



Andy's Garden

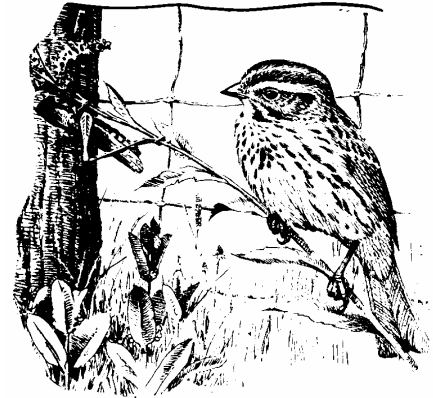
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FEEDING BIRDS THROUGH THE WINTER

Feeding birds can be a useful and entertaining activity throughout the year, but for many people bird feeding is mostly a winter sport. This is especially true in colder parts of the country where flocks of feeding birds may lend the only movement to an otherwise stark landscape. In cold climates, winter birds remind us that nature is alive and well in the midst of the deep freeze.



Winter feeding attracts more birds than summer feeding, and for a good reason. In the summertime most garden birds disperse and establish nesting territories which they do not leave as long as the young are in the nest. The only birds likely to come to a summer feeder are those that happen to be nesting in the backyard. In the winter most garden birds abandon their nesting territories and are more likely to be found in flocks.

Winter brings a change in food supply as well. In cold climates many insects become dormant during the winter and are unavailable as food for birds. Woodpeckers, nuthatches, and other insect eaters that brave the northern winters feed by preying on grubs and hibernating beetles found under tree bark, and they often supplement their intake with seeds, nuts, and berries.

The birds that do stay around in cold weather are faced with a special problem. They must eat large quantities of food to to keep warm, but some of that food can disappear under a pile of snow at any moment. No longer tied to their breeding territories, most winter birds do a very sensible thing - they cluster in places where nourishment and shelter are plentiful and sit out the bad weather. Turn your yard into such a place.

When we put out bird feeders we are asking birds to trade whatever other food they might find for the food we provide. Some argue that feeding birds tampers with the natural system and might be harmful. Might the presence of artificial feeding stations disrupt the migratory urge of some birds, leaving them victims of cold weather they cannot handle? This does not seem likely as birds migrate in response to a complex process of signals and cues which occur early in the fall when natural food is still abundant.

***Making the world beautiful
one flower at a time.***



Several nonmigratory species of birds come to depend on food you offer during the winter and if you are the only person in your neighborhood that feeds birds, it is a good idea to keep feeding them until spring has come to stay. This is especially true during bad weather when birds might not locate a new source of food quickly enough to stay alive.

WATER FOR WINTER BIRDS

In cold climates, winter birds can obtain drinking water from snow but are hard put to find open pools for bathing. It is not essential to keep birdbaths and pools open in freezing weather; wild birds get by without bathing for long periods. Birds seem to enjoy winter bathing, however, and many backyard birdwatchers enjoy providing water in winter. Keep the birdbath open by filling it with boiling water. The ice in the birdbath will quickly cool the hot water for birds to enjoy.

COMMON BIRDS ATTRACTED TO SELECTED FOOD

BLACK-STRIPED SUNFLOWER

NIGER (THISTLE)

BLACK OIL SUNFLOWER

MIXED SEED

Blue Jay	Goldfinch	Common Grackle	House Finch
Cardinal	House Finch	Goldfinch	Brown Headed Cowbird
Chickadee		House Finch	English Sparrow
Evening Grosbeak		Mourning Dove	Mourning Dove
House Finch		White Throated Sparrow	White Throated Sparrow
Purple Finch			
Tufted Titmouse			
Mourning Dove			
White Throated Sparrow			