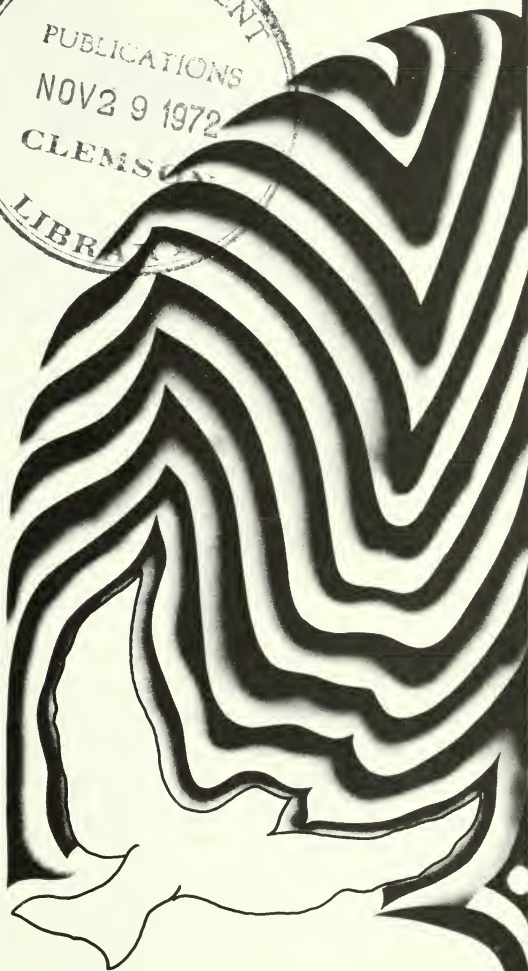


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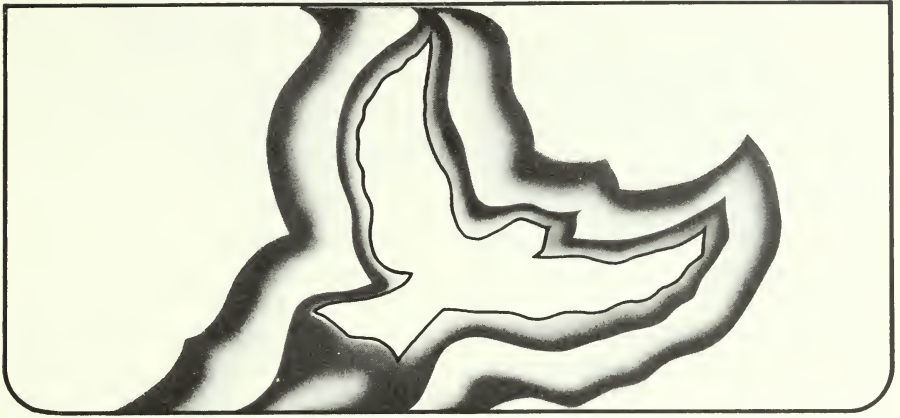


*attracting
and feeding
birds*

CONSERVATION BULLETIN NO. 1
FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR



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attracting and feeding birds

by
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Attracting and feeding wild birds are pastimes long enjoyed by people the world over; and across our country more citizens become interested each year. Feeding birds has become so popular that commercial feed mixtures are readily available. We feed birds for many reasons; sometimes it is advantageous both to the birds and the people.

Many pleasant hours can come from watching birds; a hobby often develops into a serious study of their habits. Accurate identification of birds is usually the original goal, but observations that an amateur ornithologist can make are practically limitless.

But there is responsibility associated with bird feeding, including a disease hazard. Attracting numbers of birds continually to the same spot can be harmful to them, particularly species that pick

food from the ground contaminated by the droppings of other birds.

It is in winter that feeding efforts are most satisfying to people and are of greatest benefit to birds. During this time when fewer natural foods are available and air temperatures are lower, supplemental feeding can keep a bird warm and well—and increase certain species above the normal carrying capacity for the area. So once begun, feeding should never slacken during these lean months. If you start a local increase of birds, be prepared to do what may be required to eliminate hazards to those you want to befriend. A constant supply of food should be maintained until the cold is over and spring has arrived. If feeding is stopped during severe weather, birds accustomed to relying upon the feeders might starve.

Summer feeding is of less value and can be discouraging to the would be bird lover. Because natural food is readily available, handouts are ignored by all but a few species such as jays, cardinals, sparrows, and other seed feeders. But nothing is more attractive to birds during hot weather than drinking and bathing places. In droughts a water supply may permit the survival of both adults and nestlings. A birdbath should be cleaned regularly—at least once a week to prevent mosquito breeding. A shallow pool not more than two inches deep, with a gradual slope and a rough interior finish, is most desirable.

