



BACKYARD nature center News

October/November 2013 • Issue 20

Why Feed the Birds?

Sometimes, we take it for granted that everybody likes to feed their birds. After all, it is among the most popular leisure activities in America. Lots of people feed birds here in Kansas—it's one of the biggest hobbies there is. But WHY do it at all? And, what does it take for someone to get started?

First, there are no rules and procedures. None! There is no club to join (unless you want to), there's no "must" wearing apparel, and you don't have to travel anywhere (again, unless you want to). Getting started is as simple as hanging a birdfeeder in your yard, and filling it with fresh seed that our birds like. Your interest will probably build from there...maybe not.

If you were to ask someone why they feed birds, he or she'd hem and haw a bit before answering something like "it's fun". It just makes you feel good—you instantly become part of nature when you put out a bird feeder.



A few avid birdwatchers have a way of making the rest of us feel insignificant. It doesn't matter, however, if the bird you're seeing is a Northern Harrier, an American Goldfinch or an Indigo Bunting. That may or may not come later. All you really need to know now is that there are several very good reasons to start feeding birds.

- Feeding birds is environmentally responsible. Anything you can do to give nature a helping hand is good

Lots of people feed birds here in Kansas—it's one of the biggest hobbies there is.

for the world. It's "green".

- It's inexpensive. Very few hobbies are as inexpensive as feeding birds. Part of the reason is that it's done in your own yard—no travel required.
- It's calming and relaxing. Few things are more blissful than looking out your window at several carefree birds on your feeder, knowing that you're responsible for their food.
 - It's educational. Seeing things like mating rituals, eggs hatching, "pecking order" at feeders, fledglings being taught where to get seed, etc., is profoundly instructional.
 - It controls bugs. Since most birds eat bugs by the thousands, birds are cheaper and safer than whatever chemical you've been spraying.



- It's physically undemanding. Even if you have difficulty walking (or almost any other disability) you can handle birdwatching.
- It helps them stay in their habitat. Your house probably sits where some birds used to live—eliminating their food sources and habitat. Mine does! We owe it to them.

Getting started doesn't take much effort at all. Just put out a birdfeeder (or 2, or 3, or 4), and go back inside. A word of advice: get feeders that are well designed and well-built. Few things are as discouraging as a feeder that falls apart during the first squirrel encounter, or one that doesn't last through a severe storm. Fill it, or them, with good-quality, fresh seed (the kind that our birds like) and just sit back and enjoy.

BACKYARD Nature Center News
is a publication of
BACKYARD Nature Center of Wichita, KS
8336 E. 21st Street, Wichita, KS 67206
www.backyardnaturecenter.com
(316) 683-2121
Nick and Cathy Clausen, Owners

BIRD FEEDING PREFERENCES



SEED/FOOD CHOICE

FEEDER STYLE

BIRD

PERCHING FEEDERS

GROUND FEEDERS

	BLACK OIL SUNFLOWER	SUNFLOWER CHIPS	STRIPED SUNFLOWER	WHITE MILLET	THISTLE / NYJER	WHOLE CORN	CRACKED CORN	SAFFLOWER	SHELLED PEANUTS	PEANUT IN SHELL	SUET	FRUIT / JELLY	NECTAR	MEALWORMS	TUBE	HOPPER	PLATFORM	PEANUT	SPECIALTY
Cardinal	•	+	+					+	+					+		+	•		
Chickadee	•	+						+	•		+			+	•	+			+
Tufted Titmouse	+	+							•	+	+			+	•	+			•
American Goldfinch	+	•			+										•	+	+		
Purple Finch	•	•													•	+	+		
House Finch	•	•			+			+				+			•	+	+		
Pine Siskin	+	•			•										•	+	+		
Nuthatch	•	+							•					+	+	+	+	•	
Blue Jay	+		+			+	+		•	•	•					+	•	•	•
Downy Woodpecker	+	•							•					+	+	+		•	•
Hairy Woodpecker	+	+							•	•	•			+	+	+		•	•
Red-Bellied Woodpecker	+	•							•	•	•			+	+	+		•	•
Flicker	+	•	+						•	•	•					+	•	•	
Common Grackle	•	•	+			+	•				•				+	•	+		
Hummingbird													•						•
Eastern Bluebird		+							+					•	+		+		•
Wren		+							+		+			•	+				•
Oriole		+										•	•	+	+				•
White Crowned Sparrow	+	+		•			+											•	
White Throated Sparrow	+	+							+										
House Sparrow	+	+		•			+								+	+	•		
Harris Sparrow	+			•			+											•	
Junco	+	+		•			+											•	
Starling		+					•	•	•					•		+	•	+	
Brown Headed Cowbird	+			•			+									+	•		
Mourning Dove	+			•	+		+	+										•	
Towhee	+			•			+											•	
Duck, Goose	+			+		•	•											+	
American Crow	+						•											•	
Red-winged Blackbird	+	+		•												+	•		
Quail	+			•		+	•											•	

