



Songbird-Safe Bird Feeding Guidelines

First, please consider using native plants to feed and sustain our native songbirds. Native plants are a superior choice to feed birds than bird feeders. Native plants provide seeds, berries, nectar and, most importantly, INSECTS. Creating backyard habitat with native plants supports songbirds through each stage of their annual life cycle, from breeding to migration, and also attracts a greater diversity of birds.

If you do use bird feeders, please continue enjoying your avian neighbors, but follow these guidelines to help keep them healthy and safe.

Prevent the spread of disease. Bird feeders are a primary reservoir for several avian diseases, including Salmonellosis, which spread rapidly among local songbird populations. If you encounter sick or dead songbirds in your backyard, immediately remove bird feeders and bird baths. Do not rehang feeders for at least 3 weeks after the last sick or dead bird is seen in your yard. Properly clean and disinfect your feeders before refilling and returning them to your yard. Bird baths can be refilled after cleaning and disinfection, but should be cleaned and refilled on a daily basis.

Follow our Songbird-Safe Bird Feeder and Bath cleaning instructions as part of your regularly scheduled feeder maintenance to keep your songbird neighbors healthy.

Songbird-Safe Bird Feeder Cleaning Instructions

Birdfeeders should be cleaned and disinfected once a week regardless of disease outbreaks. (Tip: Keep two of the same style bird feeders so that you can put out a fresh clean feeder while you're cleaning the dirty feeder.) Use soap, water and a scrub brush to clean feeders. Rinse out all soap and debris before disinfecting. To disinfect, immerse clean feeders in a 1:9 bleach:water solution. Soak 10 minutes and rinse thoroughly. Alternatively, the same solution can be made and stored in a spray bottle. Spray the solution on the inside and outside of the feeder and let sit for 10 minutes before rinsing. Allow the feeder to dry fully before refilling (a dry feeder will deter mold growth on seeds).

Songbird-Safe Bird Bath Cleaning Instructions

Bird baths should be emptied daily and refilled with fresh water regardless of disease outbreaks. Clean and disinfect once a week by scrubbing with soap and water, rinse and disinfect with bleach solution. Fill or spray the bath with a 1:9 bleach:water solution, cover the bath with a board to prevent birds from entering and let sit for 10 minutes. Rinse the bath very thoroughly before refilling with fresh water.

Keep yourself safe. Wear gloves to prevent skin contact with pathogens and bleach. Wear a mask to prevent the accidental ingestion of fecal matter while cleaning feeders and baths. Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water after contact with a sick or dead bird or dirty bird feeder or bird bath.

Sweep up spilled seed and debris beneath feeders. This reduces the potential for ground-foraging birds to come into contact with infectious fecal matter and also helps discourage the presence of rodents.

Put feeders in cat-free zones. Please do not attract birds with bird feeders if there are free-roaming cats in your neighborhood. If you have [neighbors with free-roaming cats](#), encourage them to contain their cats and explain the [merits](#) and good citizenry of doing so. The American Bird Conservancy has excellent information about safely containing cats ([abcbirds.org](#)).

Reduce the risk of window collisions. Window strike mortalities can be reduced by moving feeders within 3' of the window or farther than 30'. When feeders are close to a window, a bird leaving the feeder cannot gain enough momentum to do harm if it strikes the window. American Bird Conservancy ([abcbirds.org](#)) and Fatal Light Awareness Program ([flap.org](#)) has more information to help [prevent window collisions](#).

Do not feed predators. Species such as crows, jays, ravens and squirrels are predators of songbirds, especially their eggs and young. These species put a tremendous amount of pressure on native songbirds by causing increased nest failure and creating an imbalance in the local ecosystem. Remove bird feeders if they're attracting high numbers of predatory species or select a [feeder](#) style that excludes predatory species. Avoid feeding peanuts, corn and sunflower seed in the shell.

If you find an injured or ill bird, please contact us right away at 707-484-6502.

**Native Songbird Care & Conservation
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