

Attract More Birds by Offering a Variety of Seeds, Feeding Locations

Backyards in Nebraska are common feeding sites for at least 15 to 20 species of birds. In addition to the trees, shrubs and flowers providing basic habitat, adding a bird feeder can bring birds out and close where you can see them. To enjoy observing such great diversity when feeding birds, it is important to offer a variety of food sources in a safe, versatile location.

Bird diets can range from seeds and fruit to insects or nectar. But regardless of these preferences, your feeder will attract more birds if the food is in place before the first cold spell. In fact, when severe weather strikes for several days in a row, supplemental food can increase survival rates, mostly because natural food sources are covered in snow and ice or just not available.

Extreme weather conditions create a need for protection against the wind as well. An ideal location for feeders is an open area sheltered from strong winds and within 10 feet of cover. Not only does this provide protection from the weather but a place for quick escape from predators as well.

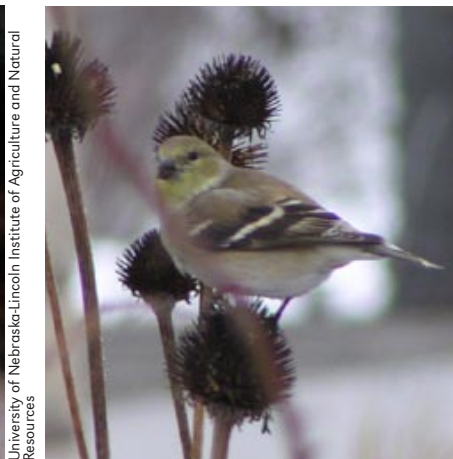
It is a good idea to keep feeders a safe distance from windows to help decrease the occurrence of window collisions. Alternatively, placing feeders fairly close to windows can prevent injuries because the birds can see the window or, if they should strike the window when taking off from the feeder, they won't be flying very fast. Birds often see windows as an open flight path when fleeing from feeders.

Feeders can be bought commercially or made at home. A good feeder should protect the seed from rain and snow, dispense feed gradually to reduce spillage and be easy to clean and fill. Hopper-style feeders are most common, but other types include specialty feeders for thistle seed and counterbalanced perch feeders. Some feeders are designed to sit near ground level, while others can be hung aboveground or mounted.

Remember to keep bird feeders



This female cardinal is one of many common year-round and migratory birds that visit backyard bird feeders each winter.



American goldfinch

clean and disinfect them on a regular basis. Disease is more likely to spread in areas where a large number of birds congregate. Remove wet food and keep spilled seed and hulls raked to prevent the growth of mold.

There is a wide variety of seeds to choose from. The most widely preferred seed is small, black oil-type sunflower seeds because they are high in energy and have thin, easy to crack shells. However, white proso millet, finely cracked corn, safflower and unsalted nutmeats are good options to try.

Regardless of the specific seeds used, all feed needs to be fresh. Often-times commercially packaged mixtures

are convenient but contain high amounts of filler seed that go to waste. It often is a better option to buy quality seeds that birds will prefer in bulk and mix at home. Fresh bulk seed is most commonly found in stores specializing in feeding birds.

Grit and suet are two optional supplements increasing the likelihood of birds visiting a feeder. Grit is used in the gizzard of birds to grind down feed and also serves as a source of calcium. Sand, fine poultry or canary grit, eggshells or crushed limestone can be mixed with the seed or placed in a tray or on the ground.

Suet or hard beef fat is available in commercial no-melt packages or directly from the butcher or grocery meat counter. Mixtures made of animal fat mixed with other ingredients like seeds or nutmeats are an excellent source of energy for birds over the winter months. Suet can be fed in onion or orange sacks and in suet feeders on or near trees and wooden posts. Keep suet high and out of the sun to prevent melting.

Overall, it is fun and educational to experiment with different food in various locations to determine what best suits the area and interest level.

