

# Attracting Birds to Your Property

By Jerry Walls, Christmas Creek Nature Preserve

Four (4) major criteria: Water, Food, Shelter, Places to Raise Young

## **Water:**

Essential; not all birds are attracted to feeders but all require water for drinking and bathing.

More birds are attracted to a source of water than anything else!

Can be as simple as a shallow container placed on the ground or an extravagant system.

Moving water is best. Attracts more birds plus less chance of mosquitoes. Dripper, mister, etc.

Clean out receptacle regularly especially in warmer months.

Place water source near shelter but not so close as to allow predators to prey on birds from immediate hiding places next to the water.

## **Food:**

Seed—black oil sunflower is #1 choice!!!

White proso millet—ground feeders (doves, sparrows, etc) plus painted buntings.

Safflower seed—many birds like it, squirrels find it has a bitter taste.

Thistle—goldfinches, pine siskins.

Caution: many cheap bird seed mixes contain “filler” seeds such as milo and sorghum which go uneaten and spoil on the ground, attract rodents, etc.

Suet—provides protein in winter (low insect populations)

Peanuts—whole or shelled

Peanut butter—spread on pine cones and hang

Jelly—orioles

Fruit—bananas, oranges, grapes, apples, etc. Insects—birds plus butterflies as a bonus!

Nectar—hummingbirds — 4 parts water to 1 part sugar, boil water, add sugar, stir.

Do not add red food coloring, honey, etc. Refrigerate unused portion, clean feeds out ever 3 to 4 days.

Mealworms—bluebirds, woodpeckers and many others.

Places to purchase bird seed and bird feeders—Tractor Supply, Wal Mart, Home Depot, Lowe's, feed stores, garden supply stores, Wild Birds Unlimited (good information source).

Types of feeders: hopper, platform, tube, suet, peanut, hummingbird, oriole, fruit spike feeders and more.

Squirrels—protect feeders from above and below with baffle(s)! Place feeder(s) 8 feet from trees, fence, etc. Place baffle/feeder at least 4 feet from ground.

## **Shelter:**

Provide flora (grasses, shrubs, vines, flowers, trees, etc).

Consider natives; they use less water and are use to our climate and soil, plus birds historically feed on natives. Include evergreens for shelter in the winter.

Flora — ground cover, under-story, mid-story, canopy.

Roost boxes

Brush piles

Dead trees/snags (consider your homeowners association rules/deed restrictions).



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## Places to Raise Young:

Provide flora — ground cover, under story, mid-story, canopy.

Nest boxes—come in all shapes and sizes. Consider entrance hole diameter, distance from hole to bottom of box, floor size, ventilation holes near top (on sides or in front), drainage holes in bottom, thickness of wood (generally thicker is better insulation), easy opening for cleaning.

Placement—directional facing of entrance hole, height above ground, etc.

Baffle—discourage raccoons, snakes and other predators.

Clean out box(es) after each brood fledges.

Enjoy our feathered neighbors in your yard! You will appreciate and enjoy their presence and be rewarded with hours of simple enjoyments!

Brown or bulking materials include sawdust, wood chips, twigs and branches, straw, dried leaves, dry grass, ground corncobs, shucks and corn stalks, seed hulls, shredded cardboard and paper.