Birds enjoy the spray from a sprinkler or even from a hose. Keeping areas well watered also increases the food supply such as earthworms and many forms of insects. Further, a trickle of water in the right place may create the mud that is needed by robins and swallows in building their nests.

All bird bathing, however, is not in water; many birds prefer dusting. Turning soil in a few small spots, preferably at the base of a sunny wall, will provide sites for this activity.

Whether the birds at your feeder are permanent residents or winter visitors, they fall into two groups. One can be

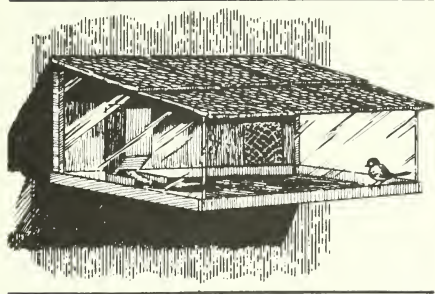
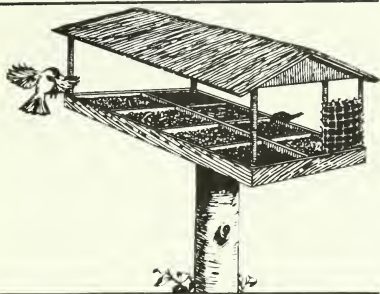
called "vegetarians," the other "non-vegetarians." The vegetarians—such as goldfinches, siskins, juncos and sparrows—in general are seed eaters. Birds in this group are attracted by millet, hemp, cracked corn, sunflower, peanuts, sorghum, oats, buckwheat, wheat, rice and Sudan grass.

Animal fats are standard food for species such as warblers, woodpeckers, titmice, chickadees and nuthatches. Good beef suet is best, but use fat trimmings from any of the meat bought for your own table. No cooking or special preparation is necessary; in fact, fats are best offered raw.

Various other foods are used by certain birds. These include bread crumbs, crackers, cheese, chopped hard-boiled eggs, mealworms, coconut meat, broken dog biscuits, hominy, peppers, pumpkin and squash seeds, earthworms, ant eggs, bananas, cooked rice, doughnuts, grapes, oranges, apples, raisins, and sugar water, with peanut butter perhaps being the most universally acceptable. Commercial bird feeding mixtures or various poultry feeds are often used in feeders.

Anyone who has time and interest can easily find which foods are relished by an area's birds by dividing a feeding tray into compartments and





placing different types of food in each compartment. Within a few weeks, it will be obvious which are preferred. A homemade mixture of these foods may be cheaper and attract more birds than the prepared mixtures.

Table scraps and other foods that freeze in winter (or sour in summer) should be provided only in quantities that will be promptly consumed. Residues should be cleaned up regularly. Since suet may melt in hot weather, it should be placed in self-draining containers. If it molds, discard it. Any indication that food is in oversupply should be taken as a hint to reduce the quantity.

Grit can be an effective attraction, but size of the particles should fit the species being attracted. Hard types are desirable. Crushed eggshells can serve a useful purpose and their calcium helps fill requirements that are high during the breeding seasons.

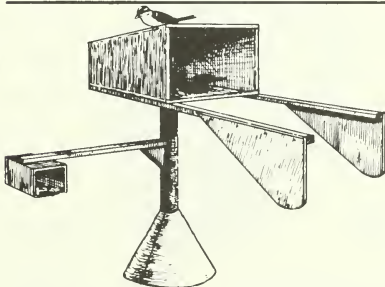
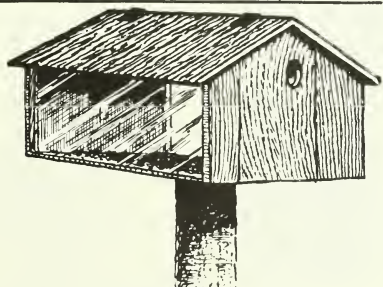
Feeding operations should start on a small scale; they can be expanded as

selections of certain foods are made by the birds and as you select the species you wish to attract.

One of the secrets in a bird-feeding operation is proper presentation of food. The simplest feeder is a plain wooden shelf at least a foot square, but the food will be better protected if the shelf has three walls and a roof. Warier birds will use the feeder more freely if panes of glass permitting clear views of any approaching danger are set in each wall.

The open side of the feeder should face the direction from which driving rain or snow is least likely to come. An effective method of achieving this is a "weather vane" feeder, with a projecting tail that causes it to pivot like a weather van and keeps the open side away from the wind. Whatever the design, a wooden coping should be placed around the edge to restrict the amount of feed which is scratched out.

