

09) An Introduction into Attracting Birds to your Garden

TYPES OF FEEDERS:

Probably the best way to feed birds and enjoy watching them is with a 'feeding station'. This is basically a pole on which you can hang a variety of feeders for different types of food and of course a water dish. Traditional bird tables are also very good, are decorative and can be a feature in the garden.

Site the 'feeding station' and bird tables out in an open area, safely away from fences, trees and bushes that could be used by cats to ambush birds from.

There is an extensive range of very good feeders available from shops, garden centres and Centres at Essex reserves. These feeders include specific types for seed dispensing, peanuts and live feeds, in all shapes and sizes. Fat balls in fat ball holders are a great source of energy in winter. Squirrel proof feeders are available if squirrels are a problem in your garden. As with bird tables site ground feeding trays out in the open, as birds are at their most vulnerable when down on the ground feeding.

It is vitally important to keep feeders and bird table clean to stop the spread of diseases that can be fatal to birds. Always use a stiff brush or scrapper to remove droppings and old food from bird tables before adding fresh. Do not throw old and/or stale food on the ground as this could attract vermin. All bird tables and feeders should be cleaned regularly with a mild disinfectant, then thoroughly rinse off.

WATER:

Birds importantly need water almost as much as they need food for drinking and bathing to keep plumage in good condition, all year round. It is especially vital during freezing conditions in winter or very hot conditions during the summer. The best way to provide water is in a heavy dish at the feeding station, or as a bird bath. Water should also be changed on a regular basis and the dish cleaned.

Enjoy all the bird species that visit your garden, make lists of them and send the information to the Society County Recorders to help compile important data for conservation. Contact details for the County Recorders can be found on the Society's website.

Make a list of your sightings (i.e. for each day, for each month, a year list and a 'life' list) and please remember to send in all your sightings to the Essex Birdwatching Society County Recorders such that your data can form a part of the trends and be included in the '*Essex Bird Report*' produced annually by the Society. Details where to send your data can be found on the Society's Website – WWW.EBWS.ORG.UK or from the Society's Secretary by e-mail – Info.EBWS@gmail.com