

Once you have attracted birds to your backyard, take some time to enjoy them.

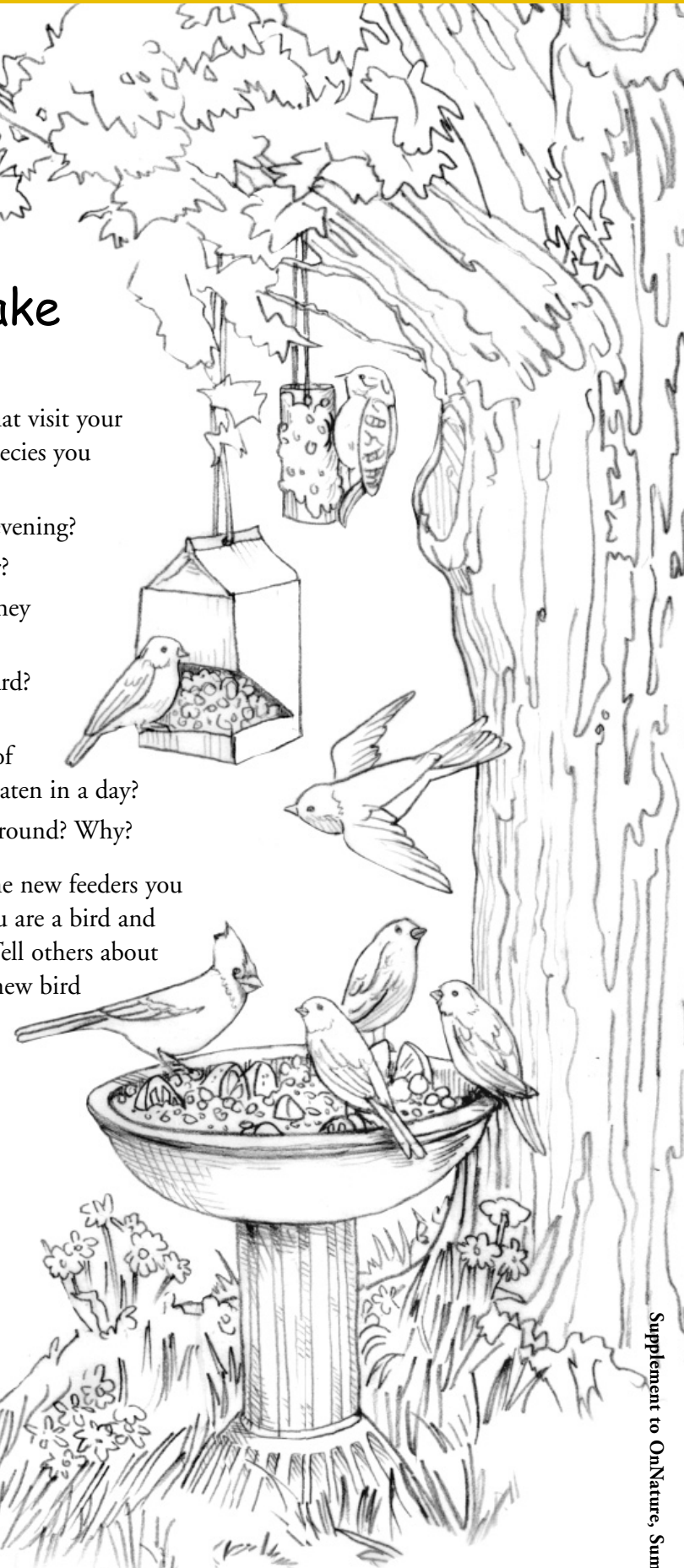
Take an **inventory of the birds** (and other creatures) that visit your birdfeeder and note their habits. As well as listing the species you observe, try to answer these questions:

- Do some birds come to feed only in the morning or evening?
- Do bird bullies scare other birds away from the feeder?
- Do the birds stay and “socialize” while eating, or do they “dine and dash”?
- Do birds prefer to eat in certain places in your backyard? Why?
- Does the weather (rain and wind) affect the number of birds that come to the feeder or the amount of food eaten in a day?
- Do some birds eat only seeds that have fallen to the ground? Why?

