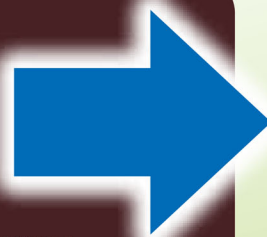


Nothing brightens a gray winter day faster than watching a flock of colorful birds gobble seeds at a bird feeder. Providing a feast for your feathered friends is as easy as scattering birdseed on the ground around your house. If you want something a little fancier, you can buy a feeder or make one yourself (see Page 11). Place the feeder near a window, preferably close to bushes or trees so birds have a place to escape to if the neighborhood cat comes prowling. Once the table is set, grab a pair of binoculars and sit where you can watch the feathered feeding frenzy.

But First, Make This Field Guide



- 1 Cut out the next two pages along the dotted lines.
- 2 Fold each cut-out down the middle.
- 3 Stack the cut-outs so the pages are in numerical order.
- 4 Staple the cut-outs together along the middle between pages 8 and 9.
- 5 Sit with this field guide where you can see birds.



Female northern cardinal

Male northern cardinal



mdc.mo.gov

You Discover BACKYARD BIRDS



White-breasted nuthatch

A Mini Field Guide to the Feathered Foragers at Your Feeder

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1

Frequent Fliers

Pine Siskin

Pine siskins show up in Missouri when seeds get scarce in northern forests where the birds usually live.



American Goldfinch

American goldfinches are active, acrobatic little birds that sometimes hang upside down to feed.



Red-Bellied Woodpecker

Red-bellied woodpeckers aren't well-named. Although the red on their heads stands out, the blush on their bellies is hard to see.



Dried kernels of corn are prized by blue jays. Cracked corn is eaten by doves and sparrows.



Peanuts are treasured by nuthatches, woodpeckers, titmice, and blue jays.

Peanut butter and suet (animal fat) attracts woodpeckers, chickadees, and nuthatches.



What if you forget to fill your feeder? Don't sweat it. Birds will find food elsewhere. But to keep your feathered friends coming back, keep the food a-coming.

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3

Treats for Tweets

Birds of a feather may flock together, but different birds have different tastes. Offer several of these treats to attract a variety of tweets to your bird buffet.

Black-oil sunflower seeds attract the widest variety of birds. Cardinals especially love 'em.



Doves, juncos, and other ground-feeding birds prefer millet.



Niger seed (also called thistle) attracts finches and pine siskins.



2

Many kinds of birds may visit your feeder. Here are a few others to watch for.

European Starling

European starlings were brought to New York City from Europe in the 1890s. They are now one of the most common birds in the U.S.



House Sparrow

House sparrows have a pecking order. Males with the biggest black patches on their throats get to eat first.



Cooper's Hawk

Cooper's hawks sometimes swoop in to pluck songbirds from feeders. Don't despair. Hawks have to eat, too.



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Northern Cardinal



Bird Feeder Faves: Sunflower seeds
Wild Menu: Seeds, berries, small insects

Female cardinals are the same size and shape as males but aren't as colorful.

In the spring, cardinals sometimes attack their reflections in windows, believing the reflection is another bird invading their space.

Cardinals are wary birds, often flicking their tails and whistling a sharp "chip" to show they're worried.

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White-Crowned Sparrow



Bird Feeder Faves: Millet, thistle, cracked corn
Wild Menu: Weed and grass seeds, insects, berries

Sparrows with the brightest colors on their heads get to eat first. Duller birds have to wait their turn.

White-crowned sparrows often hop backward then forward, dragging both feet on the ground. This isn't some funky dance. It helps turn over leaves to expose hidden seeds.

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House Finch



Bird Feeder Faves: Sunflower seeds, thistle, millet
Wild Menu: Seeds, berries

Flocks of finches may stay at feeders a long time, eating tons of seeds and keeping other birds from taking a turn.

Purple finches look a lot like house finches. To tell the birds apart, look at the streaks on their sides. Male house finches have brown streaks; male purple finches have rosy streaks.

Male house finches come in many shades, from yellow to orange to red. They get their color from pigments in the wild seeds they eat. Female house finches are brown.

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Blue Jay



Bird Feeder Faves: Peanuts, sunflower seeds, cracked corn

Wild Menu: Acorns, insects, berries, small animals, bird eggs

These “bully birds” often shriek “Thief! Thief!” before swooping in to a feeder. The call scares away other birds, leaving the jay to have the food all to itself.

You can tell a blue jay’s mood by looking at the crest of feathers on top of its head. A happy jay keeps its crest down. When a jay is mad, its crest comes up.

The black band on a blue jay’s chest varies from one bird to another. It may help jays recognize friends, family, and strangers. Can you tell the jays apart at your feeder?

5

Chickadee



Bird Feeder Faves: Sunflower seeds, peanuts, suet
Wild Menu: Insects, spiders

When a chickadee spots danger, it gives an alarm call to warn other birds: chickadee-dee-dee. The more dees, the bigger the danger.

Chickadees are bold, curious birds. With lots of patience and a steady hand, you can coax a chickadee to eat seeds from your palm.

Chickadees hide most of the seeds they take for later use. Even with a brain smaller than a raisin, the little birds can remember the precise location of thousands of seeds.

10

Dark-Eyed Junco



Bird Feeder Faves: Millet, sunflower seeds, cracked corn

Wild Menu: Mostly weed seeds but also a few insects

The boss bird in a flock of juncos feeds in the center where it’s safest. You might see juncos lunge at each other and flick open their tails. This is how they figure out who is in charge.

Juncos often scratch around in feeders, kicking seed over the edge to birds feeding on the ground below.

Juncos are nicknamed “snowbirds” because they appear in Missouri during late fall and winter. In spring, they migrate north to nest.

7

Mourning Dove



Bird Feeder Faves: Cracked corn, millet, sunflower seeds

Wild Menu: Weed and grass seeds

When a mourning dove takes flight, its wings make a whistling sound.

Doves quickly gobble seeds, storing them in a pouch in their throat called a crop. Once a dove has topped off its crop, it flies to a safe perch to digest the meal. One dove had more than 17,000 grass seeds in its crop!

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Downy Woodpecker



Bird Feeder Faves: Suet, peanuts, sunflower seeds

Wild Menu: Insects, acorns

When a downy woodpecker is angry at another bird, it fans out its tail and swings its beak like a sword.

Male downies keep females from feeding in the best spots. When males arrive at a feeder, females often fly away to hide in a nearby tree.

Males aren't total bullies, though. If a male spots danger when he's alone, he keeps quiet. When he's with a female, he gives an alarm call to alert her of the threat.

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Tufted Titmouse



Bird Feeder Faves: Sunflower seeds, peanuts

Wild Menu: Mainly insects in summer; acorns and seeds in fall and winter

Titmice flit down to a feeder, grab the largest seed they see, and dash away. At a safe perch, they hold the seed with their feet and peck it open. Many seeds are hidden in trees for a later snack.

Tufted titmice couples defend their territories year-round. That's why you usually see only one or two titmice at your feeder at once. If you see more, they're likely kids joining mom and pop for dinner.

8

White-Breasted Nuthatch



Bird Feeder Faves: Suet, sunflower seeds, peanuts

Wild Menu: Insects, acorns, seeds

Though small, nuthatches are feisty. They often swing their long, sharp beaks like swords to drive away other birds. When this happens, only woodpeckers hold their ground.

Nuthatches love to swipe peanuts and stash them away to eat before bedtime. Seeds with shells require too much effort to crack right before bed, so they are usually eaten on the spot.

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