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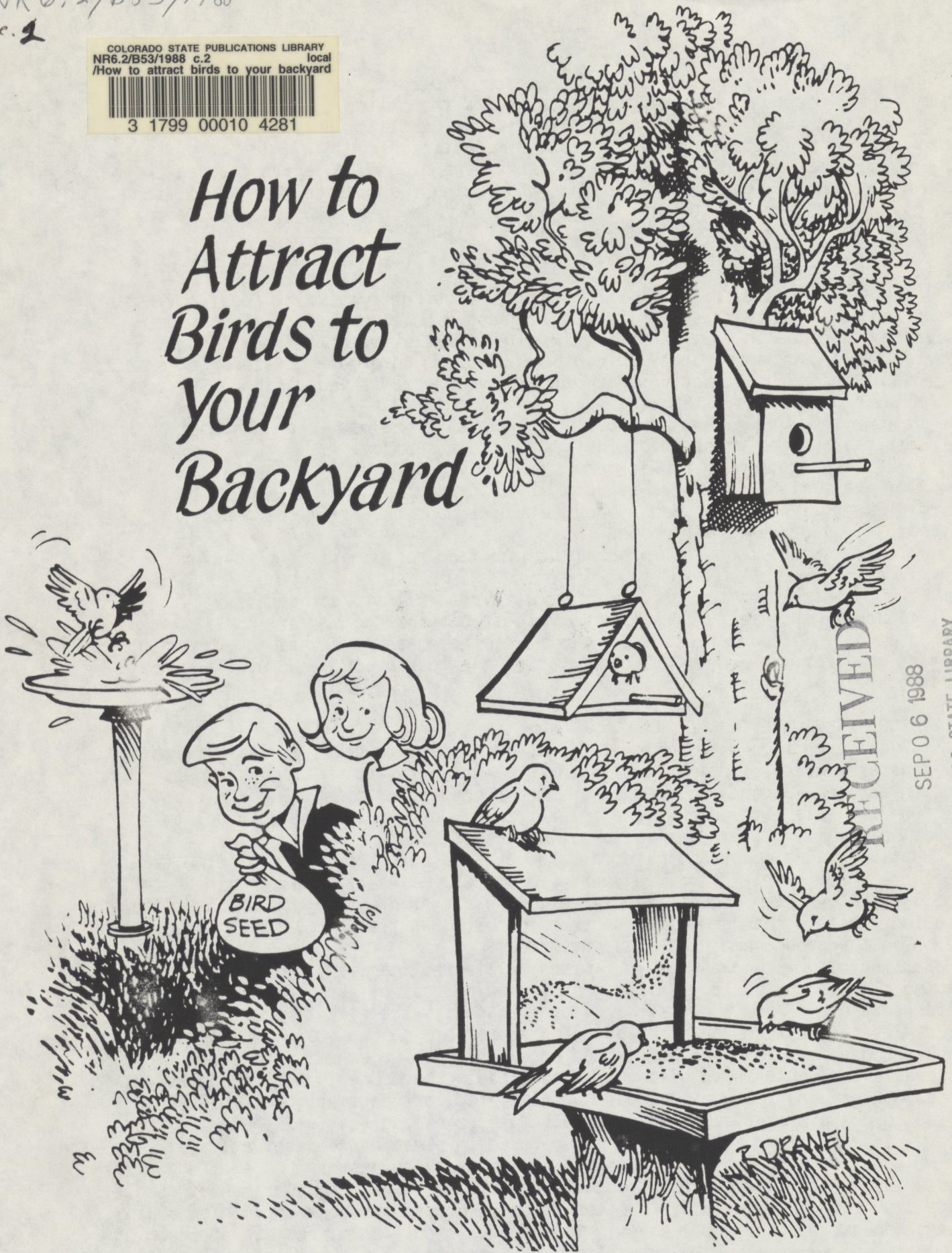
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/How to attract birds to your backyard



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How to Attract Birds to your Backyard



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COLORADO DIVISION OF WILDLIFE

Colorado is home to more than 400 species of birds during all or part of the year. Great diversity between the mountains and the plains presents us with the opportunity to enjoy and observe equally diverse birdlife. Birds in Colorado range from the tiny blackcapped chickadee to the majestic bald eagle.

