



The John T. Huston – Dr. John D. Brumbaugh Nature Center  
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## Bird Feeder Fact Sheet

Bird watching, or birding, is the fastest growing hobby in America. Each year more and more people put feeders, bird baths, and nesting boxes out to attract birds to their yard. Having a bird feeding station in your yard will allow you to observe birds and their behavior up close. Bird feeding has no age limit, and anyone can do it. All you need to get started is a well-placed feeder and some bird seed. Once you get started, there are many additions you can make to your feeding station to attract a variety of bird species.

### COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS

When is a good time to start feeding birds?

-Any time is a good time! Bird species of one kind or another are actively feeding in and around your yard all year.

Why are no birds coming to my feeder?

-Sometimes this can be difficult to figure out. Patience is key, as it may take a while for the birds to find your feeder. Many birds discover feeders while passing through an area during migration or while moving about in foraging flocks. They can come and go very quickly, so you may have a few birds visiting and not even know it! You may also want to check the placement of your feeder (see Placement of your Feeder below).

### TYPES OF FEED

Sunflower seed: This comes in various types, but black oil sunflower seeds are typically preferred over other kinds. Shelled sunflower kernels are also available if you'd like to reduce the mess under your feeder. Cardinals, finches, chickadees, Blue jay, nuthatches, sparrows, doves, and Tufted titmouse are a few common species that readily eat this seed.

Cracked corn: Exactly what it sounds like, you get small bits of corn that are consumed by all the species mentioned above as well as grackles, blackbirds, and starlings.

Millet seed: Small round seeds that make up the majority of mixed seed blends. It is consumed mainly by doves, sparrows, and some finches.

Safflower seed: Looks like a small, white sunflower seed. Consumed typically by cardinals, Blue jay, and doves. It is a good substitute for sunflowers seeds if squirrels become a problem at your feeding station.

Thistle (Nyger) seed: Tiny, thin black seed usually sold separately from other seed types as it requires its own special feeder. Finches are the primary consumer of this seed type.

### TYPES OF FEED (Cont'd)

Suet: A cake or block of rendered beef fat with any number of seeds, nuts, fruits, or flavorings added which is a favorite of woodpeckers and nuthatches. Homemade suet is easy to make by following any number of recipes found on the internet.

### FEEDERS

Tube Feeder: This feeder should be filled with sunflower or safflower seed. Mixed seed blends are not recommended because most of it is wasted by birds looking for the sunflower seeds.

Hopper-type Feeder: Designed with a roof, it looks like a house full of seed with trays at the bottom for the birds to feed from. These feeders hold a good amount of seed, but distribute only a small amount at a time. Sunflower seeds, safflower or mixed seed blends can be used.

Platform Feeder: These feeders are good for birds that are too big for tube and hopper-type feeders. They can be hung up or designed to look like a small table. You can put sunflower, safflower, cracked corn, or mixed seed blends on a platform feeder.

Thistle Feeder: This is made specifically for thistle seed. Available in a number of styles and sizes, and some hanging tube feeders are designed to be converted for use with thistle seed.

Suet Feeder: A wire basket designed to hold a suet cake. One can also be made by drilling 1-1/2" diameter holes into a log that is 3" in diameter and 12-18" long. Filling the holes with suet and hanging it near a tree will attract woodpeckers and nuthatches.

### BIRD BATHS

A feeding station would not be complete without a source of water. There are many types of bird baths in all shapes and sizes. A heated bath is recommended in the winter. Make sure to clean the basin of your bird bath and replace the water regularly to keep the birds healthy.

### PLACEMENT OF YOUR FEEDER

An important part of feeding birds is to provide them with some nearby shelter. You want to place your feeder in a sunny area, but in a place close enough to trees and bushes for the birds to take cover. If the birds see your feeding station as a dangerous place, they will most likely avoid it, despite your best efforts. Also, avoid placing your feeder too close to windows so that the birds do not fly into them.

### CLEANING YOUR FEEDER

All bird feeders should be cleaned regularly with a mild bleach solution. This will help prevent the spread of disease from bird to bird and prevent birds becoming ill from moldy seed.

### MAKE IT COUNT!

Consider turning your love of feeding and observing birds into scientific data. Participate in Project Feeder Watch or the Great Backyard Bird Count each winter, or submit bird sightings anytime of the year to eBird.org!



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