



Wild Bird Division

BIRD SEED Information, References & Tips



Getting Started

No matter where you live, you can put food outside your door, and some creature, feathered or furred, will show its appreciation and make an appearance. That's all it takes. Once you get started, it's hard to stop.

Before you know it, you're learning bird names. After awhile, you'll start to recognize individuals and the messages in their behavior and song.

When you get to the point where you want to attract and "keep" a particular species, what you do will be determined by where you live, and the time of year. For example, on any winter day, you're likely to see a cardinal at a sunflower feeder in Virginia, a goldfinch at a nyjer (thistle) seed feeder in Massachusetts and hummingbirds at a nectar feeder in southern California.

How can you find out which birds to expect? A bird field identification book has pictures of different birds and will help you find the names for the birds you're likely to see.

Buying Bird Seed

Bird seed mixes are blends of various agricultural crops - black and striped sunflower seed, sunflower meats, milo, corn, millets, safflower, nyjer (thistle) seed and others. These ingredients are blended to either attract a wide variety of birds or a specific species of bird.

Ingredients vary in cost and the price of a particular mix is determined by the percent of each ingredient included in the mix. Likewise, birds indicate a preference for some seeds over others. So, while the price of a particular mix may seem attractive, value can be lacking if the birds do not consume part of the mix because of seed preference or discard part of the mix as waste.

Every bird seed mix will list the ingredients in the mix in descending order by percentage. This list will be found on the package or on a tag attached to the package. The tag will also list percentages of protein, fat and fiber available from the mix. *See sample tag below on the left.*

While price is certainly an important criteria for purchasing bird seed, it is more important to look at *value* represented by your bird seed purchase. Decide on the type of birds you want to attract and provide the seed preferred by those birds. Then decide how much waste you are willing to tolerate. There are bird seed mixes which are totally consumable by birds and leave little or no waste. While these no waste products are more expensive per pound, they may ultimately represent the best value for the reasons mentioned above.

Bird feeding has become the nations second largest backyard hobby. Becoming familiar with the type of bird seed mixes available in the market place today can only enhance you bird feeding experience.

INGREDIENTS

Millet, Sunflower Seed, Sunflower Meats, Safflower, and Grain Products

GUARANTEED ANALYSIS:

Crude Protein (Min).....	12.50%
Crude Fat (Min)	13.00%
Crude Fiber (Max)	14.50%
Moisture (Max)	12.00%

What's in the Seed?

Prince Corporation would like to provide the following dietary information for you and your customers.

INDIVIDUAL INGREDIENTS

CANARY GRASS SEED: Golden yellow, sharp shiny seeds. A staple in many of our seed mixes. It provides the necessary fiber and carbon for heat and nitrogen for strength.

Bird's Favorite: Gold Finch Mix and Elite Mix

Nature's Select: Finch's Feast

Prince: Finch Mix

Also sold as a straight ingredient.

CORN: Good source of Vitamin A, Vitamin B-Complex and a small amount of Vitamin C. Helpful for emaciation and constipation. A good general body building food.

Bird's Favorite: No-Waste Mix, Good Friend Mix, Cardinal Mix, Elite Mix and Classic Mix

Prince: Premium Mix, Supreme Mix, Original Mix and Wildlife Mix

Also sold as a straight ingredient.

FLAX SEED: Flat, brown, slippery seeds also known as linseed. Contains high fat which aids in adding luster to plumage during molting.

Bird's Favorite: Gold Finch / Small Bird Mix

Also sold as a straight ingredient.

MILLET SEED: Small to medium oval seed. Millet is either golden yellow, light yellow or red. Mid-range protein and fat. The high fiber in millet aids in digestion. Also available hulled.

Bird's Favorite Mixes: No Waste, Good Friend, Elite, Preferred, Classic, Goldfinch and Hulled Millet

Nature's Select: Finch's Feast

Prince Mixes: Premium, Supreme, Original, Wild Finch and Cardinal

Also sold as a straight ingredient.

NYJER SEED (THISTLE): Small black stick-like seeds. A source of protein and fat. Aids in prevention of egg binding.

Bird's Favorite: Elite Mix and Gold Finch Mix

Nature's Select: Finch's Feast

Prince: Finch Mix

Also sold as a straight ingredient.