Suet can be offered on "feeding sticks," short sections of soft-wood



branches three or four inches thick. Bore several one-inch holes in these branches and fill them with suet or peanut butter. Such a stick can be attached to the floor of the feeder or suspended from a tree limb. Fully opened pine cones, dipped in heated fat or spread with peanut butter, and hung by strings from tree branches will also prove popular and serve the same purpose.

Quarter-inch or half-inch mesh hardware cloth makes a useful suet holder when attached either to feeder walls or tree trunks. An empty onion sack or other plastic mesh bag can be easily filled with suet scraps and hung from a tree branch. But don't use nails to fasten the holder to a tree trunk. It is better to replace a strong twine of string occasionally than to risk killing or damaging the tree with nails or wire around the trunk.

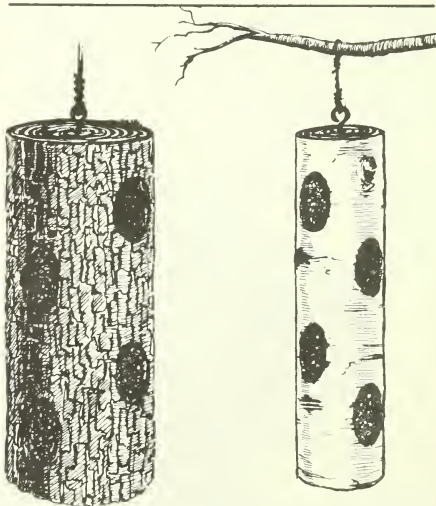
The location of a bird feeder is best determined by birds. Frequently it is desirable to place the feeder near vegetation where birds repeatedly perch. Lack of use of a feeder during the first few days should not cause concern, but

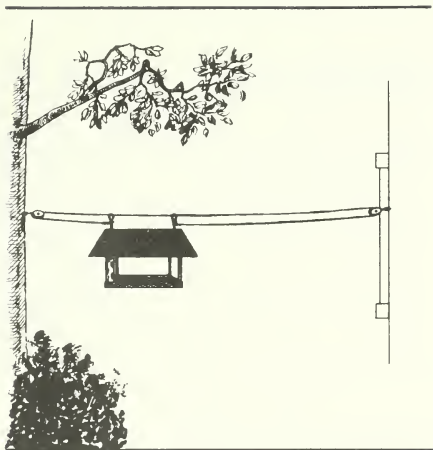
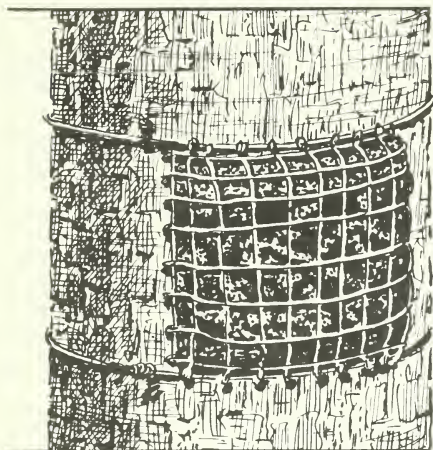
if birds are not using it within a few weeks, move it to a new location.

Protection is essential, whether the feeder is located at a kitchen window or on a metal post five or six feet high. A cat-proof fence is desirable and a squirrel guard is often necessary. A metal collar two feet wide, flaring out and slightly downward from the support, will squirrel-proof a feeder mounted on a metal pole. A garbage can lid with a center hole for the pole serves well.

A bird feeder can be movable; if built so that it can be drawn along a trolley wire suspended in the air, you can add food from your home's window. This arrangement makes it possible for one to toll birds to a window feeder by moving the trolley platform a few inches closer to the house each day. (This type of avian cafeteria is also very useful for anyone confined indoors.)

The most attractive method, though, is to grow plants which provide food and cover. A list of such plants, plus a few species attracted by them, suggests many types of growth useful for attracting birds.





trees

Beech—Titmouse, Towhee, Blue Jay, Cardinal

Black Cherry—Mockingbird, Robin, Towhee, Vireo, Finch, Flicker

Flowering Dogwood—Woodpecker, Kingbird, Waxwing, Cardinal, Catbird, Bluebird, Brown Thrasher, Purple Finch, Robin, Towhee, Vireo

Hackberry—Brown Thrasher, Mockingbird, Robin, Flicker, Cardinal, Bluebird

Holly—Catbird, Bluebird, Brown Thrasher, Waxwing, Mockingbird, Flicker, Robin, Thrush

