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TECHNICAL NOTES

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE Portland, Oregon SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE

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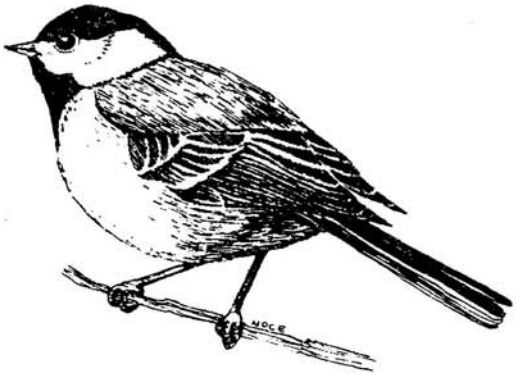
Ways to attract birds

NON-GAME

BIRDS



Black-capped chickadee

In the State of Oregon

Nearly 400 kinds of birds may be seen in Oregon. Many are "residents" the year-around. Others are "migrants" that pass southward in the fall and northward in the spring. A few species are "winter visitors", returning to Canada or Alaska for the summer breeding season; and still others are "summer visitors" or "summer residents" that raise their young in Oregon but winter in southern United States, Latin America, or South America. About 45 species are hunted as "game birds" and 350 are classified as "non-game birds".

Interest in seeing and studying birds is enhanced considerably where people purposely attract birds to their fields, ponds, backyards, and even to their window sills. Non-game birds please men, women and children--young and old--on farms, in towns, and in suburban residential areas.

Habitat Needs

Anyone can attract birds by providing foods, natural or artificial nesting sites, and suitable water. To attract any species best, its food preferences and its nesting wants should be known and provided.

Food Food is a significant influence in a bird's life. Upon food depends the vitality of the species, its energy to escape, and withstand the hardships of life. It is food that provides the heat to combat cold rains, snows, and low temperatures of winter. Food gives health and

strength to overcome disease. Young birds grow to maturity only if they get enough food to supply their growing needs.

Food availability can be assured in various ways (1) by increasing natural sources of foods, (2) planting and growing food-producing plants, and (3) by placing food at feeding stations.

The food preference of non-game birds that are most easily attracted can be grouped as follows:

Dry seeds, such as grains, grasses and weeds--blackbirds, finches, sparrows, grosbeaks

Berries and fruits--robin, thrushes, thrashers, bluebirds, waxwings

Animal matter such as fish, aquatic insects, and crustaceans--kingfisher, shorebirds, osprey

Flying insects caught on the wing--flycatchers, swallows, nighthawks

Terrestrial insects and worms, such as crickets, grasshoppers, and earthworms--robin, sparrows, thrushes,

Arboreal insects, their eggs and larvae--warblers, chickadees, nuthatches, woodpeckers, wrens

Artificial Feeding - Anyone interested in attracting birds can do so by using artificial feeding devices and providing the foods preferred by the species he wants to attract. Selective feeding can be used to deny food to unwelcome species. The art of feeding birds is the ability to feed them selectively.

Platform feeders - These feeders are simple to construct and may be placed at any point of vantage. A table-like platform can be placed in a yard or a shelf-like feeder at a window sill. The advantage of a window sill feeder is that it brings the birds up close for observation. Wood is the best material for such feeders; plastic, glass or tile surfaces are too slick for a steady foothold.

Suet feeders - Suet is a choice food of 45 species and is an inexpensive food. Suet feeders may be a stationary box with a wire mesh front usually fastened to a tree trunk or a suet log feeder having 1¼-inch holes bored for the suet.

Suet can be melted and made into cakes with nut bits, cornmeal or seeds added.

Hopper feeders - This type of feeder offers many opportunities for design, in which combinations of wood, glass, or metal can be used. They are designed to hold several days' supply of bird food mixtures, such as cracked corn, wheat, millets or sunflower seed. They may be placed on a pole, window sill, or hung from the limb of a tree.

Swinging feeders - Freely swinging feeders discourage house sparrows and starlings. When filled with sunflower seed, they are especially attractive to chickadees, finches and nuthatches.

Hummingbird feeders - Hummingbird feeders are commercially available. They are filled with sweetened liquids similar to natural nectar of flowers. They also attract small insects, which are eaten by hummingbirds.

Groups of Non-Game Birds Commonly Attracted by Catering and the Kinds of Foods They Accept

Bird Group	Readily Accepted Foods
woodpeckers, flickers,	suet, cracked nuts, corn
chickadees, nuthatches	suet, cracked nuts, shelled and broken peanuts, sunflower seed, breadcrumbs
thrashers, thrushes, robins, waxwings	cut apples, currants, raisins, breadcrumbs
blackbirds, jays, towhees, grosbeaks	sunflower seeds, corn, peanut butter, nutmeats
juncos, finches, native sparrows	millet, wheat, small seed mixtures, breadcrumbs
hummingbirds	water sweetened with sugar or honey and nectar of hibiscus, honeysuckle, trumpetervine

Nesting sites are often rather specific and very considerably, but in general, may be grouped as follows:

On the ground -- about 150 species.
Off the ground, in upland trees and shrubs, but not in holes--100 species.
In wetland areas, off the ground, in marsh plants, shrubs and trees--about 75 species.
In holes and cavities and in birdhouses--about 40 species.

Planning Suggestions

Non-game birds often find food and nesting sites in fields, pastures, orchards, woodlots, ponds and marshes, around homesites, especially in landscape plantings. Additional fruit and berry producing plantings and protection of fence rows and odd areas, shorelines and streambanks from grazing and burning, enhance the habitat for non-game birds.

Additional nesting sites may be provided by erecting birdhouses having proper size and shape of entrance holes and location of the houses.

Birds that will nest in birdhouses and recommended diameter of hole opening:

bluebirds	1½"	robin	open front and sides
chickadees	1¼		
creeper	1¼	sapsucker	1 3/4"
flickers	3"	sparrow, house	1½"
hawk, sparrow	3"	starling	2"
martin, purple	2½"	swallows, barn	open front and sides
nuthatches	1¼		
owls, barn	3"	tree	1½"
saw-whet	2½"	violet-green	1½"
screech	3"	woodpeckers, downy	1¼"
phoebes	open front and sides	hairy	1½"
		wren, house	7/8"

Water for drinking and bathing will help to attract non-game birds. The common bird bath can be very attractive to small birds, especially where water is not available.

For a "List of Local Birds," their season residence in the state, and relative abundance, contact the local Audubon Society Chapter.

Reference Books

A field Guide to Western Birds, by Roger Tory Peterson, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1961

Birds of North America: A Guide to Field Identification, by C. Robbins, B. Bruun, and H. Zim. Golden Press, Inc., 1966

Invite Birds to Your Home. Conservation Plantings for the Northwest. Program Aid 1094; USDA, SCS.