

Backyard Birds

A Sure Sign of Spring



Is there anything more relaxing than watching birds in your backyard? Take steps now to enhance your backyard by sharing it with a variety of wild Wisconsin birds this spring and summer.

While bird feeders supplement the natural food provided by plants, birds need clean water for drinking and bathing. Increase your chances of attracting birds by providing water in a birdbath, a small pond, a recirculating waterfall or a shallow dish. Cleaning feeders and baths is crucial in preventing the spread of dis-

ease among birds.

FEEDERS: Once or twice a month, immerse your seed feeders in a nine-to-one water-bleach solution, rinsing them thoroughly. If you suspect the presence disease, disinfect them twice as often.

BIRDBATHS:

Empty the water every day. Brush or wipe them clean and rinse, then refill them with fresh water. Do not use bleaches or harsh chemicals to clean bird baths as it can harm the birds.

Maintaining the

birdbath regularly will deter the growth of algae.

FOOD: Offering a wide choice of foods that are high in fat and protein at a variety of feeders will attract most "backyard" birds all year round. Check the composition of packaged birdseed mixtures to determine which species it will attract.

GROUND: Food that sits on the ground for even a short time is exposed to contamination by dampness, mold, bacteria, animal droppings, lawn fertiliz-

ers and pesticides. Rake or sweep up any uneaten seeds and hulls on the ground when you clean your feeders.

STORAGE: Store seed in a dry place in metal rodent-proof containers, and do not use it if it becomes moldy. Do not save seed from the spring to the next fall; seed spoils quickly in warm weather. If the seed in your feeders becomes moldy from rain or humidity, dispose of it (do not pour it on the ground) and clean the feeders.

LOCATION: Arrange feeders at different levels to avoid crowding and attract the greatest variety of species. Set them so they're convenient to refill. Place feeders at least 10 yards from windows to avoid collisions. Position feeders about 10 feet from nearby natural cover such as trees, shrubs or loosely stacked brush piles to provide refuge for birds while they wait their turn to feed.

Going on vacation? Don't worry that birds will have trouble surviving. "No research has shown that birds will starve if feeding is stopped during normal weather," says Christine Reel of the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology (WSO). For more detailed information on caring for wild birds, visit the **Wisconsin Society for Ornithology** at www.wsobirds.org.

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