

Winter Bird/Wildlife Survival Techniques and Tips

Birds have successfully coped with winters without our help for ages. However, with the advent of towns and cities mankind has altered their environments to the extent that winter survival is greatly improved with our assistance.

Three things are necessary for birds and other wildlife to cope with winter weather – food, water, and shelter.

To help sustain birds' high rate of metabolism and body temperature, high -calorie, high-fat foods should be provided. Examples include: black sunflower seeds, millet, cracked corn, peanuts, and suet. Each food type will appeal to certain bird groups so a mixture of foods is highly recommended.

Water is also vital to winter bird survival. Water containers should be changed often to prevent freezing. If available, an approved water heater is helpful in preventing freezing of the water source.

The water and food source should ideally be in an open area within ten feet or so of some type of shelter and perching sites. Also, food and water should be in an area protected from winter's harsh wind and weather.

Bird shelter can easily be incorporated into the permanent landscape. Evergreen trees and shrubs are ideal shelter plant. However, thorny, or densely branched deciduous plants should also be considered. Many shelter plants also provide lots of berries. Examples include: Eastern Red Cedar, Crabapple, Holly, Pines, Junipers, Forsythia, and shrub roses. Nesting boxes also provide viable alternatives or additions to the landscape by providing adequate winter shelter.

Extensive information may be found in the free OSU fact sheet HLA-6435 “Landscaping and Gardening for Birds”. Excellent information on landscaping for wildlife is also available from Penn State University Extension at <http://extension.psu.edu/landscaping-for-wildlife-trees-shrubs-and-vines>

Creating a landscape that will help birds and wildlife over winter will not only provide beauty but will also help restore critical wildlife habitat in our communities.

Resources:

[OSU Fact sheet HLA-6435 “Landscaping and Gardening for Birds”](#)

[OSU Fact Sheet L-274 “Songbirds”](#)

<https://extension.psu.edu/landscaping-for-wildlife-trees-shrubs-and-vines>

Common Lawn and Garden Questions: Answers from Tulsa Master Gardeners.2007-2015. Brian Jervis, etal.