

# Birds of the Dooryard

By Dr. Leonard Lee Rue III

“To feed or not to feed”, that is the question. Some biologists claim that we should not feed the birds because it may make the birds dependent upon us humans. They claim that feeding the birds concentrates the birds, allowing disease to be more easily spread and that the concentration of birds attracts more predators to the area. Other biologists claim that most birds do not become dependent on being fed but use the feed as an additional source of food. This additional source of food means that the birds are usually healthier and more resistant to disease. Being healthier, the birds are able to raise more young and so we can help increase the bird population.

The fact that millions of people spend tens of millions of dollars on bird feed proves that most people believe in feeding the birds. I do, and I feed them year round. It is important, and the biologists in both groups agree, that if you start to feed the birds in the fall, you should continue all winter. That is the one time when the birds might become dependent on the feed you provide. I love and enjoy watching the birds and do everything I can to encourage them to come to my area.

The top priority for the birds is protection from their enemies. No bird is going to risk its life going to either food or water unless it absolutely must. I have planted a large variety of bushes, shrubs and trees around my yard and all around the house. Many of the shrubs produce a great many berries that the birds eat. No bird, at any of my feeders, has to fly more than six feet to be in the safety of a bush. A water source can be supplied by a nearby pond, lake or natural spring, or you can put out bird baths and heated water trays in the winter.

I put mixed bird seeds on two shelves and have one hanging feeder that the squirrels also enjoy. I have sunflower seeds in a squirrel-proof feeder and suet in a raccoon-proof feeder. In the summer, two or three nectar feeders hung at different locations will attract hummingbirds. Having provided for all of the essentials that the birds need, they will reward you by flocking to your home. There may be as many as 18 to 20 different species of birds visiting the feeders all year round. I have counted up to as many as 150 birds at a time in the area. By feeding year round, you can enjoy watching the adult birds bringing their young to the feeder and feeding them.

You can build wooden ledges under the eaves of your home to encourage the phoebes to nest there and put up bird houses of different sizes to attract a variety of birds. You can even lay out short strings of soft white cotton for the oriole’s nest. Do everything you can to make the birds feel at home around your home. If you have a cat, keep it indoors, as cats are the birds’ worst enemies.

To get the greatest enjoyment from the birds it is important to learn the names of the birds you see. This program will help you to identify many birds. There is a great variety of good bird identification books available today. A good pair of binoculars is also needed so you can check out the small details that differ from bird to bird. For this purpose the binoculars should be at least 7x35 power and should be capable of being focused as close as six to eight feet.

Millions of people are now enjoying “birding” in the United States. Join them; it will greatly enrich your life.

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Augment	In addition to.
Assured	Guaranteed.
Brassy	Having lots of nerve, pushy.
Breeding	The time of the year when the male makes the female's eggs fertile.
Breeding Plumage	The birds have their brightest colored feathers during the breeding season.
Bully	Someone who is big, who takes advantage of someone who is small.
Cavity Nesting	Nesting in holes in trees.
Characteristic	A common habit.
Concentrate	To gather together.
Consume	Eat.
Crests	Feathers on the top of a birds head that can be raised and lowered.
Crop	A birds storage compartment for food before it is digested.
Dense	Thick.
Dimorphic	When male and female of the same species are of two different colors or sizes.
Domestic	Tamed by man.
Dramatically	Very obvious.
Drill	Make a hole.
Eaves	The underside of the edge of a roof.
Estimated	Calculated.
Excavate	To dig.
Excitable	High strung, nervous.
Expanded	Increased, made larger.
Flowerlets	A cluster of small flowers making a large blossom.
Flycatchers	Birds that feed on flying insects.
Gorging	Eating more than normal.
Hardy	Tough.
Heralds	Announces.
Hibernating	Sleeping for long periods of time with slowed down body functions.

Hint	Suggestion.
Identification	To know a creatures name.
Imported	Brought into.
Infested	Containing lots of harmful organisms.
Iridescence	Feathers or scales that change colors according to the angle of light.
Migration	Yearly journey taken by creatures, usually north and south.
Perch	A branch on which a bird sits.
Pester	To bother, annoy.
Poison	Substance that can kill.
Populous	Numerous.
Predator	A creature that eats other creatures.
Probe	To poke or to feel.
Protective Cover	Vegetation in which a creature can safely hide.
Proximity	Nearby area.
Rattling	A fast, repeated sound.
Recommend	Suggest.
Regurgitate	Returning food to the mouth that had been swallowed.
Requirements	Needs.
Resident	One who lives in a place.
Shrub	A bush that does not grow large enough to be a tree.
Succulent	Vegetation having a high water content.
Suet	Animal fat.
Sun Bath	Relaxing in the sun.
Territory	An area that a creature claims as its own and for which it will fight to keep others of the same species away.
Tier	Layer.
Utilize	To use.
Variety	Different.