

## **Frequently Asked Questions:**

**Q: When is the best time to start?**

**A:** There is no best or worst time. Start whenever you want to. The birds can use your help in the very early spring when their natural seed sources are scarce. In general, whenever the weather is severe, the birds would appreciate a reliable supplemental food source.

**Q: When's the best time to stop?**

**A:** If you enjoy feeding birds, there is no reason to stop. You can do it year-round. Feeding the birds throughout the summer will not make them "lazy" or "dependent." If you keep your feeding station clean, there is no reason for you to stop feeding suet, sunflower, millet, fruit and nectar.

**Q: Is it best to stop feeding hummingbirds after Labor Day?**

**A:** There is no evidence that feeding hummingbirds after Labor Day will keep them from migrating. In fact, it may help a weakened straggler refuel for the long haul. Leave your nectar feeders out until the birds stop coming.

**Q: How long does it take for birds to find a feeder?**

**A:** Sometimes it can feel like forever. It may take more time for birds to find window feeders than hanging or pole-mounted feeders. If you are impatient, start with a feeder full

of hulled sunflower. If that doesn't get their attention, wrap aluminum foil around the top of the feeder hanger. Sometimes all it takes is the reflection of light on the foil to get their attention.

**Q: My feeder is full of seeds. I haven't seen birds for months. Am I doing something wrong?**

**A:** When birds desert your feeder, it may simply be that a lot of natural food is available nearby. Or something may be wrong, such as your seeds are spoiled or your feeder is contaminated. Throw the seeds away and wash the feeder. Take a look at where your feeder is placed. Be sure it is not vulnerable to predators.

**Q: Can birds choke on peanut butter?**

**A:** There is no evidence that birds can choke on peanut butter. However, birds have no salivary glands. You can make it easier for them by mixing peanut butter with lard, cornmeal, and/or grit. Your birds will appreciate drinking water too, a bird bath or trough.

**Q: Do wild birds need grit?**

**A:** In the winter you may see flocks of birds along roadsides. They are after the grit. Birds have no teeth to grind their food. The dirt, sand pebbles, and grit they eat sits in their crop and helps grind up their food. Adding grit to your feeder is helpful year-round, but particularly in the winter and

spring. Crushed egg shells do the same thing, and in the spring have an added benefit. They provide extra calcium during the nesting season.

**Q: Won't suet go bad during the summer?**

**A:** In the winter, raw beef fat from the local butcher is all you need for your suet feeder. When the temperatures rise, raw beef fat can melt and get rancid. It's safer to use commercially rendered suet cakes in the spring and summer months. Rendering, boiling the fat, kills the bacteria. And yes it's okay to feed your wood peckers year-round. They will visit your feeders all summer long, and they'll bring their babies.

**Q: What is hummingbird "nectar"? Do hummers need nectar fortified with vitamins and minerals?**

**A:** Nectar is sugar and water. Hummers eat insects for their protein. There is no evidence that these tiny birds need vitamin and mineral supplements. Red food coloring will not harm the birds and may help them find your feeder. Placing your feeder near a pot of red flowers will also help in attracting the birds to your feeder. Please remember, sugar water will ferment when left in the hot sun. Fermented nectar is deadly to hummingbirds. Please clean and refill your feeders at least weekly, preferably twice a week.

**Q: I bought a bag of bird seeds in the mid-summer. I noticed first tiny worms, then moths. What can I do to keep the bugs out?**

**A:** It's natural for moths to lay eggs in sunflower seeds. The eggs lay dormant as long as the seeds are stored in a cool dry place. In the summer, seeds get hot and the eggs hatch. One way to avoid this problem is to store the seeds in a cool dry place and maybe buy seed in smaller quantities. Also Cole's Bird Seed packaging process takes oxygen out of the bag and helps eliminate insect problems.

**Q: What is suet?**

**A:** Suet is animal fat. It is the most highly concentrated source of energy you can offer wild birds. Since birds have high metabolic rates, offering suet mixed with high quality fruits, nuts, & grains is a great source of food for our feathered friends. Suet cakes can be fed all year round.

**Q: Why is seed found in chain stores sometimes cheaper than other wild bird stores?**

**A:** Birds prefer black oil sunflowers, white proso millet, & safflower along with certain fruits and nuts. Cheaper bird seed use red millet as a filler to lower the cost. Birds don't like the red millet and will throw it on the ground, wasting your money.

## Bird Feeding Tips

- For beginners, start with a tube feeder filled with black oil sunflowers. As the birds start coming, offer alternative foods such as suet, fruit, insects, & peanuts
- Place feeders so they can be seen easily from a window
- Provide a bird bath as a source of water
- Keep the birds safe by protecting them from predators
- In addition to feeders, provide birds with habitat, bird houses and nesting material
- Keep your feeders clean and full
- Be consistent
- Squirrels can be fun to watch but can deplete your seed and damage feeders. Consider using a squirrel baffle or squirrel proof feeder



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# Bird Feeding Guide