You can increase your enjoyment of birds by adding a few extra touches to your yard and garden. These extras --along with taking the time to look and listen-- can give you the chance to watch a mother robin raise her young, hear a meadowlark sing, and see the grace of a barn swallow in flight.

ATTRACTING BIRDS

Like all wildlife, birds have four basic needs for survival: food, cover, water, and a place to raise their young. These requirements for life can be provided for birds in your backyard. With a little extra time and willingness to provide a safe, clean habitat you can begin setting up a home or stopover for birds.

One of the main attractions for birds in your yard is vegetation. Start by following these easy steps:

1. Don't mow your lawn any more than necessary and mow it on a higher setting. Longer grass holds insects that birds enjoy.
2. Plant a garden or flower bed.
3. Have a place for birds to bathe or drink.
4. Plant trees. Both coniferous and deciduous trees will help attract birds to your yard year round.
5. Have shrubs that will provide both berries and a nesting place for birds.
6. Provide places for birds to perch. Birds will sit on fenceposts, laundry lines, trees, or a place you construct for them.

Once you've attracted birds to your yard, there are many ways you can encourage them to stay for a season. Again, providing the four basic needs will encourage birds to stay and prosper in your yard.

PROVIDING BIRDS WITH A HOME

You can encourage birds to nest by providing nest materials; leave twigs and a few scattered grass clippings out in the open in your yard. String and horse hair (no longer than 7 inches) placed in an open concentrated area will help birds to build their nests with quicker and fewer trips. Do not use string longer than 7 inches; birds may get tangled in longer pieces.

Mud is another important material used by some birds for nest building. By keeping a small supply of mud in your yard you will attract birds, robins especially, to nest. Mud can be placed in the corner of your yard in some kind of container that is open and will not trap the bird. A trashcan lid or hubcap can be placed in the ground and used as a mud holder.

Setting out nest boxes for your birds will offer them a place to live when nothing else is available. Cavity nesters may need a nest box when starlings or sparrows take over their nests, or if other cavities are already occupied. Houses for cavity nesters can be purchased at a store, or you can build your own.

Birdhouses should never be painted or decorated. Remember: the less noticeable the house is to us the less noticeable the house is to predators. Plain wooden houses constructed from seasoned pine, fir, or cedar are best. If you decide to use a preservative on your house use something that will not harm the bird. Linseed oil or spar varnish can be used in place of a preservative.

Nest boxes can be built for birds other than cavity nesters. A shelf house is popular when trying to persuade robins and swallows to nest at your house. Shelf nests are bird houses without front or sides. They should be mounted high against houses and garages, or under eaves. Shelf boxes should be placed out of reach of both cats and squirrels. No power lines or ropes should run close to the nest to keep predators from getting in and to prevent accidents.

PREFERRED TREES & SHRUBS

	ASPEN	BLACKBERRY	DOGWOOD	ELDERBERRY	HACKBERRY	HAWTHORN	MAPLE	OAK	SERVICELERBERRY	SNOWBERRY	SUMAC	VIRGINIA CREEPER	WILDOHERRY	WILLOW
Western bluebird			X	X	X									
Cedar waxwing			X	X			X				X	X	X	
Clark's nutcracker									X		X			
Evening grosbeak		X	X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	
Northern flicker		X	X	X	X	X			X	X			X	
House Finch	X			X										X
House sparrow						X								
Humminbird											X			
Juncos						X					X	X		
Mountain Chickadee									X					
Nuthatch				X				X	X					
Red-winged Blackbird		X						X	X					
American Robin		X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
Rufous-sided towhee	X			X					X					
Scrub jay		X												
Song sparrow		X		X										
Starling			X	X	X				X			X	X	X
Stellar jay		X		X	X					X				
Warbling vireo			X						X			X		
Downy woodpecker			X			X			X		X		X	X
Warblers			X						X					

PREFERRED WEEDS & HERBS

	BLUEGRASS	CRABGRASS	DANDELION	FILAREES	NIGHTSHADE	PANICGRASS	PIGWEEF	SUNFLOWER	RAGWEED
Brown creeper						X			
Chipping Sparrow	X	X	X			X	X		X
House Finch				X			X		
House Sparrow		X	X			X	X		X
Juncos	X	X		X		X	X		X
Lark bunting	X					X	X		X
Mountain Chickadee									
Nuthatch							X		
Pine siskin			X	X			X		
Red crossbill							X		X
Red-winged Blackbird				X		X	X		X
American Robin						X	X		X
Song sparrow		X			X	X	X		X

BUILDING A BASIC BIRDHOUSE

A basic birdhouse for cavity nesters should provide cover from weather, protection from predators, ventilation, drainage, and a side that will open for cleaning. There should be a way to mount the house, and it should be stable and secure.