Photograph, draw or paint your feathered friends at the new feeders you have made. Write a story about the birds, or pretend you are a bird and tell about the adventure you had finding a new feeder. Tell others about the fun you’ve had building feeders and watching your new bird friends. Help others make feeders for their backyards!

If you want to learn more about birds in your area or become involved in helping to preserve habitats for birds, check out these websites:

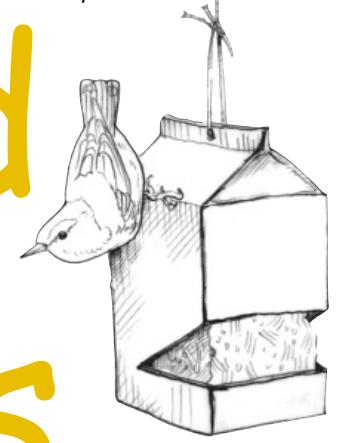
Ontario Nature: www.ontarionature.org
 Project Feeder Watch: www.bsc-eoc.org/national/pfw.html
 Bird Studies Canada: www.bsc-eoc.org



Supplement to OnNature, Summer 2007

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Feed the Birds



Nothing says summer like the chirping of songbirds. Don't take your feathered friends for granted, though: provide them with a feeder or two and invite them into your backyard.

Some birds primarily eat insects, some sip nectar, and others dine on seeds, such as sunflower or niger seeds, or eat fruit and berries. Providing a variety of tasty treats for birds will attract many different species.

Many people think that “backyard” birds need to be fed only during the winter, but this is not the case. True, seeds and insects are naturally abundant in the warm months, but at this time chicks of many species are still dependent on their parents for food. You can help birds and keep them coming to your yard by providing food all year round.

Because our cities are getting bigger and bigger — a process known as urban sprawl — bird habitat is decreasing and so too are the seeds and insects that birds need to survive. Pesticides used on lawns, shrubs and trees kill many of the insects that birds and other creatures eat. Providing birdfeeders and keeping them stocked year-round can help offset the problems that *we* have created.

The seed combination that seems to satisfy the hunger of the widest variety of birds is:

- 50 percent sunflower seeds
- 35 percent millet (the seed of a type of cereal plant)
- 15 percent finely cracked corn

Be sure to store this seed in a cool, dry location in a tightly sealed container.



If your aim is to attract specific birds to your backyard, you will need to know not only what types of birds live in your area, but also what kind of feeder and food they prefer. Although you can buy fancy, expensive birdfeeders from stores, homemade feeders work well too and are fun to make.

The real reward comes when the first bird visits your creation! Whatever feeders you use, cleaning them regularly is essential. If the feed gets wet, it can become mouldy and make birds sick.

Feeding birds seeds and nuts

To attract cardinals, sparrows, chickadees, finches, doves, juncos and jays, build a carton or tube feeder from recycled material and fill it with the seed mix or peanuts. Reusing a cardboard milk carton or pop bottle and making it into a birdfeeder shows that you take the “Reduce, reuse, recycle” motto to heart.

You can use a milk or juice carton of any size to make a feeder. Wash the carton well and carefully punch a hole in the top using a sharpened pencil. Use a utility knife (always with the help of an adult) to cut a v-shaped hole in the carton as shown in the illustration. Thread some heavy string through the hole you made so that you can tie your new feeder to a tree branch. Because your feeder is light, hang it somewhere out of the wind so that it will not blow around. Smaller, agile birds such as titmice and sparrows will use the feeder despite the wind. Place a small amount of feed in the bottom of the feeder, and be sure to check it every day and fill as needed. When the carton becomes too soggy from rain or damaged by the wind, simply recycle it and make a new feeder!