OAT GROATS: Medium light brown, oblong seeds. The oat kernel is one of the most complete in amino acids and Vitamin B-Complex. Primarily used for body heat and fattening.

Prince: Wildlife Formula

PEANUTS: Good mineral content. Fat/protein combo makes this a very valuable food for underweight or weak birds.

Bird's Favorite: No-Waste, Elite and Preferred

Nature's Select: Fruit & Nut, Backyard Gourmet, Woody's Goody Blend, Insect Indulgence, and Cardinal

Prince: Premium and Wildlife

Also sold as a straight ingredient.

PUMPKIN SEED: A high fiber source of protein which contains Vitamins A and B, iron and phosphorous. Aids in digestion and prevents constipation.

Nature's Select: Woody's Goody Blend

RAISINS: High in Vitamin B, potassium and iron. Helps in building up the heart and prevents anemia.

Nature's Select: Fruit & Nut Mix, Insect Indulgence, and Cardinal

What's in the Seed?

Prince Corporation would like to provide the following dietary information for you and your customers.

INDIVIDUAL INGREDIENTS

RAPE SEED: Tiny, round, hard, red or black seeds. High in fat and contains potash, phosphoric acid, lime and magnesium. Most valuable as a song food. Canaries may not sing without this seed in their diet.

Sold as a straight ingredient.

SAFFLOWER SEED: A flowering thistle-like plant whose seeds yield an edible oil. This seed is a food source of usable oil and very high fiber.

Birds Favorite: Safflower, Elite and Safflower.

Nature's Select - Fruit & Nut, and Cardinal

Prince: Supreme and Cardinal

Also sold as a straight ingredient.

SUNFLOWER SEED: Very rich in oil (high fat). Some types of Sunflower are Grey Stripe, Black Stripe, and Black Russian. Rich in albumen, minerals and Vitamin E

Bird's Favorite: No-Waste, Good Friend, Cardinal, Elite, Preferred and Gold Finch

Nature's Select: Fruit & Nut, Backyard Gourmet, Insect Indulgence, and Cardinal

Prince: Premium, Supreme, Wild Finch and Cardinal

Also sold as a straight ingredient.

WHEAT: An excellent food source for birds and a good source of Vitamin B-Complex. Wheat is low in fiber and has an average amount of protein with very little fat.

Prince: Premium and Wildlife

Bird's Favorite: No-Waste and Preferred



FAQ: Feeding Wild Birds

When's the best time to start?

The beauty of wild bird feeding is that you can start whenever you want to. The birds can use your help in the very early spring when natural seed sources are scarce. In general, whenever the weather is severe, birds will appreciate a reliable supplemental food source.

When's the best time to stop?

If you enjoy feeding the 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's no reason for you to stop feeding.

Is it best to stop feeding hummingbirds after Labor Day?

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.

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

Sometimes it can seem like forever. It may take more time for birds to find window feeders than hanging or pole-mounted feeders. If you're 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 catch their attention.

My feeder is full of seeds. I haven't seen a bird in months. Am I doing something wrong?

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

Won't birds' feet stick to metal feeders and perches in the winter weather?

Birds don't have sweat glands in their feet, so they won't freeze onto metal feeders. There's no need to cover any metal parts with plastic or wood to protect birds feet, tongues or eyes.

Can birds choke on peanut butter?

There's no evidence that birds can choke on peanut butter. However, birds have no salivary glands. You can make it easier on them by mixing peanut butter with lard, cornmeal, and/or grit. Your birds would appreciate drinking water too - a bird bath or trough.

Do wild birds need grit?

In the winter, you may see flocks of birds along roadsides after the snowplows have passed. They're 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.

Although there is plenty of natural grit available, some people add grit to their feeders. Crushed eggshells do the same thing and in the spring have an added benefit. They provide extra calcium during the nesting season.

FAQ: Feeding Wild Birds

Won't suet go "bad" in the summer?

It's safer to use commercially rendered suet cakes in the spring and summer months. There are many no melt suets available today. Rendering, boiling the fat, kills bacteria. And yes, it's okay to feed your woodpeckers year round. They will visit your feeders all summer long, and they'll bring their babies.

