

Klamath Bird Observatory Safe Bird Feeding Tips



Most people who feed birds do so for two reasons:

1. To help the birds
2. To attract birds to their yard for enjoyment

These are great reasons to feed birds, but it is important to make sure you are not doing more harm than help! Feeding birds in your yard influences the composition of bird species and mammalian predators inhabiting your yard. If not done wisely, bird feeding can actually harm birds at the individual and population level. Here are some tips for safe bird feeding!

What makes an un-healthy bird community?

Too Many Predators-Too many predators (bird and mammal) can adversely affect healthy songbird populations. Feeders should not provide food for mammals and jays.

Too Many Competitors-Non-selective feeders can support non-native bird species such as the House Sparrow and European Starling. These species compete with our native bird species for food and nest sites. Monitor your feeders to be sure you aren't feeding these birds!

Presence of Nest Parasites- The Brown-headed Cowbird parasitizes songbird nests by depositing their eggs in the nests of small songbirds. As a result, the host bird spends more energy raising the larger cowbird chicks while its own young don't survive. Don't feed cowbirds!

Disease- Feeders that are not well cleaned or monitored can spread avian diseases such as avian pox, house finch disease and conjunctivitis. Monitor your bird feeders for sick birds. If you observe them, clean your feeder with bleach and water and leave it down until sick birds move on.

Poor Nesting and Feeding Habitat-Birds need healthy nesting and feeding habitat, which includes native plants growing near the ground (understory), in the midstory, and at the canopy level. Native plants provide birds with the food and habitat structure they need to survive.

Safe Bird Feeders and Tips For Feeding Birds



Types of feeders

Choose **Selective Feeders** such as tube and cage feeders that favor smaller species such as chickadees and finches and discourage predators and non-native species. Seed on the ground and indiscriminate bird feeders such as open tray feeders, and feeders with large perches encourage jays, starlings, house sparrows and cowbirds.

Positioning of Feeders

Always be mindful of where you hang your feeder. Keep feeders away from shrubs where predators may be hiding and waiting for birds. Install predator guards to keep squirrels and rodents from feeding on your seed. Do not feed birds if you have cats in your yard.

Timing of Feeding

Do not feed birds during the nesting season (April 15-July) because you may be supporting nest predators such as jays, raccoons, and squirrels. Birds don't need feeders during the nesting season because insect and seeds are plentiful and birds feed their young high protein insects to ensure healthy chick growth.

Monitor your Feeder

Be aware of what is going on at your feeder. Watch for sick birds, predation events, and moldy seed. Keep feeders clean and temporarily remove them when there are sick birds or stalking predators. Clean feeders with a 10% bleach water solution and rake seed from the ground below your feeder. For more information on recognizing diseased birds visit:

www.birds.cornell.edu/pfw/AboutBirdsandFeeding/DiseasedBirds.htm

Create Bird Habitat

To determine what to plant in your yard, mimic the plant community in the surrounding wild-lands and open spaces. Plant only native or non-invasive plants in your yard. Never plant Scotch broom, pampas grass, purple loostribe, teasel, Scotch thistle, tansy ragwort, medusahead grass, or yellow star thistle, to name a few.

The Klamath Bird Observatory is a non-profit organization committed to monitoring bird populations and providing scientific information to land managers and conservation groups. Visit us online at www.KlamathBird.org.
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