Keep Those Feeders Full

By DOROTHY STEINBACH

If you have encouraged birds to remain in your garden in the fall by establishing feeders for them, it is now of utmost importance to keep them well supplied with food. These are the months when deep snow covers the natural feeding sources, and the feathered creatures have become almost completely dependent on you to feed them. This is an excellent time to review the "gastronomic" needs of the birds, and perhaps you will find that you can add to the staples you have been providing. Birds, too, like variety, and different birds prefer different foods.

There is, of course, the commercially mixed bird seed which is available in the stores, and it is a well known fact that sunflower seeds are the favorite of many birds. However, did you know that the cardinals like squash and pumpkin seeds practically as well as sunflower seeds? I make it a point to save these seeds whenever I serve these vegetables to my family, and since we raise large quantities of squash and pumpkins, I have more than the usual access to the seeds.

Medium sized chick feed is eaten by many birds. If you mix in five pounds or more of sunflower seeds to 50 pounds of chick feed, and also
five pounds of fine gravel or oyster shell, you will have a fine, general, bird seed mixture.

Suet and peanut butter are quick energy foods. Suet should be enclosed in a “cage” to discourage greedy birds from carrying off large chunks at one time. String or nylon mesh bags are ideal. They may be tied to a branch of a tree. Peanut butter is best when mixed with a binder or extender of cracker crumbs or corn meal (I prefer corn meal), using one part peanut butter and one part meal, or until the mixture is of putty consistency. Birds have been known to choke on just the peanut butter alone. This mixture can be pressed into holes bored into a log or stick, or between the petals of large cones, then hung in convenient places. I find that empty sunflower heads, spread with the mixture and tied onto a tree branch, are favorite snack bars in our back yard.

For variety, place pieces of raw apples, grapes, raisins and small pieces of white bread in the feeders. Peanuts, corn, left over pie crust, baked and crumbled into the feeder, are also tasty snacks.

You can also cater to the birds by including pork rinds, bones with shreds of meat, cooked meats, chopped hard cooked eggs, cured cheese, corn bread, broken-up doughnuts, cracked nuts and oatmeal. In other words, you can easily keep the bird cafeteria filled from items readily available.

An Important Rule

The important rule: Do not start feeding the birds in the fall unless you seriously intend to continue without fail. The lapse of a day or two during severe weather may find many birds starving to death because they have come to depend upon you.

Today, at the time of this writing, I have seen the following birds in our feeder which is placed about 10 feet from the the dinette window: cardinal, nuthatches, chickadees, down woodpeckers, evening grosbeaks, a pair of blue jays, and junco.

Continue to feed the birds until late in the spring and even into and through the summer. This will supply their needs and keep the damage in your fruit garden to a minimum.

RFD 1,
Clintonville, Wisconsin