



NATIONAL BIRD-FEEDING SOCIETY

Autumn Signals Start of Feeding Frenzy

Fall is the traditional beginning of the greatest season for the most number of players.

Football? No way. And it's not the World Series either. It's the classic start for the year-long season of bird feeding. That's right. More people feed birds than watch football or baseball or any other sport, or participate in any other outdoor activity. Bird feeding is in. More than 50 million Americans already have season tickets.

To attract the widest variety of birds, landscape your property with plants that offer cover and natural foods for them, as well as make your yard look more beautiful. And provide a source of water as well.

The majority of North American birds suffer from loss of habitat. We need to make a concerted effort to slow down or reverse this process. Investment in avian habitat will return valuable dividends for birds and tons of backyard enjoyment for us. Now, as a new season is just beginning, it's a perfect time to get started.

Take an inventory of your feeders. Ideally you want to place feeders in areas that offer nearby cover for the birds and permit you to watch the bird activity from your favorite inside chair. Having some dense ground cover, shrubs or trees (especially conifers) close by will help protect birds from predators.

Feeder selection should match the foods you offer. For example, tubular feeders with Nyjer attract goldfinches and pine siskins. Tube feeders for sunflower attract house finches and chickadees. Black oil sunflower, perhaps the best all-around seed, also can be served from hopper feeders for cardinals and other small birds. Hoppers hold large quantities and require less time for maintenance and filling.

Flat feeding trays positioned close to the ground accommodate doves, sparrows and



other ground feeding birds that generally like mixed seed. These trays should have a lip to prevent seed from falling off. An optional cover is helpful to prevent rain and snow from fouling the seed. The bottom of the tray can be wood or fine mesh screen, which permits better drainage.

Beef suet, a good substitute for insects, appeals to insectivorous birds, such as woodpeckers and nuthatches. Suet can be offered in wire-mesh feeders or something as simple as a mesh fruit bag from the grocery store.



With appropriate backyard habitat and the proper combination of seed and feeders, you should be able to attract a good assortment of birds. Your immediate surroundings, whether urban brick, woodlot or creek, will affect your success, but having neighbors who feed birds will help. Birds tend to make the rounds of

“food patches,” and a neighborhood smorgasbord is great incentive for feathered guests.

Fall is a season of change. Trees take on beautiful yellow and orange hues, days grow cooler and shorter and many birds migrate to southern climes. Depending on where you live, an assortment of residents and migrants will settle in your area. Invite them to your backyard.

The author, Eldon Greij, president of Avian Enterprises, is a renowned bird authority.

FALL FITNESS

Plant bird friendly shrubs and trees that will bear fruit and nuts as well as give shelter for wildlife.

Make a brush pile out of branches from your tree-trimming projects to provide cover for the birds during the cold weather.

Take down and clean all your summer nest boxes. You can rehang them, put some fresh wood shavings on the bottom and perhaps some birds will use them for roosting in severe weather.

The Bird's-Eye reView

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Helping people create bird-friendly backyards