The birdhouse shown in the accompanying drawing is easy to build and can be used for most cavity nesters in Colorado. Your birdhouse can be mounted on either a tree or pole. The following chart provides a list of birds and the dimensions you'll need for them when building your birdhouse.*

BIRDS	INTERIOR SIZE	DEPTH OF HOUSE	ENTRANCE HOLE	HEIGHT OF ENTRANCE	HEIGHT ABOVE GROUND
BARN SWALLOW	6"x6"	6"	shelf nest	---	---
BLUEBIRD	5"x5"	8"	1-1/2"	6"	5-10'
DOWNY WOODPECKER	4"x4"	8-10"	1-1/4"	6-8"	5-20'
FLICKER	7"x7"	16-18"	1-1/4"	6-8"	6-20'
FLYCATCHER HOUSE	6"x6"	8-10"	2"	6-8"	8-20'
FINCH HOUSE	4"x4"	6"	2"	4"	8-12'
WREN	4"x4"	6-8"	1"	1-6"	6-10'
MOUNTAIN CHICKADEE	4"x4"	8-10"	1-1/8"	6-8"	5-15'
MOURNING DOVE	12"x12"	9"	shelf nest	---	10-15'
NUTHATCH	4"x4"	8-10"	1-1/4"	6-8"	5-20'
ROBIN	6"x8"	8"	shelf nest	---	6-15'
SONG SPARROW	6"x6"	6"	shelf nest	---	1-3'

*NOTE:

You may wish to discourage starlings and English sparrows because they become too numerous and keep other birds from coming into your yard. You can discourage these two species from nesting in boxes by adjusting the entrance hole size. Make the entrance to your bird house less than 1-1/2 inches in diameter to keep starlings out. To keep English sparrows out of your boxes the entrance hole needs to be 1-1/8 inches or less. However, an entrance hole this small in diameter may exclude all birds except chickadees.

FEEDING YOUR FEATHERED FRIENDS

You can also help provide for the birds' need for food. When natural feed is available you probably won't need a feeder, but putting out a feeder in the winter is helpful to birds who stay in Colorado during the snowy season. Winter feeding should be continuous because more birds may show up in your yard than the natural food source can supply, and the birds may come to depend on your handouts.

Many types of feeders can be purchased from stores. Stable hanging feeders that will not swing when birds land on them are preferred by most people. These feeders can be hung high on outreaching branches from trees, or hung from a patio cover. Hanging feeders are favored by many species of birds and are out of reach of predators. By providing a place for birds to perch on your feeder you can attract a wide variety.

If you want an even greater diversity of birds, you can use a platform or ground feeder. These feeders should be placed in an area that has a wide view of the surroundings and is no further than five feet from cover. If you decide to use a platform feeder and you have a cat, put a bell around the cat's neck. If your neighborhood has lots of cats, a platform feeder should not be used.

Another type of feeders is a tube feeder, which will dispense more expensive foods such as thistle and sunflower seeds more economically. Many birds also enjoy fresh fruit. By using an orange feeder you can keep birds from trying to run off with the fruit you put out. If you don't own an orange feeder, you can nail the fruits to a board on a tree. Fruits you can use include oranges, apples, bananas, berries, and coconuts.

Placing your feeders in view of your window will enable you to watch birds while they feed. Winter feeders also should be placed near shelter to protect birds from the wind and snow. If you decide to mount your feeder on a pole, an inverted metal or tin funnel approximately 5 feet from the ground will keep squirrels from getting into your feeder. You can make this yourself or buy a commercial squirrel guard from a pet store.

All bird feeders must be cleaned. A high concentration of birds eating in one place may spread disease and infection. Hanging and platform feeders should be cleaned weekly with soap and water. Be sure to rinse off all soap so birds don't get sick from the residue. You should also be careful when cleaning feeders to wash your hands and the cleaning area thoroughly.

