

HOW TO SUPPORT BIRDS IN WINTER



HOW DO THEY DO IT?!

Not all birds will fly south for the winter months. Those that stay face the seemingly impossible to survive!

There are three main obstacles that residential wintering populations face - staying warm, finding food and finding water.

Many species use adaptations or behaviours to survive the cold. For example, some species make their homes closer to the ground in the winter to avoid harsh wind chills. Others may congregate in large groups to stay warm and to stay informed of new food sources!

Regardless of how each species survives, it is always an incredible and inspiring feat, and each of us can do our part to help them.

- **Every year, people in North America spend over \$122 BILLION on bird-related activities.**
- **1 in 4 American adults is a bird watcher.**
- **60 million people watch birds, making it the biggest spectator sport in North America! More people watch birds than hockey and football combined.**
- **In the United Kingdom, more than half of all adults feed garden birds.**

Feeding birds can help them overcome natural food shortages, survive periods of severe winter weather and help them become better breeders in the spring.

If you decide to feed your garden birds, it is vital to do so responsibly and safely. It is also essential to continue feeding them throughout the winter as they will learn to depend on the supply for survival.

Feeders alone won't provide all of the natural proteins and vitamins that a bird needs. You can help by creating bird-friendly gardens that provide sources of natural foods as well. If you offer both natural food and feeder food, your garden will be visited year-round by a host of different birds.

Unlike humans, birds need high levels of saturated fat. They need a high energy content to keep warm in cold weather since their body reserves are quickly used up. Birds have high body temperatures and rapid metabolisms. For instance, a Sparrow's heartbeat is 460 bpm!

WHAT TO FEED

BLACK SUNFLOWER SEEDS: Excellent year-round food. The hearts (husked kernels) are a great no-mess food.

NYJER SEEDS: Small, black seeds with high oil content. A favourite of American Goldfinches & Pine Siskins.

PEANUTS: Rich in fat, but can be high in a natural toxin which can kill birds. Buy from a reputable dealer such as [Wild Birds Unlimited](#). Salted or dry roasted peanuts should be avoided.

FAT BALLS & SUET: Excellent winter food. Be careful of the mesh bags as they can trap or injure wild birds. It is best to remove the bag before putting it out.

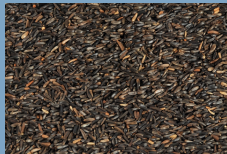
LIVE FOOD: Mealworms! They must be fresh. Remove dead or discoloured ones as they can cause salmonella poisoning.

COOKED RICE (WITHOUT SALT) IS OK: Uncooked rice is less attractive to birds.

BREAKFAST CEREAL (IN SMALL QUANTITIES) IS OK: Best offered dry because it quickly becomes mush when it gets wet.



BLACK SUNFLOWER SEEDS



NYJER SEEDS



PLAIN PEANUTS



MEALWORMS



COOKED RICE



FAT BALLS & SUET

WHAT NOT TO FEED

NO COOKED PORRIDGE OR OATS: They harden around a bird's beak.

NO MIXTURES WITH SPLIT PEAS, BEANS, DRIED RICE OR LENTILS: Only OK for large birds like pigeons and doves, keeping smaller species away.

NO MIXTURES WITH PINK OR GREEN LUMPS: They are dog biscuit pieces and cannot be digested.

NO COOKING FAT: When meat juices blend, smearing can happen which is not good for bird feathers. It is also a breeding ground for bacteria. Lard and beef suet on their own is fine. They re-solidify and are not as attractive to bacteria.

NO PET FOOD: It will attract cats.

NO MILK: Bird guts are not designed to digest milk. Mild, grated cheese is OK.

NO POWDERED OR DEHYDRATED COCONUT: It can swell inside a bird's stomach. Give fresh coconut only in the shell.

NO BREAD: It provides no goodness or nutrients and swells in their stomach.

IMPORTANT FOOD TIPS

- Remove stale or mouldy food. It is a breeding ground for salmonella bacteria and other harmful and deadly diseases.
- Large quantities of food scattered on the ground may attract rats and mice. Try placing food on a platform or tray instead so it can be removed and cleaned.
- Clean and wash your bird table and hanging feeders regularly. Ideally, use a 5% disinfectant solution and move feeding stations to a new area close by to prevent food gathering in one spot. Hanging feeders should be within 1M (3.3 FT) of the house to avoid the likelihood of bird-window strikes.



