

Feeding Birds in Winter

Manual



Bird Feeders

Pine Cone Feeder

To Make Pine Cone Bird Feeders, you will need:

- Pine Cones
- String for hanging
- Bird feed (from the pet store)
- Peanut Butter (or use LARD that is a great substitute)

These are so easy to do.... tie your string onto your pine cone bird feeder.

Get the kids to spread the peanut butter onto their pine cone bird feeder (yes this is messy, but it is great “Knife handling practice”).

Roll your peanut buttery pine cone in the bird seeds.
Make sure it is nice and compact.

And ta-da – your Pine Cone Bird Feeder is FINISHED! Now hang in the garden!



Bird Feeders

Bread Bird Feeder

As the weather gets colder and you need some indoor activities to keep kids busy, here's an oldie but a goodie: sit them at the kitchen table and have them transform stale slices of grainy bread by turning them into bird feeders that will keep cold-weather visitors happy outside your window.

All you need is a shallow dish of birdseed (available at most grocery or department stores, or even the dollar store) and some peanut butter or other nut butter.

Leave the bread out to dry completely, thread a thick needle and string or a wire or twist tie through the top of the bread slice (leave enough bread on top that it doesn't pull through), then spread it on both sides with sticky nut butter.

Douse each side in birdseed, turning it to coat and attach it to a sturdy branch in your back yard. Breakfast is served!



Bird Feeders

Gourd Bird Feeder

The first step is allowing the gourd to dry. Place the gourd in a dry spot and after a month give it a shake. When the gourd feels light and you can hear the seeds rattling around inside, the gourd is ready. It might take a few months...patience.

Next, I used a bread knife to cut the gourd in half. Once the gourd was cut in half, we could see that the inside was hollow...the seeds were perfectly dried. Seriously, it was pretty cool to see.

We cleaned out the seeds and used a fine drill bit to make the holes we would use for hanging the bird feeder. I positioned 3 holes evenly spaced around the gourd. Then I fed 3 pieces of thin wire through each hole. I simply twisted the wire to fasten it to the gourd. Once the wires were attached to the gourd, I brought all the wires together and created the hanger.

Finally, we filled the gourd with bird seed and hung them up in our little pine tree. Now we wait to see who will enjoy our little bird feeders. So, this project took some patience and some work with some tools...but in the end we created something really useful.



Bird Feeders

Soda Bottle Bird Feeder

If your child is allergic to peanuts, solid shortening can be substituted. Also check your bird seed to make sure it doesn't contain peanuts.

Another fun bird feeder to make that reuses material, is a water bottle bird feeder. You need a water bottle, scissors, pencils or spoons and bird seed.

Poke holes in water bottle where the pencil or spoon will go through. Then you need to cut a small hole above that one so the birds can perch on the pencil and reach in to get seeds. You can cut one set of holes or two as shown in the picture above. Once you have your holes cut, add your pencils or spoons and fill with seed.

What birds come to your feeder? The more mixed your seed, the greater the mix of birds, primarily finches, buntings, and sparrows, but also doves and others.

You can use not only the bottle but also canister or paper package.



Foods for Winter Bird Feeding

Winter: 'Tis the season for feeding birds all across North America, especially in those regions where it gets mighty cold and snowy. If you are a veteran bird feeder, you've probably gained lots of insight into the foods your backyard birds prefer. Perhaps you've learned through trial and error, or perhaps you did your homework and read up on the subject.

If you are just getting started in bird feeding, or if you are frustrated by a lack of success in attracting winter birds to your feeders, the first thing you need to determine is whether you are feeding the right foods. If you are not giving the birds what they want, you might not have many birds.

The following ten foods are extremely popular with backyard birds.

10. Black-oil sunflower seed. This seed is the hamburger of the bird world. Almost any bird that will visit a bird feeder will eat black-oil sunflower. Birds that can't crack the seeds themselves will scour the ground under the feeders, picking up bits and pieces. The outer shell of a black-oil sunflower seed is thinner and easier to crack than that of striped sunflower. Black-oil sunflower kernels have a higher fat content than striped sunflower seeds, and so make a great winter diet staple. Striped sunflower is still fine, and evening grosbeaks, cardinals, jays, and other big-billed birds may even prefer it slightly, but black-oil sunflower seed is better at attracting a wide variety of birds to your winter feeder. Hulled sunflower seeds, aka sunflower hearts, provide a no-mess option.

9. Peanuts. Shelled (which means without a shell), dry-roasted, and unsalted peanuts provide protein and fat, so they're a great fuel for birds in winter. Several major feeder manufacturers produce sturdy, efficient, tube-shaped feeders intended to serve peanuts. Woodpeckers, jays, nuthatches, chickadees, and titmice will readily visit a feeder for this high-energy food. Even cardinals and finches will eat peanuts. Whole peanuts—in the shell— attract jays and woodpeckers, but not smaller birds. Birds love peanut butter, too—just avoid brands that contain partially hydrogenated oil, aka trans fat. Be warned, though, that squirrels love peanuts in any form.

8. Suet. For birds in winter, fat is an excellent source of energy. Commercial suet blocks are available wherever birdseed is sold. Or look for raw suet in the meat aisle of your grocery store. Ask for it at the butcher counter if you don't see packages of it on display. It is fine to feed small chunks of raw suet to wild birds, but it does become rancid faster than commercial blocks, especially during warm weather. No suet feeder? No problem—just use an old mesh onion bag. For the adventurous, you can render raw suet to make your own longer-lasting blocks: Melt it down to liquid in a microwave or on the stovetop, monitoring it carefully. Remove and dispose of the unmelted bits, and allow it to harden.

