

ATTRACTING BIRDS

Bird watching can be a very enjoyable hobby. There are 3 ways you can attract birds. Providing food, water, and nesting sites will appeal to the birds and bring them to you.

Bird feeding can be done not only during the winter months but also during the warm months. The main thing to keep in mind is **consistency**. Cleanliness is also important. Soiled feeders and moldy, spoiled foods are undesirable. The main ingredients in a feeding program are a source of fat, various grains and seeds, and a source of grit. The birds use the grit in their gizzards to grind up hard seeds. Suet is a good source of animal fats. Bacon drippings, shortening, and meat fats can also be used. Many different types and mixtures of seeds are available. Testing or trial and error is the best way to determine which seed is best for the birds you are or are not trying to attract. Fruits chopped into bite-sized pieces are a good addition to summer feeding. Peanut butter can be used to offer high protein nutmeats. It is less expensive than providing straight shelled nuts.

The **presentation** of the food is also important. The type of feeder and its placement are determined by the types of birds and the types of feed. The feeder should allow the birds to be visible to you but also allow the cautious birds to feel comfortable. The feeder should protect the food from the rain or snow. There are other animals that may also want to get to the seed or even the birds. Squirrels will scare away the birds and eat a large amount of the food. Shiny metal or pole collars can prevent the nuisance of squirrels. Cats will be more interested in the birds alone. A bell can be hung around the cat's neck to warn the birds. A feeder placed in the open is also a deterrent for cats. Cats feel more skittish out in the open.

Birds also appreciate the presence of water to drink and bathe. Water should be made available in all seasons. It should also be fresh, clean, and plentiful. Heaters and heated birdbaths are available for the winter months. The safety of the birds should also be considered when placing the water source in your yard. Birdbaths, garden pools, and fountains are all great suppliers of water.

The final items that will help you attract birds are **nesting sites**. Some birds are territorial so the variety of breeding species you will be able to attract depends on the size of your yard. If your property is large enough to allow more than one species, birdhouses of different styles and sizes will increase the chances for diverse nesting. When building or buying a birdhouse, the following factors should be considered. Bird species will be attracted to specific types of houses determined by their dimensions; the diameter and placement of the entrance hole and the depth, width, and height of the interior. Because birds are territorial, houses should be designed for a single nest. The simplest, plainest design with no frills or bright colors will be more appealing. The materials used in the construction should be durable and weather resistant. When mounting the birdhouse, it should be made secure and stable. Try to protect the site from the weather. The entrance should be placed away from the wind and set slightly downward so it will not collect rain or snow. As soon as the nesting season is over, the houses should be cleaned. Safety of the birds is again an important factor when determining site placement. By providing food, water, and nesting sites you can bring the beauty of nature right to you.



Pleasant Valley Garden Center We can supply you with all bird and garden needs. We carry an excellent selection of bulk and prepackaged bird food year round. Stop by and we can help you get started on a very rewarding program. **1301 South Gilbert Street * Iowa City, Iowa 319-337-3118**