Feeders can be filled with store-bought food. Most birds prefer either black or striped sunflower seeds. Millet can also be put out as a mixture with sunflower seeds for birds. To attract more finicky birds such as siskins and goldfinches you will need to put out thistle (niger). For winter feeders a suet (animal fat), peanut butter, and oatmeal mixture pressed around a pine cone hung from a tree offers birds a high-fat diet. Suet should not be used in the summer since it spoils easily. All food put out for birds should be kept fresh and stored properly.

PROVIDING PROTECTION

Birdhouses provide nesting cover, as do trees and shrubs. Birds need a place to nest which is not easily seen and is out of reach of predators. Some prefer to nest on or just a few feet above the ground. These birds need thick bushes that have not been clipped on the bottom. The denser the tree the bird will be nesting in, the more cover it will offer, so be careful not to trim bushes too much.

Birds need trees and bushes to help them escape weather, too. Thick trees and bushes in your yard are the best cover from rain, wind, snow, and heat. In winter, coniferous trees are important to birds, since most other plants have shed their leaves. A coniferous tree is also one of the best protections against Colorado snows and winds.

PROVIDING WATER

The last essential need of birds is water. Water is not only used for drinking, it is also important for cooling and bathing. A bird bath with gently sloping sides and a depth of 1-1/2 to 2 inches is a must. Bird baths can be found in most garden shops. If you want something a little more elaborate than a bird bath, you can make a pond. Trashcan lids sunk into the ground, plastic-lined holes, or cement ponds are all possibilities. Like everything else, bird baths and bird ponds must be kept clean. Bird baths should be cleaned with soap and water weekly. Ponds do not need to be cleaned as often as baths but should be kept free of debris.

Birds are attracted to the sound of running water. Having a hose or bucket hanging from a tree over your water source is one way to do this, or you can place a fountain in your bird bath or pond.

By placing a heater in your bird bath or pond you can provide a winter watering spot for birds. Special outdoor heaters can be purchased that are made for the shallow water in bird baths. Or you can buy a heater that will keep your pond from freezing over.

ATTRACTING HUMMINGBIRDS TO YOUR BACKYARD

Hummingbirds are a rare and unusual pleasure that can be enjoyed in Colorado. Of the 12 species of hummingbirds in North America, three visit Colorado. Hummingbirds can be hard to spot, and they are often heard but not seen unless you have a hummingbird feeder or garden. In Colorado the broad-tailed hummingbird is our most common visitor. Less frequent visitors are the rufous and calliope hummingbirds.

Hummingbirds come to Colorado in the spring and summer to breed. The broad-tailed hummingbird arrives in Colorado in early May and stays until mid-September. Rufous and calliope hummingbirds arrive in mid-July and stay until early September.

One way to enjoy hummingbirds is by offering them both natural and man-made food. Planting a bright and colorful garden full of plants with tubular, nectar-producing flowers is the first step. Some of these are: gladiolas, petunias, columbines, geraniums, and honeysuckle. Bright colors, especially red, will attract the birds to your yard. Hummingbirds also eat the insects and spiders that are on your flowers.

If you decide to use a feeder for hummingbirds you must be willing to devote a little extra time to the birds. Hummingbird feeders can be purchased at most stores with a pet or garden section. Make sure the feeder you buy is equipped with a bee guard because the sweet solution will attract bees to the feeder. Buying a feeder with red coloring on it will make it more appealing. If your feeder is plain in color you may want to put a red ribbon or tape on it to help lure the birds to the feeder. When using a feeder extra steps need to be taken to keep it clean and fresh. Feeders must be cleaned and sterilized daily. Glass feeders can be placed in a dishwasher, but plastic feeders need to be hand washed. You will also need to make sure that the solution is kept fresh and changed daily.

You'll need to place your feeder in an obvious attractive place. Put your feeder next to the colorful flowers in your garden. After hummingbirds start coming to your house you can put the feeder in a more viewable area near a window.

When feeding your hummingbirds you must be careful to use the right solution. A four-part-water to one-part-sugar solution is the only solution that should be put in your feeder. You'll need to boil water and then add the sugar when making your solution. Keep any extra solution refrigerated. The red color of your feeder is enough to attract hummingbirds so do not use red food coloring. Food coloring is an extra burden on a hummingbird's system and can be harmful to its health. Honey should not be used as a sugar substitute in a feeder. Honey will spoil easily out in the sun and may cause a deadly tongue infection in hummingbirds.

