



Great Backyard Bird Count



What Kind of Bird Food Should I Use?¹

Black-oil sunflower seed:

This is the type that's preferred by the widest variety of species. Chickadees, titmice, cardinals, and nuthatches are among the popular feeder birds that favor black-oil sunflower seeds.

White millet:

Many ground-feeding species, such as juncos and sparrows, are attracted to white millet.

Red milo:

Some western species, including jays, flock to red milo.

Cracked corn:

By scattering cracked corn over the ground, you'll invite doves to your feeding station.

Mixed seed:

This is best sprinkled on the ground or onto platform feeders. Mixed seed typically contains high quantities of millet, preferred by ground-feeding birds: many feeder birds will not take millet. Likewise, ground-feeding birds that favor millet will not have access to it if it's in a feeder. You may want to investigate to determine which species your yard will attract. Or fill hanging feeders with sunflower seeds and spread mixed seed for ground-feeding birds.

Niger (Thistle):

Also known as thistle seed, this will attract small finches such as goldfinches, siskins, and redpolls. There are feeders specifically designed for thistle seed.

Safflower:

Although this seed is typically more expensive than sunflower, it is not proven to be more preferred, but some reports claim that squirrels dislike it.

Sugar water:

Hummingbirds are attracted to sugar water. Prepare this by mixing four parts water to one part sugar and bringing to a boil. Allow this to cool before pouring it into your hummingbird feeder.

Suet:

Woodpeckers, chickadees, titmice, and nuthatches all enjoy suet. You can hang this in a mesh bag, but it won't be as protected from raccoons that might help themselves. You may wish to consider purchasing a sturdy suet feeder.

Fruits:

Raisins, bananas, currants, and sliced apples may attract mockingbirds, robins, bluebirds, and waxwings. Oranges are a favorite with orioles.

Bird Food Preference Table

	Chickadees, Titmice, Nuthatches	Finches	Cardinals, Grosbeaks	Jays	Woodpeckers	Pigeons, Doves
Sunflower	X	X	X	X	X	
Safflower	X	X	X			
Whole Corn				X		X
Millet		X				X
Milo				X		X
Niger		X				
Suet	X			X	X	

Results based in part on the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's 1995-96 Seed Preference Test, a National Science Experiment sponsored by the National Science Foundation

¹ Modified from Great Backyard Bird Count web page "What Kind of Bird Food Should I Use?" www.birdsource.org/gbbc/learning/seed.html