Why feed birds during summer?

By Timothy Nowicki
special writer

Feeding birds during winter has become a popular source of entertainment in recent years. Many people enjoy seeing the red cardinal come for a snack of sunflower seeds or the American goldfinch nibbling on a niger seed.

Providing a nutritious source of food for birds during the winter, when food is scarce, serves both birds and birdwatcher, but some people have asked me, "Do I need to feed birds during summer, too?"

The direct answer is no. Birds can find sufficient food during summer when insects and other food sources abound.

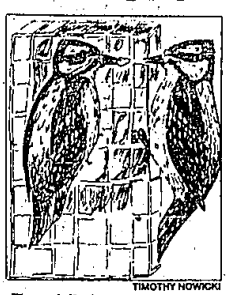
THERE ARE, however, reasons you may want to consider feeding birds in summer.

First of all, even seed-eating birds like cardinals feed their young nestlings insects. They provide a more nutritious source of food for growing bodies than seeds.

So if you provide a constant source of food for the adults, you free up their time to search out hard-to-find insects for their young. Even if the adults just supplement their own diet, it will still save them time.

The second advantage is that you can see the young birds as they come to the feeder.

THE OTHER day my wife and I watched a mother downy woodpecker and her young at our suet feeder. The adult probed into the suet, picked out small bits and fed them to the young bird.



TIMOTHY NOWICKI

The adult downy woodpecker picked out bits of suet and fed them to her young, who learned suet is good to eat and where to find it.

A few days later, we saw dad feeding his son, who had by then learned how to feed on his own quite well — but he never missed a free handout from dad when it was offered.

In this way, the youngster learns that suet is good to eat, he learns how to eat it and he knows where to find it.

Any way of increasing your opportunities to view wildlife and to observe their unique ways is worth considering.

volunteers

The Oakland County Volunteer Bureau has a current file of volunteer opportunities for more than 200 agencies. Non-profit organizations needing assistance may list with the bureau. For more information about these and other volunteer openings, call the bureau, 642-7272.

TUTORS — People over 17 years of age with good communication skills are needed two or three hours a week — time flexible — by the Oakland County Literacy Council to meet weekly with adult students. Ten hours of Laubach training are provided.

RECEPTIONIST — Persons, 18 and over, who have evening and weekend hours open, are needed at Georgian Bloomfield Nursing Center. Receptionists, one-on-one "visitors" and game assistants for cards and bingo are needed.

MAILING CLERK — Clerical aids are needed at the Birmingham Community Women's Center, a support organization for women, to help with the 13,000-name mailing list. Volunteers are needed during office hours of 9 a.m. to noon, four hours a week until the job is completed. Other openings are available.

INFORMATION CLERK — OLHSA is an agency working with low-income individuals to provide them with sources of help to become more self sufficient. The agency needs volunteers, 18 years of age and up, to answer the phone and do referrals for the next three months. Previous phone experience his helpful but training is available. Shifts from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 1 to 5 p.m. are open at several locations. The use of a car is helpful.

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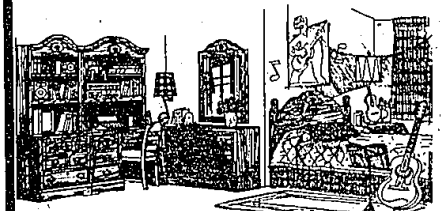

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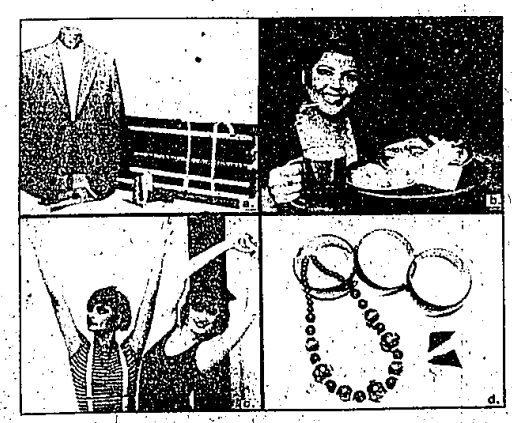

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