



Bird Studies Canada

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Études d'Oiseaux Canada

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Christmas gift ideas “for the birds”

9 December 2002 - Instead of a partridge in a pear tree this holiday season, why not aim for a downy woodpecker on bird pudding, or a pine siskin on a niger seed feeder?

Christmas isn't just for people. Participants in Project FeederWatch, a North-American wide program aimed at monitoring backyard birds through the dreary winter months, provide special treats for the birds over the holidays. Bird Studies Canada (BSC) promotes and organizes the Canadian event each year.

“At Christmas time we place raisins, cranberries, and cut-up apples on the ground feeder as well as directly on the ground; the birds love this,” says Donna Daubney, a Project FeederWatch participant from Ashton, ON.

Another anonymous FeederWatcher sent in a note on how to make use of the Christmas tree once the season is over. “Each year we save a section of our Christmas tree. We prune back the branches, drill holes in the stem, and then screw it to one of the upright roof supports on our deck. Each morning through the winter I fill the holes with crunchy, natural peanut butter. Woodpeckers, nuthatches, chickadees and magpies empty it by the evening.”

Bird puddings (mixtures of rendered suet and nuts, grains, seeds, fruit, grape jelly, and eggshells) are also special treats for birds at Christmas time. Cherry juice gives the pudding a festive colour, and a green bow completes the look! Slather pine cones with peanut butter and decorate them with frozen mountain ash berries (or other colourful, natural bird treats), and hang them from your outdoor Christmas tree for a holiday look the birds will love.

Project FeederWatch has over 16,000 participants across North America, 2,800 from Canada. The information collected by these "FeederWatchers" tells scientists how winter bird populations are growing or declining, and how their continent-wide distributions are changing — information that is crucial to effective bird conservation programs.

FeederWatchers count birds at their backyard feeders once every two weeks from November through March. They count the kinds and numbers of birds they see, and record the information on FeederWatch data forms or using interactive web pages. Project FeederWatch is a joint project of Bird Studies Canada, the Canadian Nature Federation, the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society.

Participants in Project FeederWatch are asked to become members of Bird Studies Canada (BSC), a national, non-profit research institute studying birds and their habitats for conservation. For an annual \$25.00 membership fee, participants receive the FeederWatch instruction booklet, resource manual, data forms, a calendar, a poster of common feeder birds, and BSC's quarterly publication, *BirdWatch Canada*. Project FeederWatch makes a great Christmas gift! Write to: Bird Studies Canada, P.O. Box 160, Port Rowan, Ontario N0E 1M0 (enclose a \$25 cheque to Project FeederWatch), e-mail pfw@bsc-eoc.org, or call Bird Studies Canada toll-free at 1-888-448- 2473.

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