

WILD ABOUT BIRDS

Attracting wild birds to your garden or even your window sill by way of feeding them will bring hours of pleasure. Birds, especially in winter, need extra food not only to survive the harsh winter months but also for warmth. Wild bird food can be bought from most pet shops and is an ideal mix of nuts and natural seed. Kitchen scraps and leftovers also make a welcome meal. Be careful though not give anything too salty, salt is not necessary to a bird's diet and can prove dangerous, even fatal. Bread of



course is an obvious choice for wild birds but, although better than nothing, it plays a poor substitute in the bird's diet. A fresh coconut cut in half hung on a tree in your garden will provide the smaller birds with a tasty snack. However desiccated coconut must be avoided as this swells in the bird's stomach and can prove fatal. The winter

months are the most important months to feed wild birds as their supply of natural food is somewhat depleted. Feeding birds in a particularly cold spell is very important; it could mean life or death! Once you have made the decision to feed the birds the commitment must be on going, simply because they will come to rely on you for food. Birds lose weight and strength overnight therefore the best time to feed is morning, even late at night as long as rodents do not have access to the food and there is no chance of a hard frost. Bird nuts in string bags can be hung on trees; the smaller birds love these. Fat is an important part in a bird's diet to see them through the winter, grated cheese is a good source of fat.

Wild birds can also be fed throughout the year. Spring to Autumn sees them raising their young, therefore easy pickings off the bird table or even the patio are welcome. Water should also be provided. Birds need water not only to drink but to keep their feathers in tip top working condition by splashing in the water and preening their feathers at the same time. A bird table will not only look attractive in your garden but it is also a good way of feeding the birds. It should be approximately 6ft off the ground, the table should be up to 2ft square, ideally with a rim around, to stop the food falling off. Water should not be allowed to collect on the table itself. The main support pole should be cat proof. The best type would be one of galvanized steel or anything to stop a cat climbing up. The table should be a fairly open area remembering that some birds will fly onto the table from the branch of a tree or a fence, therefore locate the bird table near some cover if possible. There are of course some birds who prefer to feed off the ground rather than from a bird table. Yellowhammers, finches and blackbirds are ground feeders so don't forget to cater for them.