Finally, hummingbirds migrate to warmer climates for the winter; therefore, all hummingbird feeders should be taken down by September first. Leaving your feeder up any later than this will encourage the tiny birds to remain in Colorado where winters are too cold for hummingbirds.

AND BUTTERFLIES TOO

No garden is complete without a butterfly or two. Since many of the flowers you plant for hummingbirds are attractive to butterflies, you should expect a few extra visitors. If you have planted purple, pink, yellow, orange, or white flowers then you should already have butterflies in your garden. The flowers you plant should have nectar in them, since this a butterfly's main diet.

Butterflies go through two stages in their life-- the larval stage and adult stage. Most plants in your garden will provide for the needs of butterflies in both stages. Shrubs, vines, and bedding plants will provide good homes for your butterflies.

Here are a few common species of butterflies in Colorado. Also listed are some of the better garden and bedding plants you may want to consider to attract butterflies to your yard. You may also have heard of attracting butterflies to your yard with a fruit and alcohol mixture. Although this mixture may attract butterflies, moths, and other insects to your yard, it is intoxicating and will leave the insects more vulnerable to predators.

BUTTERFLIES AND THEIR FAVORITE PLANTS

BUTTERFLIES: checkered white, blue copper, hairstreak copper, gulf fritillary (uncommon), monarch, mourning cloak, painted lady, black swallowtail, tiger swallowtail, western swallowtail, wood nymph.

GIANT SILKWORM MOTH: cercopia, polyphemus.

GARDEN PLANTS TO HAVE: lilacs (swallowtails and pink lady), rabbit brush, milkweed (monarchs-- both larval and adult), dill, carrots, and parsley (black swallowtail), hackberry (painted lady), aspen and/or cottonwood, elderberry (moths)
FLOWERS: sunflower, zinnia, petunia, marigold.

STARLING AND ENGLISH SPARROWS

Both English sparrows and European starlings are introduced species to North America. Because of the high population numbers and competitiveness with native species some people find them a nuisance. If you have sparrows and starlings taking over your feeders and nest boxes, you can discourage them by doing a few simple things.

- Do not put perches on your hanging feeders. Since both species are basically ground feeders this will make it impossible for them to steal your food.
- If you use a ground feeder place bread crumbs, table scraps and unused grain from your other feeder in a secluded area in your yard. These birds will find this mixture of foods better than your more expensive seeds.
- Suet is a starlings favorite food, so you may not want to use it.
- Tear out sparrow nests as soon as they start to build them. When tearing out nests you should be aware that they will build more than one and that you must be ready to do it many times.
- Fill in any holes in your house. Sparrows will nest in any space they can find.
- Cover up eaves in your house or patio. Use panel or chicken mesh to keep the sparrows out.

ENJOYING BIRDS RESPONSIBLY

Watching birds in your yard can be only one of the ways to enjoy them. To get a better understanding of your year round visitors you may want to start keeping track of the birds that visit. Keep a notebook on what birds come into your yard, what they prefer to eat, the time of year they show up at your feeder, and whether they stay to breed or are just passing through. Charting and observing the birds in your yard will not only get you involved with Colorado's wildlife but will also give you a new insight into some of our most important residents.

If you decide that you want to attract birds to your yard you must be willing to accept some responsibility. Birds are wild animals and are able to survive without our help. By putting out feeders you will make birds depend on you for food, so you must be prepared to clean feeders weekly, add seed regularly and keep feeders away from predators. If these precautions are not taken when the results may lead to death and disease.

GETTING MORE INFORMATION

For more information on how you can provide suitable habitat for the wildlife that visits your yard, where to buy feed, and how to build a birdhouse, you can contact the Division of Wildlife office nearest you. The resources suggested below are available from most libraries and at many bookstores. To find out more about the materials available from the National Wildlife Federation, contact the Colorado Wildlife Federation at 830-2557 in Denver. The Colorado State University Extension Service offers information through its Teletips program. To take advantage of this service, call 825-1588 in Denver, 491-7387 in Fort Collins, and 1-800-332-2473 elsewhere in Colorado. Tapes available include: 5422--Winter Feeding for Birds; 5423--Colorado Bird Notes; 5426--Control of Birds in Buildings; 5427--Coping with Woodpeckers; 5428--Attracting Hummingbirds; 1209--Selecting Plants to Attract Birds.

