

How to attract the discerning bird to feeder

By Annegret Lamure
 Quick now — What would you offer to a yellow bellied sap sucker that by some incredible chance, instead of heading south, is wintering in your backyard? This problem would stump most people, but naturalist Art Briggs-Jude has the answer. He would simply go into the kitchen and cook up a mess of spaghetti.

manageable lengths. For dessert, it might be a good idea to get out the canned peaches that have been mouldering in the back of the fridge for two weeks, and put them in a hollow log. Sounds too silly for words? Not at all, maintains Art. He explained that sap suckers are just that — birds that live on the juices and fruits of trees and shrubs. Spaghetti and canned fruit approximate their natural diet more than seeds. Wintering robins and other birds belonging to the thrush family also enjoy this

fare when the natural food sources are gone. The majority of birds have more prosaic tastes, however, and will thrive happily on a good seed mixture. A good seed mix should contain sunflower seeds, millet, and cracked corn, with heavy emphasis on sunflower seeds. "If you want blue jays and cardinals, you have to put out sunflower seeds," explained Art. The amusing little chickadees also love this fare and even woodpeckers are sometimes tempted by sunflower seeds

although they generally prefer suet. Suet, (unrendered beef fat) can be served in an onion bag suspended from a branch but if you want to attract many woodpeckers, it might be worthwhile to construct a woodpecker log. This is done by halving a thick branch or small log, hollowing out the middle and drilling a series of holes from the inside to the surface. The cavity is then packed with suet, or other animal fat such as bacon grease, and the log wired together and hung from a tree. If you want to give the woodpeckers a real treat or suspect that a sap sucker may happen along, you can add canned fruit and ground nuts to the filling as well.

however, that most birds prefer their acorns smashed. Apples are another windfall you can put to good use. Collect a bag of them and stick them in the freezer. Later they can be chopped and put on a feeder or else simply left whole and placed on a spike near a perch. Left over bread and cake, can of course, be fed, but it should be dried and crumbled first since there is some danger of the birds choking on it otherwise. There are really no hard and fast rules on feeding birds except for one.

Always at the same time. That way the birds get used to a set amount and when it's gone, that's it. However, Art prefers to go all out and keeps his feeders filled at all times, especially in severe weather. Aside from food, birds have two other needs — water and gravel. Birds consider water a real treat in the winter, but they can eat snow to satisfy their thirst. Gravel is a more serious question, especially during times of heavy snow since without it the bird cannot digest his food.

to see a robin huddled in your yard on a bitter January day. (Of course faced with this situation, you could make shelters for these courageous birds, but that's another topic.) Bird feeders need not be fancy. A simple board with a ledge all around to keep the seed from blowing off is all that is really necessary, although it may be a good idea to put a roof over a portion of it to keep the snow off.

To discourage starlings and sparrows, feeders can be suspended by a rope — the swaying horrifies them but doesn't bother the bolder blue jays and chickadees. If you would like to study your guests really closely, a trolley feeder is the answer. This is a feeder you attach to your clothes line. Start it out far away, and gradually move it closer to your observation post. After a few weeks, you will be able to approach within a few feet of most birds.

If all this sounds like far too much trouble don't be discouraged. There's nothing wrong with merely sprinkling a few crumbs on a sheltered window sill now and again and watching the sparrows fight over them. Sparrows, after all, are also birds, and they're not at all picky.



Bird feeders need not be made of redwood and glass. Here Art Briggs-Jude inspects a woodpecker log which attracts many of the birds to his yard. The log has been split, hollowed out in the centre, and riddled with holes. It was then stuffed with suet, nut meats and left over canned fruit and wired back together.



A simple rustic platform with a roof at one end will attract a great variety of birds and is simple to construct. This blue jay has just garnered his sixth unshelled peanut in a row. Jays will fly off with peanuts as fast as you can put them out says naturalist Art Briggs-Jude who constructed this feeder. He recommends putting peanuts in an onion bag so that the birds have to eat them on the spot.



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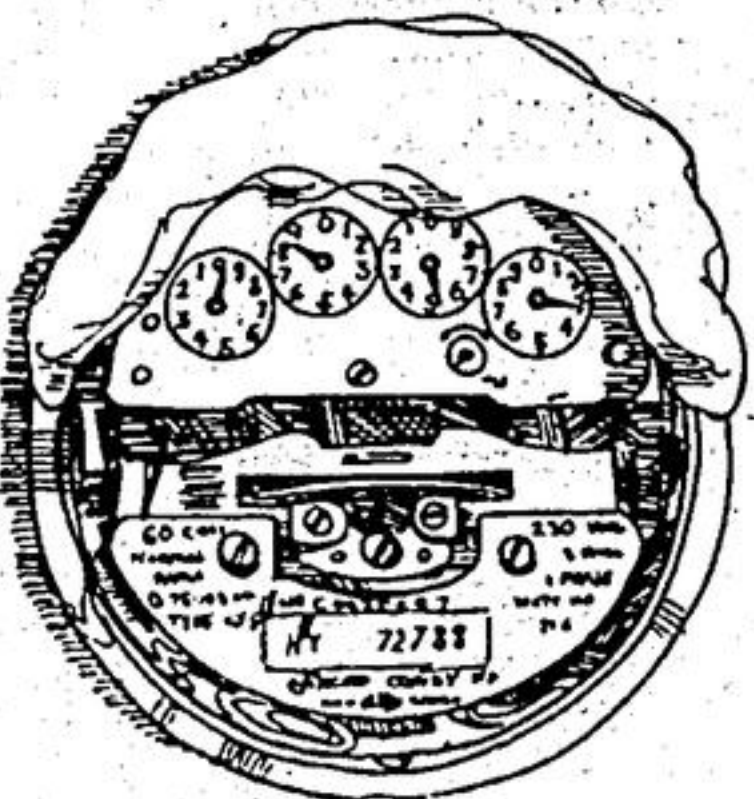
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