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

Hummingbird nectar is nothing more than table sugar and water. You can make your own by adding 1/4 cup of sugar to a cup of boiling water*. Hummers eat insects for their protein. There is no evidence that these tiny birds need vitamin and mineral supplements. There is also no evidence that adding red food coloring to nectar will harm the birds, but it probably is not necessary to attract them. Just put your feeder near red flowers. *Please remember, sugar water will ferment when left in the hot sun. Fermented nectar is deadly. Do not put out a feeder if you are not willing to clean it at least weekly, preferably twice a week.*

How can I avoid bees at my hummingbird feeder?

Bees are usually a problem only in hot weather. It's inevitable that bees will visit your hummingbird feeder. Little plastic bee guards may help keep them from getting nectar, but it won't stop them from trying. Don't take the chance of contaminating your nectar by putting vegetable oil around the feeding portals. The safest solution is to add a few small feeders away from where people are likely to be bothered by bees.

How close to your window can you put a feeder?

Birds will come right to your window. Sometimes it takes a while for them to overcome their initial reluctance, so be patient.

Don't worry that a feeder on the window will cause birds to fly into the window. Birds fly into the window because they see the reflection of the woods. Window feeders and decals can break up the reflection.

If you find a bird that has hit a window, carefully pick it up and put it in a box or large paper bag. Put it in a dark, quiet corner of your house for a couple of hours. If the bird recovers, take the box or bag outside and just let it go. If the bird comes to, but seems injured, call your local wildlife rehabilitation center for help.

I bought a bag of sunflower seeds early in the spring. Over the summer I noticed first worms, then moths. What can I do to keep the bugs out?

It's natural for moths to lay their 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.

The best way to avoid this problem is to buy seeds in smaller quantities, or store your seeds in a cool, dry place. It also helps to know where your retailer stores the seed. An air conditioned storage unit is the better choice.

Insects will also lay their eggs in burlap bags. Don't buy seeds in burlap bags. Don't buy seeds in paper and plastic bags with patched holes. That may be a sign of insect or rodent infestations.

Attract the Birds You Desire To See!

QUICK GUIDE

Wild Bird Food Preference Chart

BIRD	FOOD PREFERENCE
Indigo Bunting	Thistle seed, sunflower hearts
Northern Cardinal, Evening Grosbeaks, Rose-Breasted Grosbeaks	Sunflower Seeds, safflower, cracked corn, millet, fruit
Chickadee, Titmouse	Peanut kernels, sunflower seeds, suet, peanut butter
Mourning Dove	Millet, cracked corn, wheat, milo, buckwheat, sunflower seeds
Blue Jay	Peanuts, sunflower seeds, suet, cracked corn
Sparrows (White Crowned, White Throated, Chipping, Field, Tree, House)	Millet, sunflower hearts, black sunflower seeds, cracked corn.
Finches (House, Purple American Goldfinch), Pine Siskin	Thistle seed, sunflower hearts, black sunflower seeds, millet, canary seed, suet
Cowbird, Red-Winged Black Bird	Cracked corn, sunflower hearts
Woodpeckers (Red Bellied, Hairy, Downy, Pileated)	Suet, sunflower hearts and seeds, cracked corn, peanuts
Flicker	Suet, sunflower hearts and seeds, cracked corn, peanuts, insects
Wrens	Suet, peanut butter, peanut kernels, fruit, millet
Nuthatch	Suet, sunflower hearts and seeds, peanut kernels, peanut butter.
Junco	Millet, sunflower seeds, cracked corn, peanuts
Redpoll	Sunflower hearts, thistle seed
Hummingbirds	Plant nectar, small insects, nectar
Orioles	Orange halves, fruit, berries, nectar, grape jelly, suet
Robin	Suet, mealworms, berries, fruits, sunflower hearts, worms
Cedar Waxwing	Berries, fruit, raisins
Scarlet Tanager	Suet, fruit, nectar, mealworms

Did You Know...

- 80 million Americans (1 in every 4 suburban households) regularly feed wild birds.
- Over two billion dollars is spent annually on bird feeding & this number is growing.
- Bird feeding is second only to gardening as the country's favorite hobby.
- People always upgrade and buy new products for their hobbies.
- When purchasing a hobby product, price is not the main issue - quality is.
- Category growth will come from new and unique products.
- People will pay for convenience.

Source: *Birdola/Metz Farms*