SUGGESTED READINGS

Farrand, Jr., J. 1983. The Audubon Society Master Guide To Birding. Publ. Alfred A. Knopf. New York. 1244pp. in 3 volumes

Folzenlogen, R. 1986. Birding Guide To The Denver Boulder Region. Publ. Pruett Publ. Boulder, CO. 164pp.

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Lane, J.A. and H.R. Holt. 1973. A Birder's Guide To Eastern Colorado. Publ. L and P Press, Denver. 136pp

Logsdon, G. 1983. Wildlife In Your Garden. Publ. Rodale Press, Emmaus, Pa. 268pp.

Kress, S.W. 1985. The Audubon Society Guide To Attracting Birds. Publ. Scribner's, New York. 377pp.

Martin, A.C., H.S. Zim, and A.L. Nelson. 1951. American Wildlife And Plants: A Guide To Food Habits. Publ. Dover Publ. 500pp.

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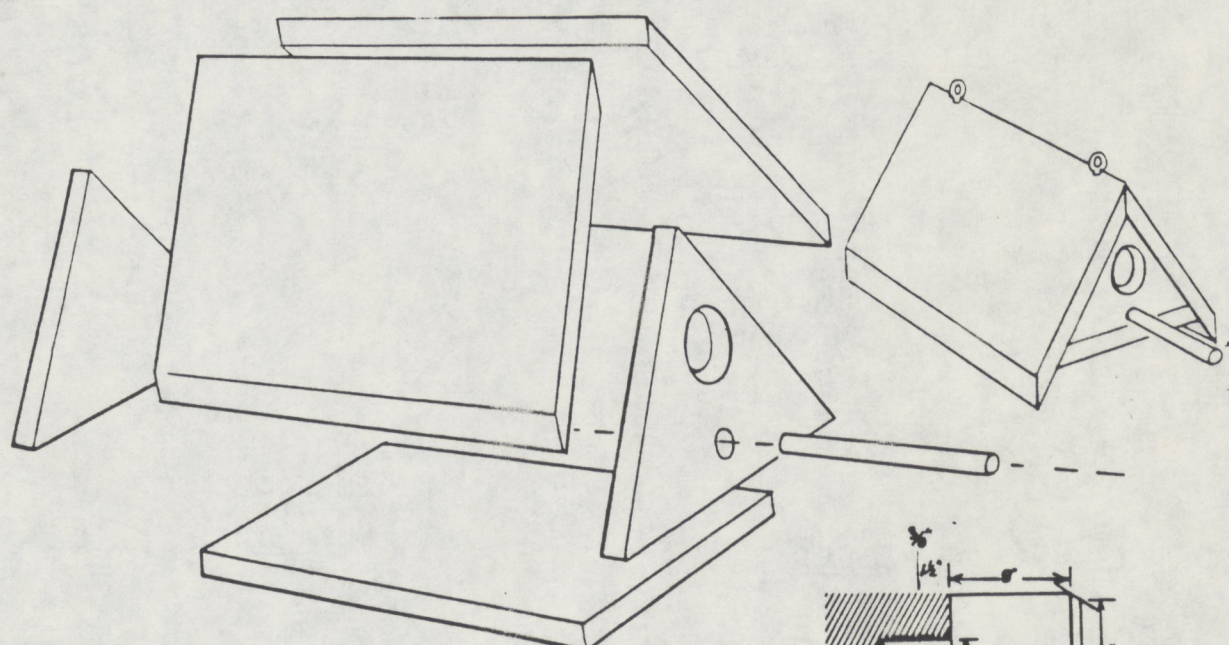
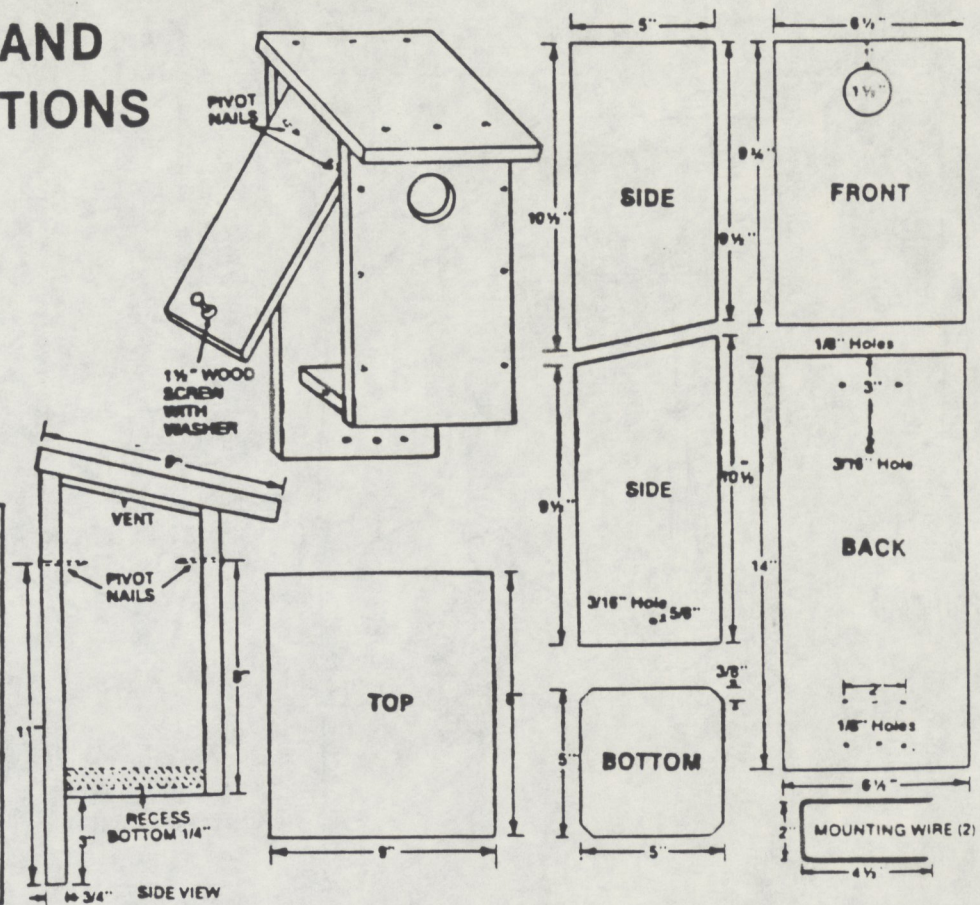
Udvardy, M.D.F. 1977. The Audubon Society Field Guide To North American Birds. Publ. Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., New York. 854pp.