Source: Ron Johnson, Ph.D., UNL wildlife specialist

Wild Bird Seed Mix Recipe

You can make your own mix. It may cost you a little more initially, but you'll have far less waste, so you'll end up saving money. Try this blend:

- 25 pounds of black-oil sunflower seed
- 10 pounds of white proso millet
- 10 pounds of cracked corn

Pour the seeds into a rodent-proof, metal container and mix well. A new, clean metal trash can works well. Your container should be stored in a dry, cool place like an unheated garage. Check the seed often for mold. If any seed appears questionable, throw it out. If you plan to store your bird seed in the house, keep it in the freezer to prevent pantry pest infestations.

ewf needs volunteers

Volunteers are needed for **earth wellness festival** on Wednesday, March 21 and Thursday, March 22 at Southeast Community College in Lincoln. Approximately 3,000 fifth-graders participate in this annual event that involves students in creative and innovative environmental education activities.

Each year, over 250 volunteers take part in **earth wellness festival activities**. As classroom escorts, bus greeters, presenter and registration assistants; volunteers are essential to the success of this event. You may choose to volunteer one or both days, all day (8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.) or morning only (8:30 a.m.-noon). In return, you receive a festival T-shirt, a free lunch, an invitation to our celebration party following the event and an opportunity to participate in a rewarding volunteer experience.

Please contact Meghan Sittler at 472-2712 or via e-mail at msittler2@unl.edu for more information.



Beekeeping Workshop, Feb. 17 & April 7

A two-day workshop, "Beginning Beekeeping Workshop—Everything You Need to Know to Get Started in Apiculture" for beginning beekeepers will be held at UNL Agricultural Research and Development Center near Mead, NE on Saturday, Feb. 17, 9 a.m.–5 p.m. and Saturday, April 7, 10 a.m.–2 p.m.

Some topics covered on Feb. 17 include honey bee biology and behavior, Nebraska honey plants, hive location for best survival and production and managing honey bee diseases. The April 7 workshop is a hands-on session for participants. Registration is not required for the April workshop. This session will be a day to meet other beekeepers and share a potluck meal. Those attending will be able to open and examine honey bee colonies with guidance from members of the Nebraska Beekeepers Association.

Registration fee: \$20 per person or \$20 per family plus \$8 for each family member accompanying the registered participant. Cost includes refreshments, lunch and a workbook for new beekeepers. Preregistration is required. For a brochure, go to <http://entomology.unl.edu/beekeeping/> or contact Keith Glewen at e-mail kglewen1@unl.edu or (402) 624-8030.



Fun Facts about Honey Bees

- Honey bees have five eyes—two compound eyes and three simple eyes. Drones have bigger compound eyes than either workers or the queen, probably an advantage in catching the queen during the nuptial flight.
- Honey bees see colors, but not all the same ones we see. Humans see all colors of the rainbow; red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, violet. Honey bees cannot see in the red end of the spectrum. To a bee, red looks black. But, bees can also see in the ultraviolet range, which is invisible to humans. They also can see polarized light.
- Bees have been producing honey for at least 150 million years. Prehistoric humans robbed feral hives for honey, but actual beekeeping began about 4000 BC. Advanced beekeeping existed in Egypt, during the time of pharaohs and honey is mentioned repeatedly in the Bible.
- The area now comprising Israel and the Palestine autonomous region was referred to as "the land of milk and honey." (Exodus 3:8)
- German peasants were required to give their feudal lords a payment of honey and beeswax.
- Europeans brought the European honey bee to America in 1638. Native Americans referred to the honey bee as the "white man's flies"
- Most early beekeepers were members of the clergy. They kept bees for the beeswax, used for church candles.
- 80 percent of the pollination of the fruits, vegetables and seed crops in the U.S. is accomplished by honey bees.
- A queen is the largest bee in the hive. She can lay up to 3,000 eggs per day.
- Drones have no stinger and no other purpose than to mate with an unmated queen. In the fall, they are uncharitably driven out of the hive to die.
- To make one pound of honey, honey bees must fly 55,000 miles and visit approximately two million flowers.
- One average worker bee will make only 1/12 teaspoon of honey in their lifetime.
- Honey bees will visit between 50–100 flowers during one collection trip.