+ = PREFERRED • = FAVORITE

ANNUAL BIRDSEED SALE

Now—October 31

SAVE
ON
SEED!

Sale

Don't miss our Bi-Annual Birdseed Sale! All bulk seed, 20-pound and larger bags, will be 20% off!

Prepurchase your seed at the 20% discount and let us store it for you by opening or adding to your seed storage account with a minimum \$150.



Seed Matters

Until recently, people who fed birds operated on the theory that food was food, and that birds would eat whatever was left over. Leftover seed and grain, scraps of fat, bread crumbs—it was all the same to the birds. But how much seed was actually being eaten and by whom? Were squirrels carrying bakery goods off to hiding places while birds were left to hunt for a few good seeds?

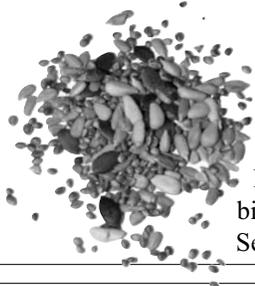
Over time, through scientific observation, studies showed that seed-eating birds, particularly those that come to elevated feeders (whether hanging or pole-mounted), prefer black oil sunflower seed overall. Early studies (part of the Urban Wildlife Research Program, and sponsored by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife) showed that five of nine species that routinely feed at elevated feeders took black oil sunflower seed as their first or second preference. None of the 13 species studied (including several ground-feeding species) refused it.

Not only does the kind of seed matter, the quality of the seed matters, too. Other studies showed that birds are actually selective about which individual seeds they pick to eat. Birds seem to have some kind of inner scale that indicates that the weight of a seed is (or isn't) adequate for the size of the shell. Those seeds that are judged to be too light are routinely dropped to the ground, as the birds search for a seed that meets their standards.

Even casual observation of your backyard feeders will show you bird behavior that expresses preference. Several species, particularly some members of the blackbird and jay families, do something called "bill sweeping." Bill-sweeping birds push large amounts of seed aside while looking for the choicest selections. Common Grackles will often sweep through mixes looking for peanuts, a preferred food, while pushing the rest of the mix out of the feeder.

If your feeder has more of what they want, birds will waste less when feeding. Even if you pay a bit more for quality seed, it will save you money in the long run.

Seed matters to birds; it should matter to you, too.





For people who feed and care for backyard birds
 The Shops at Tallgrass
 8336 E. 21st Street, #500 • Wichita, KS 67206
 www.backyardnaturecenter.com
316-683-2121

Return Service Requested

STORE HOURS

OPEN 7 DAYS WEEK

Monday–Friday: 10 a.m.–6 p.m.

Saturday: 10 a.m.–5 p.m.

Sunday: 12 noon–4 p.m.

We will be closed on Thanksgiving.

PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT:
 WWW.BACKYARDNATURECENTER.COM



Small Business Saturday

Small Business Saturday is November 30th. Start your holiday shopping with us and **save 15% off your entire purchase**, (in stock items and Saturday only).

We appreciate your business and support these last 22 years. Couldn't do it without you! Just a reminder that we always participate in Music Theater of Wichita Performance Cards! Big thanks goes out to you and happy birdwatching!



Remember to Recycle