

## Ripple Effect #95

### **Feeding Wild Birds**

Providing for and feeding wild birds can be a very rewarding and enjoyable activity. Bird feeding is the most popular form of providing for wildlife and is practiced by many homeowners. Other means of providing for birds include installing bird houses, providing fresh water and the planting of trees, shrubs, evergreens and flowers to provide shelter and natural food. The Minnesota Nursery and Landscape Association ([www.mnla.biz](http://www.mnla.biz)) has provided the following tips to get you started in attracting the beauty, color and song that birds will add to your yard.

1. When starting to feed birds, black-oil type sunflower seed or a mixture containing a good percentage of sunflower and/or safflower seeds is good to use. The protein, carbohydrates, fats and oils provided by seeds are needed by birds, especially in winter, to keep warm. For some birds, suet can also provide for some of these needs. When starting with sunflower seed, additional types of seed may be added as you learn which birds feed at your station.
2. Position the feeder out of the wind and near trees and shrubs. A ten-foot distance from overhanging trees or buildings is recommended to discourage squirrels. When possible, choose plants in the landscape that provide seed, nectar, or cover for birds. Mass plantings, thickets and dense growth are desirable for bird habitat.
3. After setting up the feeder, it is important to provide an uninterrupted daily supply of food. The birds depend on it. Also, inspect the feeder weekly for cleanliness.
4. Birds need grit to digest their food and, in winter, birds have difficulty finding enough of it. Grit is small hard objects the bird take in to help them grind up their food . . . small pebbles, eggshells, and coarse sand can all serve this purpose. Add an extra fine grit to the feeder in the winter, when snow covers their natural sources of grit.
5. You may want to add more feeders to attract more birds. Space these feeders to accommodate the various flight paths of the birds. Consider adding a thistle feeder, a window feeder or an additional basic feeder.
6. If squirrels can become or are a problem, then consider using a squirrel resistant feeder or ask us for the current information on making feeders that are more squirrel resistant. Another alternative is to provide squirrels with a feeding area on the ground and away from the bird-feeding station.
7. Hummingbird and oriole feeders should always be taken down by September 15. This encourages the birds to migrate, which is essential for their survival, since they cannot tolerate our cold winters.
8. Providing a source of water will attract the largest number of species. Birds will be best attracted to a source of dripping water. Birds need water in the winter for bathing

(to keep clean and warm) and to drink. Specially designed birdbath heaters are available to keep the bath free of ice.

Put some bird feeders up today and let the beauty of nature entertain you during those dreary, cold winter days!

Until the next Ripple Effect,

The Red River Basin Commission (RRBC)

The RRBC is a grassroots organization that is a chartered not-for-profit corporation under the provisions of Manitoba, North Dakota, Minnesota, and South Dakota law. Our offices in Moorhead, MN and Winnipeg, MB can be reached at 218-291-0422 and 204-982-7254, or you can check out our website at [www.redriverbasincommission.org](http://www.redriverbasincommission.org).