keeping your feathered visitors healthy.

- * Invasive species (Cowbirds, House sparrows, blackbirds) like millet too. To avoid feeding them switch to black oil seed.
- ** Keep corn dry, wet corn spoils which can make birds sick. A bit of corn is good but avoid mixed seed with lots of cracked corn.
- *** Almost all birds enjoy peanuts and bits of dried fruit. Both can clog tube feeders. No salted, candied or seasoned nuts please.

Tip: 2 helpful websites - http://www.audubon.org/sites/default/files/documents/birdfeeding_basics.pdf and <https://www.allaboutbirds.org/news/browse/topic/feeding-birds/>



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Bird Feeder Basics



Seed:

1. Black Oil Sunflower - popular with all feeder birds, easy to hull (crack open), high in fat (25%), and protein
2. Striped Sunflower - larger birds, Jays, Cardinals, harder to hull, slightly less fat and protein
3. White Millet - popular with ground feeding birds, Doves, Juncos, Sparrows, high in protein, calcium and minerals
4. Nuts - chopped for all birds, peanuts in the shell for Jays, high in fat and protein, do not use salted, candied or season nuts
5. Cracked corn - a favourite with cardinals and ground feeding birds, high in protein, keep it dry
6. Dried, unsweetened fruit bits - all birds enjoy fruit bits, raisins and dried cranberries can be left whole, fruit will clog most tube feeders.
7. Red Millet - this is filler, avoid red millet, sorghum (milo), flax, other grains (and an excess of cracked corn) the birds do not eat them, the grains fall to ground and spoil, making an unhealthy mess.



Mixed Seed

← Good mix - plenty of high fat seeds and very little filler.

This sample has filler → sorghum, barley, and safflower seed, which birds like but is expensive and spoils easily. It's bitter taste deters non-bird visitors from coming to your feeder.



Join Bird Studies Canada's Feeder Watch Program at <https://conserve.birdscanada.org/page/51911/subscribe/1?mode=DEMO> and become a citizen scientist.

Ask for a **free** full-colour Bird Identification Chart at naturehood@peptbo.ca

Recipe For Homemade Mixed Seed

4 Cup Of Black Oil Sunflower Seeds
4 Cup of Chopped Plain Peanuts***
2 Cup of Striped Sunflowers
2 Cup of Cracked Corn
1/2 Cup of chopped Dried Fruit***

Mix all together and store in an airtight container.



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