

BIRD NOOZ

In This Issue: **Free Resource: Bird I.D. Guide | Environmental Tragedy | Tours & Tips**

Weird Things

The experts have some old and new thoughts about what to feed our backyard bird friends. See what you think of their ideas!

Companies Can Now Harm/ Destroy Migratory Birds — No Cost!

New rules in Washington eliminated criminal penalties for “incidental” migratory bird deaths that come in the course of normal business. So engineers who were about to plow under the nesting grounds of **25,000 gulls, black skimmers, royal terns and other seabirds** didn’t have to worry – the Trump administration said the wildlife habitat destruction was just “incidental” to the project.

Local Birding, Next Meeting

Pinckney Island birding in almost any month is fantastic! Our Club’s **February 5 Meeting** will be fantastic too!



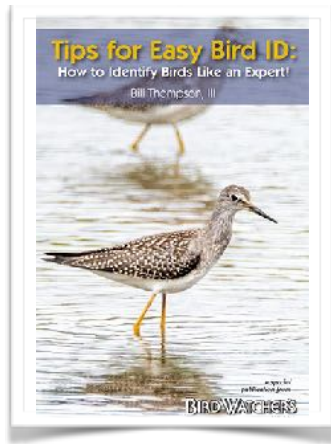
Top 10 Weird Things to Feed Birds

by Bill Thompson, III, Editor, **BIRD WATCHER’S DIGEST, JAN. 2020**

Sunflower seed may be the hamburger of the bird world, but don’t you sometimes get bored scooping the same old seed out of those 50-pound bags? We’ll never know if the birds get bored, too. But just in case they are yawning at your feeder offerings, I’ve got a few suggestions to help you break out of the old feeder routine. These 10 suggestions of weird things to feed birds include some bird feeder offerings you may have heard of before, and a few you probably haven’t.

It’s time for a caveat. Not all of these suggestions will work in your backyard. After all, everyone’s climate and feeder clientele are different. So think for yourself—these are just suggestions—do what makes you (and your birds) happy. *(Continued on page 2)*





Free Download!

Tips for Easy Bird Identification

Identifying birds is at the very heart of bird watching. Each bird encountered is like a little puzzle or mystery to solve, because, while birds of a single species all share a certain set of physical traits, no two individual birds, like no two individual humans, are exactly alike. You solve the mystery of a bird's identity by gathering clues, just like a detective.

IN THIS GUIDE: Top 20 Rules of the Bird Identification Game

- What to Do First
- What to Do Next
- What to Look For
- Bird ID Pop Quiz!
- And Much More!

DOWNLOAD IT NOW FOR FREE AT BIRD WATCHERS'S DIGEST:

birdwatchersdigest.com, go to **Green Header Box** that says "FEATURED FREEBIE" and click the red "**Get it Now.**" Fill out your name and email. That's it!

From No. 10 to No. 1, Here Are Bill's Feeding Suggestions:

10. **Roadkill.** Years ago we ran an article in BWD in which the author extolled the virtues of feeding road-killed animals to his backyard birds. He enticed a red-shouldered hawk to come into his backyard to feast on a rabbit that had met an unfortunate end on his road. But lots of birds will feed on a convenient carcass, especially the meat and the fat, which is nature's own suet.

9. **Meat Scraps.** If your enthusiasm for feeding birds does not extend to picking up dead things from roadsides, consider offering the meat scraps from last night's dinner.

8. **Grape Jelly.** Grape jelly is favored by woodpeckers, orioles, tanagers, and others. We usually offer a spoonful in a shallow dish or jar lid. The sugar content in the jelly makes it a high-energy food for feeder birds. Just don't overdo it. Too much artificial coloring is no good for any one.

7. **Holiday Nuts.** They get stale when they get old. What better way to rid yourself of those holiday nuts (no, I'm not referring to your distant relatives).

