

Backyard Birds and Winter Feeding

Brought to you by the Kingston Chase Conservation Corps

Backyard bird feeders are especially important in late winter, when other food is in short supply, and during periods of heavy snow or extreme cold. Many of us don't put out bird feeders because we are afraid that birds will rely solely on them. But research shows that winter-survival rates are higher when birds have both feeder and native food options and that birds retain the ability to forage if feeders are removed.

After snowfall, you may see flocks of birds along our roadsides after the snowplows have passed. They are after the grit. Birds have no teeth to grind their food. The dirt, sand, pebbles, and grit they eat sits in their crop and helps grind up their food. Adding grit to your feeder is helpful, particularly in the winter and spring. Mixing grit or cornmeal with peanut butter will be attractive to many birds. Crushed eggshells do the same thing, and in the spring have an added benefit: they provide extra calcium during nesting season.

Drinking water is at a premium for Virginia birds when natural water sources freeze over. Heating elements are available for your birdbath, or try the low-tech no-cost method of carrying out warm water at regular times: morning and noon are busy bathing and drinking times.



For information about this article or the Kingston Chase Conservation Corps, visit www.kchoa.org and click on "Conservation Corps" or contact Jane Hampson at 703-481-7903 or via e-mail at janiebird1@yahoo.com.

Also, please plan to join the Conservation Corps at their next meeting scheduled for Wednesday, February 13, at 8:00 p.m. at the Kingston Chase clubhouse. They will be picking up from where they left off after their kick-off meeting, brainstorming ideas for the club and outlining a list of activities and goals to pursue.