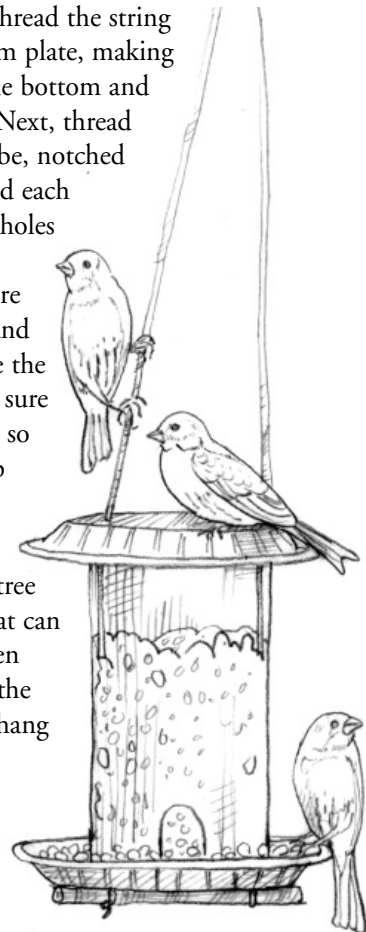
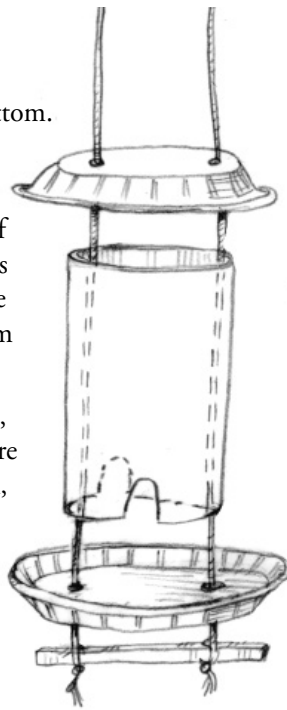


With a little ingenuity, you can turn an empty pop bottle into a seed feeder. You'll need scissors, a pencil and these materials:

- 2-litre plastic pop bottle, washed and dried
- 2 pieces of string about 50 cm long
- 30-cm-long ruler or stick the diameter of a pencil
- 2 disposable aluminum plates

Follow these steps:

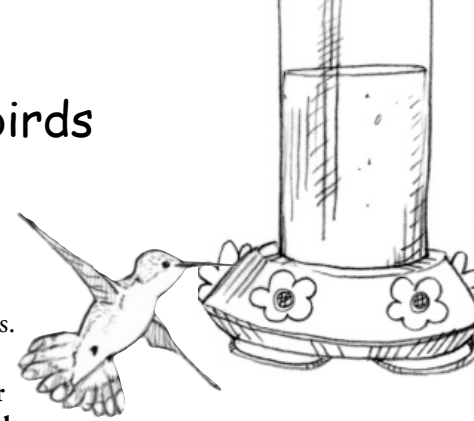
1. Make the pop bottle into a tube by carefully cutting off the top and bottom. Recycle these pieces.
2. Carefully cut two small semicircles on opposite sides of the same end of the tube (these holes will allow seeds to flow out of the tube and onto the feeding tray — one of the aluminum plates).
3. Tie both strings to the ruler or stick, as shown in the illustration. To figure out where the strings should be tied, position the bottle in the middle of the string. Then tie the strings to the stick at the edges of the bottle.
4. Place the tube in the centre of one of the aluminum plates and use a pencil to mark the location of two holes on the plate through, which you will thread the string. The holes should be opposite one another and just inside the tube. Mark similar holes on the second aluminum plate.
5. To assemble your feeder, thread the string through the first aluminum plate, making sure that the stick is on the bottom and the plate is right side up. Next, thread the strings through the tube, notched end down, and then thread each string through one of the holes in the second aluminum plate, this time making sure the plate is upside down and the strings are parallel. Tie the strings at the top, making sure that there is enough space so that you can move the top plate upward to refill your feeder.
6. Hang your feeder from a tree branch or hooked pole that can be purchased from a garden centre. If the wind blows the feeder around too much, hang a small weight (such as a rock in an old sock) from the centre of the stick.



Feeding birds nectar

A nectar feeder will attract hummingbirds, orioles and tanagers. **You can buy an inexpensive nectar feeder, but make the nectar solution yourself by following this simple recipe.**

In a large pot, boil four cups of water and add one cup of sugar. Stir until the sugar has dissolved, and let the solution cool. Store it in a tightly sealed container in the refrigerator for up to three days. Every two or three days, you should discard any uneaten nectar and thoroughly wash the feeder.