6. **Eggshells.** You may know the beneficial impact of the calcium in eggshells on female birds during the nesting season. Birds can also use the extra mineral during the winter. Save those eggshells from breakfast, rinse them out in the sink, and place them in a shallow pan and bake in the oven at 250 degrees for 20 minutes. This cleaning and baking eliminates the chance that wild birds will be exposed to harmful bacteria from domestic chickens. We crush our eggshells on our front sidewalk and the birds nibble at the pieces all winter long.

5. **Grit.** Have you ever observed house sparrows pecking at the mortar between bricks on a house foundation? These birds are getting grit for their gizzards (which are muscular stomachs that seed-eating birds have).

4. **Berries.** ... Pokeberries, sassafras berries, wild grapes, etc., can be frozen and kept for winter treats. Of course, frozen berries from the store could do as well, as would any fruit.

3. **Pumpkin or Melon Seeds.** Also melon rinds with a little melon still on it.

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2. **Pasta.** This bird food was another compost pile revelation. Our kids love spaghetti with butter (no sauce, please) so we fix boatloads of it. When we can't reheat it even one more time, the leftover pasta goes on the compost pile where the birds enjoy it al fresco. We've

Pasta with butter



had a brown thrasher, blue jays, and titmice so into the pasta that you'd think they were extras on *The Sopranos*. Then there's our macaroni-and-cheese-loving red-bellied woodpecker. Offering pasta, like a lot of these "weird" foods, is best done in dry weather. We cut down on the compost pile feeding in mid-winter when we're beset by 40 to 100 starlings. Even so, it's nice to see our leftovers consumed by something other than our pesky raccoons.

Mealworms



Jelly or mealworm feeder



1. **Mealworms.** If you've never heard of mealworm feeding, then you need to get out more, my friend. Mealworms are one of the fastest-growing bird-feeding trends of the past decade. Our initial mealworm feeding was aimed at our bluebirds. Now our avian mealworm fans include cardinals, chickadees, titmice, white-breasted nuthatches, chipping, song, and field sparrows, downy woodpeckers, and Carolina wrens. Some feeder operators have had success in attracting warblers, vireos, tanagers, and orioles to mealworms. If you want to try mealworm feeding, find a local pet store or bait store that carries mealworms and buy a few dozen. Offer them near your existing feeders in a heavy shallow dish with slick vertical sides (lest the mealworms make their escape). It may take a while for your birds to tune into the presence of live food, but once they do, look out! We go through at least 1,000 mealworms in a month, and we dole them out sparingly. When you're ready to get serious about mealworm feeding, you'll certainly want to buy your "mealies" by mail-order (and perhaps go online to learn how to grow your own) and you may want to get a feeder specifically designed for mealworms.

Try some of these "weird" foods for birds and see if your birds like them. And don't be afraid to try something else, as long as it's not unhealthy for the birds (chocolate, soda pop, and Velveeta come to mind). In moderation, any of these foods will be fine for your birds, and they give you a chance to spice up your bird feeding.

A Trump Policy ‘Clarification’ All but Ends Punishment for Bird Deaths

by Lisa Friedman, Dec. 24, 2019, The NY Times

WASHINGTON — As the state of Virginia prepared for a major bridge and tunnel expansion in the tidewaters of the Chesapeake Bay last year, engineers understood that the nesting grounds of 25,000 gulls, black skimmers, royal terns and other seabirds were about to be plowed under.

To compensate, they considered developing an artificial island as a haven. Then in June 2018, the Trump administration stepped in. While the federal government “appreciates” the state’s efforts, new rules in Washington had eliminated criminal penalties for “incidental” migratory bird deaths that came in the course of normal business, administration officials advised. **Such conservation measures were now “purely voluntary.”**

The state ended its island planning.

The island is one of dozens of bird-preservation efforts that have fallen away in the wake of the policy change in 2017 that was billed merely as a technical clarification to a century-old law protecting migratory birds. Across the country birds have been killed and nests destroyed by oil spills, construction crews and chemical contamination, all with no response from the federal government, according to emails, memos and other documents viewed by The New York Times.

Not only has the administration stopped investigating most bird deaths, the documents show, it has discouraged local governments and businesses from taking precautionary measures to protect birds.

