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Make Your Backyard a Destination for Birds

If you have wondered how to attract more birds to your yard and encourage them to stay awhile, a good way to do so is to provide feed for them. However, the type of birds you attract will depend on the type of feed you put out, the type of feeder you use, and the location of the feeder.

There are several types of feeders, and different birds will be attracted to different styles. The most common are platform feeders, tube feeders, suet feeders, and hanging feeders. Sparrows, Juncos, and Towhees are considered ground feeders and prefer table-like or platform feeders on or just above the ground. While shrub- and tree-top-feeding birds such as Chickadees, Cardinals, and Finches will prefer hopper and tube feeders that can be hung up off the ground. Location, high or low, as well as surrounding cover, will have as much to do with the likelihood of birds using the feeder as does the type of feeder. Having cover nearby the feeder will give birds more protection from predators and make them feel safer and more comfortable visiting the feeder.

Along with cover, water is another important consideration in backyard habitats, especially in the winter, when sources of water may be hard for birds to find. A birdbath may attract as many birds as the feeders. Using a birdbath heater in winter helps ensure birds have access to water even when temperatures drop below freezing.

Because food can be more difficult for birds to find during the winter, bird feeders play an important role in the winter. If you are new to feeding birds and are wondering what type of feed birds prefer, black oil sunflower seeds are the most appealing to a variety of bird species, according to Kansas State Horticulture Specialist Ward Upham. Upham recommends using a bird feed mix that has a high percentage of black oil sunflower seeds if you are new to feeding birds. In addition to black oil sunflower seeds, many birds prefer white proso millet, especially dark-eyed juncos, sparrows, and red-winged blackbirds. If your goal is to attract different types of birds to your yard, using a variety of feeders and seeds will help attract a variety of birds.

Although the number of birds that visit the feeders may decrease in the summer when there are more natural sources of food available, they will still visit the feeder, and you may see a greater variety of birds in the summer.

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