Juneberry—Bluebird, Cardinal, Catbird, Flicker, Scarlet Tanager, Thrush

Mountain Ash—Catbird, Cedar Waxwing, Flicker, Robin

Mulberry—Cardinal, Thrush, Cuckoo, Oriole, Waxwing, Vireo, Warbler

Oaks—Blue Jay, Grackle, Crow, Woodpecker, Brown Thrasher, Nuthatch, Titmouse

Pines—Chickadee, Nuthatch, Warbler, Titmouse, Grosbeak, Brown Thrasher, Blue Jay

Red Cedar—Bluebird, Sparrow, Robin, Flicker, Mockingbird, Purple Finch, Cardinal

Sassafras—Catbird, Flicker, Robin, Towhee, Vireo

Sour Gum—Purple Finch, Waxwing, Bluebird, Robin, Towhee, Flicker, Brown Thrasher

Alder, Ash, Birch, and Elm produce seeds attractive to many birds.

shrubs

Althea (*Rose of Sharon*)—Hummingbird, Goldfinch, Sparrow, Downy Woodpecker, Nuthatch

Barberry—Catbird, Chipping Sparrow, Thrush, Junco, Song Sparrow

Blackberry—Vireo, Oriole, Sparrow, Woodpecker, Thrush, Towhee, Catbird

Blueberry—Robin, Titmouse, Chickadee, Waxwing, Cardinal, Tanager, Phoebe

Elderberry—Woodpecker, Indigo Bunting, Chat, Kinglet, Phoebe, Cardinal, Towhee

Pokeberry—Bluebird, Cardinal, Robin, Mourning Dove, Flicker, Towhee, Catbird

Privet—Waxwing, Catbird, Thrasher, Robin, Mockingbird

Pyracantha—Waxwing, Brown Thrasher, Mockingbird, Robin, Bluebird, Finch

Snowberry—Thrush, Grosbeak, Bobwhite, Robin, Cedar Waxwing

Spicebush—Cardinal, Catbird, Robin, Vireo

Sumac—Bluebird, Brown Thrasher, Flicker, Hermit Thrush, Mockingbird

Viburnum—Bluebird, Finch, Thrush, Waxwing, Flicker, Robin

Winterberry—Bluebird, Brown Thrasher, Cedar Waxwing, Hermit Thrush, Purple Finch

vines

Virginia Creeper, *Greenbrier*, *Honeysuckle*, *Trumpet Vine*, *Wild Grapes*—Towhee,

Finch, Vireo, Woodpecker, Bluebird, Robin, Sparrow, Catbird, Mockingbird,

Cedar Waxwing, Hummingbird

annuals

A number of commonly cultivated annuals belonging to the same groups as those upon which birds feed extensively in nature produce good crops of seeds and, being dependent upon cultivation, can be used without fear that they will become pests. The following are suggested:

Abelia
Aster
Blessed Thistle
Buddleia
California Poppy
Centaurus
Cosmos
Forget-Me-Not
Love-Lies-Bleeding
Marigold
Portulaca
Princesfeather
Princesplume
Rockspurlane
Sacaline
Silene
Sunflower
Tarweed
Zinnia

All of these will attract seed-eating birds, such as Cardinal, Goldfinch, Sparrow, Chickadee, Nuthatch, Titmouse, and Towhee.

plants for game birds

Barnyard Grass
Beggarweed
Benne
Buckwheat
Bur-clover
Canary Grass
Clover
Corn
Cowpea
Egyptian Wheat
Flax
Foxtail
Hemp
Lespedeza
Millet
Rye
Sesame
Sesbania
Sorghum
Soybean
Sudan Grass
Sunflower
Vetch
Winter Pea

will attract game birds such as Mourning Doves and Quail and many seed-eating birds.

Local nurseries will suggest plants suitable for your soils and climate, and for landscape plans. When space permits, let a corner of your yard grow wild, with weeds and bushes which offer protection and nesting places for many birds.

Several books with valuable information on bird feeding are listed here.

selected readings

Attracting Birds: from the Prairies to the Atlantic by Vernon Davison, Thomas Y. Crowell Company, New York.

Audubon Guide to Attracting Birds, Doubleday.

Beginner's Guide to Attracting Birds, by Leon A. Hausman, Cornerstone Library, New York.

Bird Houses, Baths, and Feeding Shelters, Cranbrook Institute, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan.

Birds of North America, by Robins, Brunn, and Zim, Golden Press, New York.

Guide to Birds, by Roger Torre Peterson, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, Massachusetts.

How to to Attract the Birds, by Robert S. Lemmon, The Country Life Press, Garden City, New York.

How to Watch Birds, by Roger Barton, McGraw-Hill Book Co., New York.



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The Department works to assure the wisest choice in managing all our resources so each will make its full contribution to a better United States—now and in the future.

[First printing 1940, revised 1947, revised 1973]

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