CHECK THIS OUT!



PROJECT FEEDER WATCH: Feeders are a great way to learn about wildlife and get close to birds! Feeding birds is supported by Bird Studies Canada and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Project Feeder Watch is a citizen-science project where you count birds at your feeder between November and April. [VISIT THE WEBSITE HERE](#)

DON'T FORGET ABOUT WATER



- The #1 way to attract birds is to put out clean water. Most small birds need water twice a day to drink and to bathe. It is essential to keep feathers in good condition.
- There is some evidence that suggests birds that bathe during icy weather risk having it freeze on their feathers, which can be very harmful. To avoid this, simply place large rocks or pieces of wood in the dish to prevent the space to bathe and remove again in warm weather.
- When providing water make sure it is fresh and you clean the dish on a regular basis without any chemicals.

GET INVOLVED IN CITIZEN SCIENCE



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Christmas Bird Count : [VISIT HERE](#)

Christmas Bird Count For Kids : [VISIT HERE](#)

Started in 1900, the Christmas Bird Count is North America's longest-running Citizen Science project. Counts happen in over 2000 localities throughout the Western Hemisphere.



Project Nest Watch : Project NestWatch is a long-term monitoring program of breeding birds and nesting activity in Canada. Data gathered through this project provide valuable information on the health of bird populations and changes in the environment. [VISIT HERE](#)



Celebrate Urban Birds : A very comprehensive citizen science program with tons of information and action projects. [VISIT HERE](#)



EBird From Cornell : Transforms your bird sightings into science and conservation. Plan trips, find birds, make lists, explore range maps and bird migration. [VISIT HERE](#)



Global Bird Collision Mapper : A place for reporting and viewing the locations of bird collisions with buildings across the globe. Help gather valuable data today. [VISIT HERE](#)



VARC: Another great way to get involved with citizen science is to volunteer! From bird banding opportunities, public outreach and education to general maintenance work, VARC has plenty of opportunity for a volunteer just like you! [VISIT HERE](#)

Gardening with Native Plants

in the Lower Mainland and Fraser Valley

Your guide to creating a backyard that supports nature



OTHER WAYS TO SAVE BIRDS

PLANT NATIVE SPECIES: Planting native species means that we are planting trees and flowers that are naturally from the area. This gives birds, and other wild animals access to the nutrition they need, which is proper for their diet. Conversely, planting non-native species can make wildlife sick and disrupt the environment in other ways. Visit the [Fraser Valley Conservancy](#) for more information on what species are native to the Vancouver area and why they are beneficial. Also, visit the [Habitat Network](#) for great advice on planning and designing your garden to be bird and nature-friendly.

KEEP PETS INDOORS & ON LEASH: Cats are excellent hunters! Unfortunately, using a bell and a collar does not stop these whiskered experts. The best way to protect wild birds and your pet from outdoor injury and disease is to keep them indoors. For dogs, straying off designated paths in parks can be dangerous as many animals, including some birds, make their nests and homes on the ground. They are often hard to see until it is too late. Keeping your dog on a leash is a great way to protect ground-dwelling birds and wildlife.

PREVENT WINDOW STRIKES: Birds cannot understand glass. In fact, what they often perceive is a reflection of their habitat (trees or sky) mirrored from the surroundings. The issue is so bad it is one of the top human-related causes of bird loss. However, it is entirely preventable. Simply place visual markers on the entire outside surface of the glass, with designs being no farther apart than 5cmx5cm. Canadian companies like [Feather Friendly](#) are leaders in this life-saving field and offer applications for residential homes. Visit their online store with this coupon code, and \$1.00 per roll will be donated to VARC! Coupon Code: VARC2021

BUY SHADE GROWN COFFEE: Buying certified BIRD FRIENDLY® SHADE-GROWN and not just Fair Trade coffee is vital for protecting important habitats. Canadian companies like [Birds and Beans](#) make it easy to make the switch for our neotropical migrant birds!

WAIT!

Don't stop yet. There are many more easy things you can do to save birds and nature!

Visit our website for more:

www.birdvancouver.com/what-you-can-do/