

Attracting Birds, Not Bears

Help Keep Bears Wild



- If you want to feed birds while bears are active, you'll need to bring your feeders in every night before sundown, or hang them out of reach.
- Out of reach for a bear is at least ten feet off the ground and ten feet from anything bears can climb — which includes deck posts and exterior stairs.
- Don't use a simple rope pulley to bring your feeder up and down for filling — bears are smart enough to figure out how it works. Use a clip-style latch bears can't open.
- Keep the area underneath feeders clear of hulls and debris. Switching to a shelled or pre-hulled bird seed, often sold as Porch and Patio mix, makes that a lot easier.
- Even if a bear can't reach your feeder, the sight and smell will still attract them. Bears have been seen sitting under feeders for hours, trying to figure out how to get them down. And while they're thinking, they may look around to see if there's anything else interesting at your place. So if you feed birds while bears are active, you'll want to be extra vigilant, and make sure you've thoroughly bear-proofed your home, garage and property.

Keep reading for ways to attract birds without attracting bears.

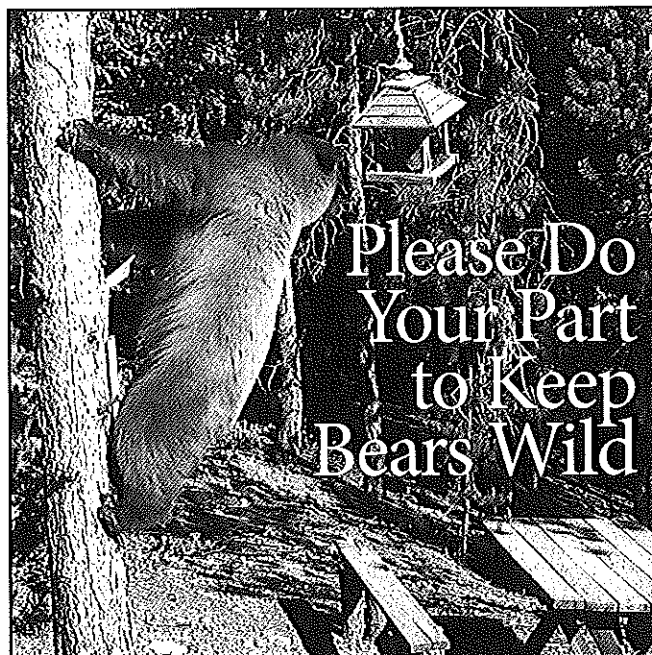
Bird Feeders Can Kill Bears

Some studies show that over 80 percent of human-bear conflicts can be traced back to the bear's first encounter with a bird feeder. Bird feeders are usually easy for bears to recognize and reach, and bird seed has lots of calories — over 12,000 in a typical 7-pound feeder.

Once bears discover bird feeders, they'll often visit every home in an area looking for more. Bears that become accustomed to getting food from human sources can damage property and become aggressive in their pursuit of easy food rewards, and often must be destroyed. Be bear-responsible about attracting birds, and you'll be doing your part to keep bears wild.

Bear-Safe Bird Feeding

- We recommend feeding birds only during months when bears are hibernating. In much of the state, that means mid-November through March. Check with your local office to find out when bears are normally active in your area.



Other Ways to Attract Birds

There are lots of ways to attract birds to your property without feeding them while bears are active.

Provide Water



- Water, especially running water, actually does a better job of attracting a wider variety of birds year round than a bird feeder. In our semiarid climate, providing a reliable place to get a drink or take a bath can even help attract many species that don't visit feeders.
- You can buy everything from a simple bird bath to an elaborate fountain at home centers and nurseries. Or use clay saucers designed to go under plants, or pans or dishes from the kitchen.
- Birds seem to prefer their baths at ground level, but raised baths and fountains also attract birds. Change water daily to keep it fresh and clean.
- If your bird bath is on the ground, add a few branches or decorative stones in the water so birds can stand on them and get a drink without getting wet.
- Adding the sound of dripping water will make your bird bath even more attractive. You can buy a dripper or sprayer, or recycle an old plastic container – just punch a tiny hole in the bottom, fill with water and hang it over the birdbath so water slowly drips out.
- Birds need water all winter long. You can buy a bird bath heater to keep it from icing over, but never add antifreeze – it's deadly to wildlife.

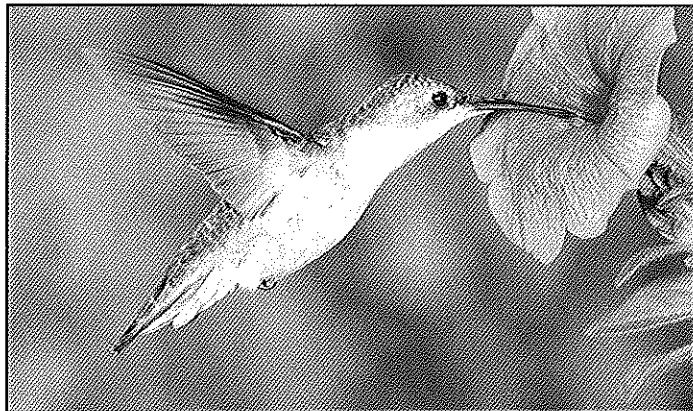
Bigger Isn't Always Better

- Bears don't sweat, so larger ponds and uncovered hot tubs can actually attract bears looking for a place to cool off. They can also attract a variety of other wildlife you might not want in your yard, including deer, mountain lions, skunks and raccoons.

Put Up Nest Boxes

- Nest boxes are more important for birds these days, with fewer dead trees being allowed to stand and provide nesting cavities. Unfortunately beetle killed trees don't have the soft core cavity-nesting birds need.
- Some Colorado species that readily use nest boxes include blue birds, wrens, swallows and chickadees. Different species have different requirements for nest box size, size of hole, and location. See More Resources below for detailed information.

Create a Bird Garden



- Add brightly colored, trumpet shaped flowers to your garden, or buy ready-to-hang baskets of hardy annuals to attract hummingbirds, butterflies and a variety of beneficial insects.
- Bee balm, butterfly bush, petunias, impatiens, penstemons and trumpet and hummingbird vines are just a few of the flowers that hummingbirds visit. Check with your local nursery for native species that will thrive in your area, or see More Resources below for some great guides.

More Resources:

Learn about building and placement of nest boxes:
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service "Homes for Birds"
http://library.fws.gov/Bird_Publications/house.html

Audubon resource page
<http://www.audubon.org/educate/expert/birdhouse.html>

Cornell Lab of Ornithology
Birdhouse Basics
<http://birds.cornell.edu/birdhouse/bhbasics/refrchart.html>

Learn About Native Shrubs and Flowers
<http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/garden/07422.html>
<http://www.ext.colostate.edu/PUBS/Garden/07242.html>

Visit www.wildlife.state.co.us/bears for more information or call your local Parks and Wildlife Office.