7. Good mixed seed. Is there such a thing as BAD seed mix? You bet! Bad mixed seed has lots of filler in it—junk ingredients that most birds won't eat. Bad mixed seed can include dyed seed intended for pet birds, wheat, and some forms of red milo that only birds in the Desert Southwest seem to eat. Good mixed seed has a large amount of black-oil sunflower seed, cracked corn, white proso millet, and perhaps some peanut chips, sunflower hearts, and dried fruit. You get what you pay for when it comes to seed mixes. Read the ingredients on the bag, or make your own seed blend from the seeds mentioned above.

6. Nyjer/thistle seed. Although it can be expensive, Nyjer (aka thistle) seed is eagerly consumed by all the small finches—goldfinches, house, purple, and Cassin's finches, pine siskins, and redpolls. You need to offer this tiny seed in a specialized feeder of some kind. The two most commonly used types of thistle feeder are a tube feeder with small, thistle-seed-sized holes, and a thistle sock. A thistle sock is a fine-mesh, synthetic bag that is filled with Nyjer seed. Small finches can cling to this bag and pull seeds out through the mesh. Note: Nyjer can go rancid or moldy quickly in wet weather. A sure sign that it has gone off is when the birds stop visiting the feeder. Time to throw away what you've got and buy a fresh bag.

5. Safflower. This white, thin-shelled, conical seed is eaten by many birds and has the reputation for being the favorite food of the northern cardinal. Some feeder operators claim that safflower seed is not as readily eaten by squirrels and blackbirds. (Caveat: Your results may vary.) Feed safflower in any feeder that can accommodate sunflower seed. Avoid offering safflower on the ground in wet weather: It can quickly become soggy and inedible. You can buy safflower in bulk at seed and feed stores.

4. Cracked corn. Sparrows, blackbirds, jays, doves, quail, and squirrels are just a few of the creatures attracted to cracked corn. Depending on where you live you may also get turkeys, deer, elk, moose, and caribou. Fed in moderation, cracked corn will attract almost any feeder species. Some feeder operators use this food to lure the squirrels away from the bird feeders. Squirrels love corn—cracked or otherwise—best of all. Whole corn still on the cob is fine for squirrels, but not a good bird food because the kernels are too big and hard for most small birds to digest. Cracked corn is broken into smaller, more manageable bits that many birds will gobble up.

3. Mealworms. Most feeder birds, except goldfinches, will eat mealworms if you offer them. Live mealworms are available in bait stores or by mail order. Don't worry, mealworms aren't slimy and gross. In fact, they aren't even worms; they are larval stage of a beetle (*Tenebrio molitor*), if that makes you feel better. We grow our own mealworms in a tub of old-fashioned rolled oats, and feed them to the birds in a shallow ceramic dish. The dish has slippery sides so the worms can't crawl out. Bluebirds, in particular, go crazy for mealworms and will eat as many as you provide. That can result in an unbalanced diet, so we recommend no more than twenty mealworms per bluebird per day. Bags of freeze-dried mealworms are usually available in wild bird feeding stores and big-box hardware stores.

Bird Food

2. Fruit. Humans are supposed to eat at least three servings of fruit every day. Fruit is also an important dietary element for birds, but it can be hard to find in many areas in midwinter. Set out grapes, slices of citrus fruits, apple or banana slices, and even melon rinds, and watch the birds chow down. If you want to feed raisins, chop them up and soak them in warm water first to soften them up a bit. Offering fruit to tanagers and orioles is a traditional spring and summer feeding strategy, but many winter feeder birds will eat fruit, too.

1. Homemade bird treats. You can come up with your own recipes for winter bird treats. Smear peanut butter on a tree trunk, and poke some peanut bits into it. Melt suet in your microwave, and pour it into an ice-cube tray to harden. Before it solidifies, add peanut bits, raisins, apple bits, or other bird foods. Put the tray in your freezer to harden. Once it does, you've got cubed bird treats—easy to make and easy to use!



Wintering Birds



Great Tit



Coal Tit



Blue Tit



House Sparrow



Tree Sparrow



Corn Bunting



Chaffinch



Brambling



Yellowhammer

Wintering Birds



Hawfinch



Bullfinch



Siskin



Greenfinch



Goldfinch



Linnet



Wren



Goldcrest



Nuthatch

Wintering Birds



Blackbird



Mistle Thrush



Fieldfare



Redwing



Robin



Tree Creeper



Wall Creeper

Wintering Birds



Great Spotted Woodpecker



Middle Spotted Woodpecker



Green Woodpecker



Sparrowhawk



Goshawk

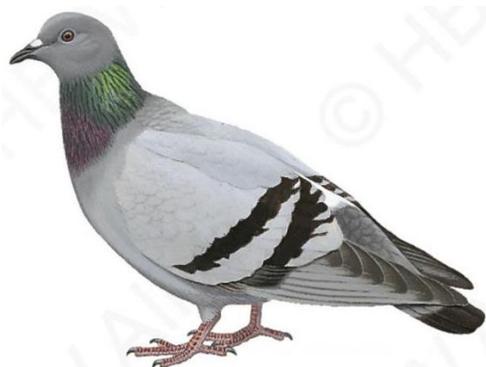
Wintering Birds



Laughing Dove



Collared Dove



Rock Pigeon



Wood Pigeon



M



F

Northern Harrier

Wintering Birds



Hooded Crow



Rook



Magpie



Jay



Jackdaw