In one instance, a Wyoming-based oil company wanted to clarify that it no longer had to report bird deaths to the Fish and Wildlife Service. “You are correct,” the agency replied.

In another, a building property manager in Michigan emailed the Fish and Wildlife Service to note that residents had complained *(Continued on page 5)*



A new interpretation of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act in 2017 means that as of now, companies are no longer subject to prosecution or fines even after a disaster like the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in 2010 that destroyed or injured about one million birds and for which BP paid \$100 million in fines. Lee Celano/Reuters

(Continued from page 4) about birds being killed while workers put up siding and gutters around the apartment. Not to worry, the agency replied: “If the purpose or intent of your activity is not to take birds/nests/eggs, then it is no longer prohibited.”

And when a homeowners’ association in Arizona complained that a developer had refused to safely remove nesting burrowing owls from a nearby lot, Fish and Wildlife said that, because of the new legal interpretation, it could not compel the developer to act.

“Of course, we just got sued over that interpretation, so we’ll see how it ends up,” the enforcement officer wrote.

The revised policy — part of the administration’s broader effort to encourage business activity — has been a particular favorite of President Trump’s, whose selective view of avian welfare has ranged from complaining that wind energy “kills all the birds” to asserting that the oil industry has been subject to “totalitarian tactics” under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918.

Habitat loss and pesticide exposure already have brought on widespread bird-species declines. The number of adult breeding birds in the United States and Canada has plummeted by 2.9 billion since 1970.

Now, said Noah Greenwald, the endangered species director for the Center for Biological Diversity, the Trump administration has engineered “a fundamental shift” in policy that “lets industrial companies, utilities and others completely off the hook.”

Even a disaster like the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill, which killed or injured about a million birds, would not expose a company to prosecution or fines.

Gavin Shire, a spokesman for the Fish and Wildlife Service, the agency responsible for protecting migratory birds, said in a statement that other federal laws like the Endangered Species Act remain on the books. The Trump administration, he said, “will continue to work cooperatively with our industry partners to minimize impacts on migratory birds.”



The documents tell a different story.

In nearly two dozen incidents across 15 states, internal conversations among Fish and Wildlife Service officers indicate that, short of going out to shoot birds, activities in which birds die no longer merit action. In some cases the Trump administration has even discouraged local governments and businesses from taking relatively simple steps to protect birds, like reporting fatalities when they are found.

“You get the sense this policy is not only bad for birds, it’s also cruel,” Mr. Greenwald said. Click here to **keep reading at:** <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/24/climate/trump-bird-deaths.html>

February 2020

- **February 5**
- **February 12**
- **February 19**
- **February 26**

Fee: \$12

Time: 7:30 AM

**Register & Book
Online** (click below):

coastaldiscovery.org

Ages: 12+ only

Birding at Pinckney Island

Hilton Head, SC

\$12 Per Person | Ages 12+ | Opportunity to see many species of birds



Tour with an experienced bird watcher

Rates

Person (Ages 12 and up): \$12

Not recommended for children under the age of 12.

Duration

2 Hours

About

Tour participants will be guided through a walking tour of Pinckney Island National Wildlife Refuge by an experienced bird watcher. With a combination of natural habitats including Salt Marsh, Maritime Forest and open fields, the site allows participants to see many different species of birds. Depending on the season, diverse birds can be spotted: Summer Tanager, Eastern Kingbird, Painted Bunting, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Egrets, Herons and many, many others.

What to Bring

- Good walking shoes
- Binoculars



Next SCHHBC meeting — last chance to join/renew your membership!

- ◆ **Wednesday, February 5, 2020 at 3:45 PM (Note earlier time to meet!)**
- ◆ **“Red Cockaded Woodpeckers and other endangered species”**
- ◆ **Hidden Cypress (After the presentation, a short meeting for budget vote.)**

Come and enjoy Caroline Causey of the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources. Caroline will talk about her work with the fascinating and elusive red-cockaded woodpeckers.

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