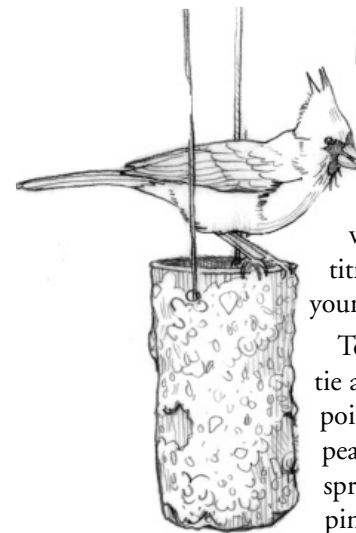


Feeding birds peanut butter or suet

You can attract chickadees, nuthatches, woodpeckers, jays, juncos, flickers, wrens, titmice, brown creepers and bluebirds to your yard by providing suet or peanut butter.

To make a feeder from an open pine cone, tie a string to it so that it will hang with the pointed end up. Make a gooey mixture of peanut butter and millet. With your fingers, spread this bird-friendly tasty treat into the pine cone. Hang it from a pine tree or in a sheltered spot.

If you can't find any pine cones, use a cardboard tube from a toilet paper roll instead. Carefully punch two holes through the tube on each side about two centimetres from the top, and thread the string through them to create a large loop that can be used to hang your feeder. Spread the peanut butter on the outside of the tube. Roll the peanut-butter-covered tube in millet until it is completely covered. Voilà! An instant birdfeeder!

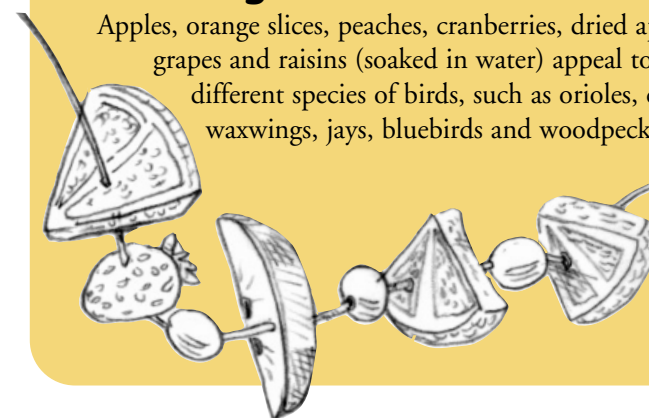


Feeding birds fruit

Apples, orange slices, peaches, cranberries, dried apricots, grapes and raisins (soaked in water) appeal to many different species of birds, such as orioles, cedar waxwings, jays, bluebirds and woodpeckers.

Place small pieces of fruit in a store-bought suet cage or a clean mesh bag (the kind that onions or oranges come in). You can also string the fruit on heavy thread using a dull needle and hang the tasty garland from a tree branch, or add a few pieces of fruit to the seed mixture you place on a platform feeder.

Whichever feeder you use, remove any mouldy or spoiled fruit, which could make birds sick.



Suet is animal fat. Your local grocer or butcher might give you some for free. If not, you can use lard, which is found in the baking aisle at grocery stores.

Follow this simple recipe to make a suet or lard mixture that you can use in the summer, when either on its own might melt in the sun.

You'll need:

- 1 cup lard or suet
- 1 cup peanut butter (the crunchy kind is best)
- 2 cups quick-cooking rolled oats
- 2 cups cornmeal
- a handful of raisins or seeds
- 1/2 to 1 cup all-purpose flour

Follow these steps:

1. In a medium-sized pot, melt the lard and the peanut butter on medium heat.
2. Remove from heat, and stir in the other ingredients, adding the flour a little at a time until the mixture is no longer runny.
3. You can form this mixture in several ways.

- Fill a small, clean milk or juice carton with the mixture and place it in the freezer. When the mixture is frozen, use a utility knife to cut a wide v-shaped notch in the carton, just as you did when making the seed feeder. Carefully punch a hole in the top of the carton using a sharpened pencil. Using a short string, hang the feeder from a pine branch or in another sheltered spot.
- You can also simply form the cooled suet into a large ball about the size of a baseball and place it inside a mesh bag. Tie a knot in the end of the bag and, using string, hang it from a tree.

