

The same researchers found that Black-capped Chickadees with access to feeders were more likely to survive very harsh winters. So your feeders can make tough times easier for the birds, but even when they visit feeders regularly, the birds still know how to find natural sources of food.



Q It seems like a bad idea to feed birds during spring, summer, and fall. Doesn't it turn them into moochers and mess up their urge to migrate?

A Nope! The main cue that urges birds to migrate is the change in day length during spring and fall. Studies show that this instinct is so strong that when migratory birds are temporarily held in captivity with plenty of food, they become restless when it's time to migrate. They even fly against the side of the cage facing the direction they must travel.

Migrating birds are typically in a hurry to reach their breeding grounds in spring or to travel to their wintering grounds in fall. Even if they find your feeder along the way, most birds typically won't stop for more than a few days unless weather conditions are dire or they've lost a critical amount of weight and need to fatten up. During especially bad weather, feeders may mean the difference between life and death for some of these birds.

THE ART OF BIRD FEEDING

During spells of bad weather over the course of spring migration, when there may be little food available before the burst of plant growth and emerging insects, birds that seldom come to feeders, such as warblers and tanagers, may visit, particularly for suet. Keeping feeders active during spring and fall will attract local birds that are searching for the most reliable feeding areas, and their presence will entice migrants passing through your neighborhood to visit.

At times, a lost or injured bird may show up at your feeder, but remember that the injury or mix-up in the bird's migratory instinct wasn't *caused* by your feeders. Your feeders can buy some time for these individuals and give them a better chance to move on when they are ready.

Some people stop feeding birds throughout the summer months when other sources of food are more abundant. However, the nesting season demands a lot of energy from birds

FEEDING AN ADDICTION (OURS!)



In addition to helping out the bird population, keeping bird feeders provides humans with enjoyment and satisfaction, affording us intimate glimpses of, and connections to, the natural world in our own backyards. Bird feeding often serves as a “gateway” activity that leads people into deeper experiences with nature, benefiting themselves and often leading them into active conservation activities that benefit the birds in return.