This informational pamphlet was researched and written by Linda Bexley, who is a senior majoring in wildlife biology at Colorado State University. Much of the information in this pamphlet came from National Wildlife Federation publications on developing backyard wildlife habitat.

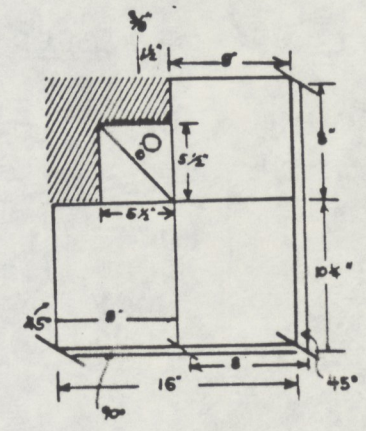
BLUEBIRD NESTING BOX PLANS AND INSTRUCTIONS

Courtesy: L. Zeleny, North American Bluebird Society, Inc.

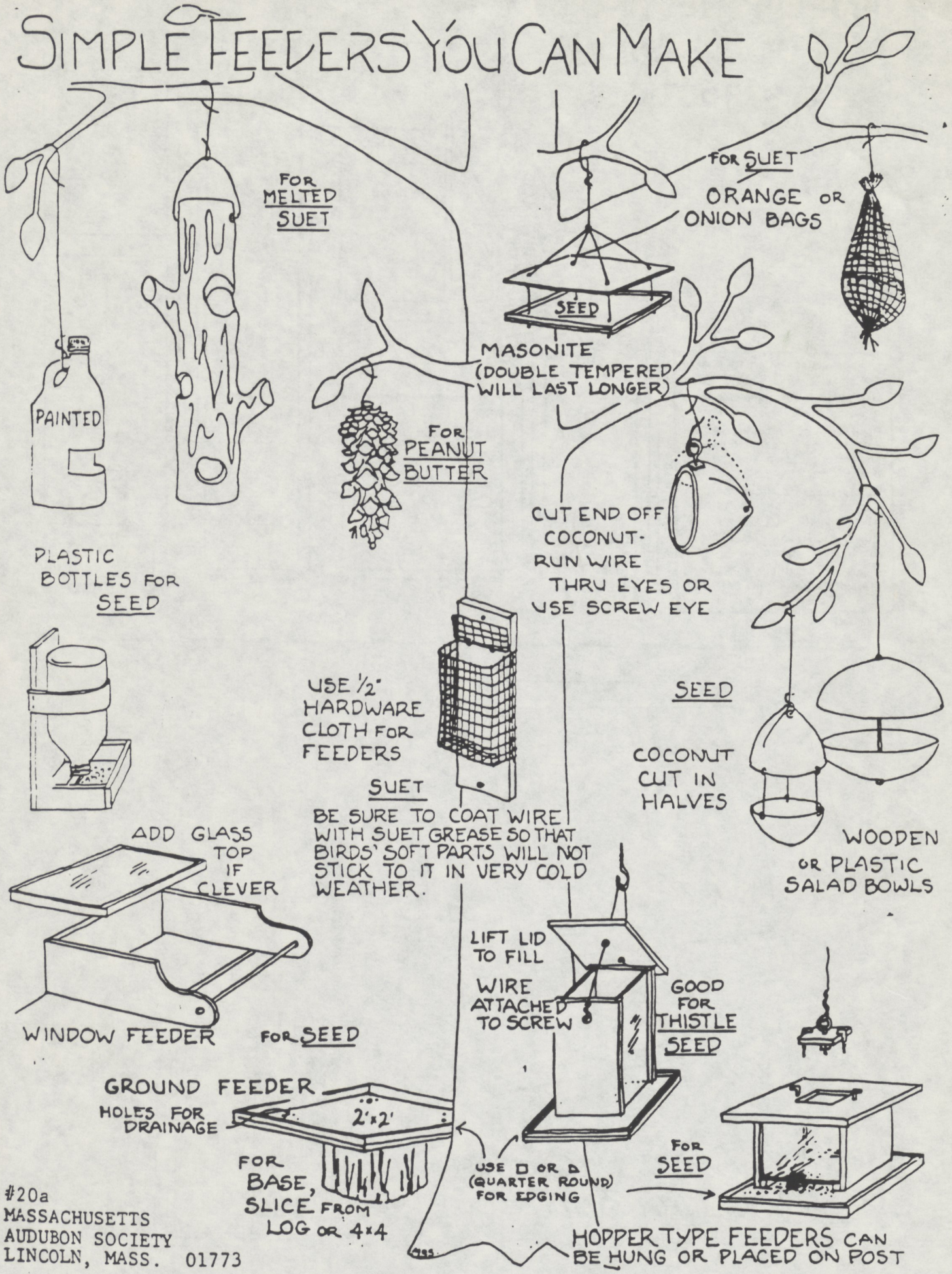
Dimensions shown are for boards 3/4" thick.
Use 1-3/4" galvanized siding nails or aluminum nails.
Pivot nails must be located exactly opposite each other as shown for proper opening of side board.
Cut top edges of front and back boards at slight angle to fit flush with top board.
Cut 3/8" off each corner of bottom board as shown.
Insert bottom board so that the grain of the wood runs from front to rear of box.



*A Basic Bird House
You Can Build*



SIMPLE FEEDERS YOU CAN MAKE



FOR MELTED SUET

FOR SUET
ORANGE OR ONION BAGS

MASONITE (DOUBLE TEMPERED WILL LAST LONGER)

FOR PEANUT BUTTER

CUT END OFF COCONUT - RUN WIRE THRU EYES OR USE SCREW EYE

USE 1/2" HARDWARE CLOTH FOR FEEDERS

SEED

COCONUT CUT IN HALVES

SUET

BE SURE TO COAT WIRE WITH SUET GREASE SO THAT BIRDS' SOFT PARTS WILL NOT STICK TO IT IN VERY COLD WEATHER.

WOODEN OR PLASTIC SALAD BOWLS

ADD GLASS TOP IF CLEVER

LIFT LID TO FILL
WIRE ATTACHED TO SCREW
GOOD FOR THISTLE SEED

WINDOW FEEDER FOR SEED

GROUND FEEDER
HOLES FOR DRAINAGE
FOR BASE, SLICE FROM LOG OR 4x4

USE D OR D (QUARTER ROUND) FOR EDGING

FOR SEED

HOPPER TYPE FEEDERS CAN BE HUNG OR PLACED ON POST