

Attracting Birds to Your Backyard

Birds need food, water, shelter, and places to nest.

Food

Black-oil sunflower seeds attract the greatest variety of birds. However, sunflower seeds might kill the grass under your feeders and is a little messy. I like to use sunflower chips for this reason.

Place feeders near cover but not too close for cats to lie in wait (approx. 15 to 20 feet).

Keep feeders clean to protect against spreading avian diseases as well as raking under your feeders. Clean feeders with one part bleach to 10 parts water. I clean my feeders every two weeks.

Landscaping your yard with native shrubs, plants and trees will also attract birds. For example, some of the plants and shrubs that hummingbirds like are: bee balm, coral honeysuckle, butterfly bush, coral-bells, trumpet creeper and fuchsia.

The mixture for hummingbird's feeders is one part sugar to four parts water. Change the mixture in your feeders every three to four days. The mixture will keep in the refrigerator for 2 weeks. Commercial mix is available; however, I don't recommend it because it contains red dye. Hummingbirds are attracted to the red on the feeder so you don't need it in the water. I clean my hummingbird feeders with vinegar every two weeks.

Water

Birds are attracted to running water. A dripper can be installed on a birdbath. Birds like to land on the dripper and drink from the end of the tube. I have taken some of my pictures this way. I sit four feet from the birdbath and wait for them to land on the dripper to take a drink. I use the green grass for my background. The lens I use is a 100-400 mm zoom lens. I usually shoot in aperture priority with a shallow depth of field.

Provide a heated birdbath in the winter. Place 15 to 20 feet from cover. Keep bath clean & filled with water. Use a stiff brush and a little bleach to clean the bath.

Nest-boxes

Nest-boxes can provide a place for birds to raise their young as well as providing shelter during the winter.

The type of bird you are trying to attract will determine the type of box you should use.

Cornell Lab of Ornithology is a good site for nest-box info such as size & placement

(<http://birds.cornell.edu/>).

Once you have attracted birds to your yard, you can begin trying to hand feed them with mealworms. Use the worms to entice the birds to a specific area in your yard so you can photograph them.

Chickadees & Nuthatches are the easiest birds to tame.