

Backyard Birding Guides

#2 - Suet and Other Winter Bird Feeding Recipes

by Chuck Otte

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Suet is an animal fat (usually beef). It is a high-energy food source preferred by many bird species, including woodpeckers, chickadees, titmice, nuthatches and creepers. It can be fed raw or rendered, plain or mixed with other feeds. It is normally fed in the winter, but many preparations will work well for summer feeding. You can purchase commercially prepared suet cakes, or buy raw suet and make your own.

The colder the weather, the more attractive suet becomes to many species of birds, including Brown Thrashers and Northern Mockingbirds. One-draw back to suet is that it can be attractive to starlings and mammals, such as raccoons and opossums.

In the following recipes, **DO NOT** substitute hardened vegetable products (i.e., Crisco) for suet or lard.

Simple Mix

Take unprocessed suet and heat over low heat until melted. Carefully skim all un-melted materials off the surface of the melted suet. Allow suet to cool slightly. Fill one pound margarine tubs 1/2 to 2/3 full of bird seed. Carefully fill container to full with melted suet. Allow suet mixture to harden in a cool location such as an unheated garage. Remove from container and place in suet feeder.

Peanut Butter Meal

Mix 1 part peanut butter with 1 part corn meal and smear onto pine cones, suet logs or tree bark.

Soft Mix

1 cup suet
1 cup peanut butter
3 cups yellow corn meal
1/2 cup all purpose flour

In a saucepan over low heat, melt the suet, add peanut butter and mix well. Mix cornmeal and flour in a separate bowl and add to suet/peanut butter mixture after it starts to cool and thicken. Smear this mixture on pine cones or tree bark or pack it into suet baskets.

Basic Mix

1 cup melted fat (suet or lard)
1 cup peanut butter
6 cups cornmeal

Mix this all together and add bird feed, seeds, nuts or raisins, as desired. Pour into molds or pack into feeders.

Hard Mix

2 cups suet
1 cup peanut butter
2 cups yellow cornmeal
2 cups finely cracked corn

Melt suet, let it cool, then re-heat. Add peanut butter, stirring well; mix in dry ingredients. Pour into molds and cool OR pour into a cake pan, cool and then cut to size for suet feeders.

Use of trade names does not constitute an endorsement of that product, they are simply used for clarity.

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October 2008

Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service, Manhattan, Kansas

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