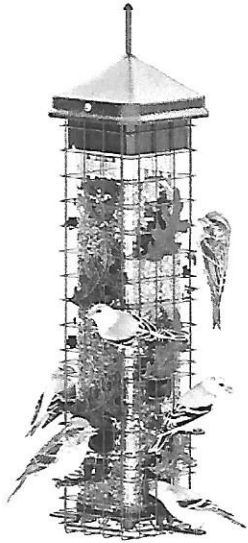


Current Issues with Bird Feeding



You may have seen these problems reported in the news this summer. Some state wildlife authorities have issued warnings and requested citizens take down bird feeder and bird baths. Since late May there have been reports in Eastern and Midwest states, including Florida, of dead or sick birds. Apparent neurological disorders and diseased eyes have been reported. The cause of these ailments is yet to be determined. Birds tested in Indiana have tested negative for Avian Influenza and West Nile virus.

Similar to humans, disease spreads more rapidly among birds where they gather, such as your feeders or birdbaths. Hopefully you care about the well-being of our feathered friends and neighbors and you avoid doing things that could cause harm. Bird feeders should only be supplemental to the food birds can find from native plants. Native plants attract critters that are bird's primary source of protein. They also can provide a direct food source in the form of seeds, berries, and nuts.

Natural food sources are plentiful this time of year. For thousands of years, birds have been able to find new food supplies when a formerly reliable one is depleted. Healthy birds will not starve if you stop feeding them. Crowded bird feeders can enable the spread of disease and infections, or even kill birds that use them. Think about the fact that a bird who is not feeling 100% is going to seek an easy meal, such as one he can find at a feeder.

The best thing you can do to prevent the spread of disease is to **KEEP YOUR FEEDERS CLEAN!** Follow these steps on a regular basis.

- Empty any remaining seed,
- Scrape out any goop that may have accumulated,
- Wash with a 10% bleach solution (1 part bleach/9 parts water),
- Rinse thoroughly,
- Let them air dry,
- Refill with as much fresh seed as the birds will eat in **one day**.
- Clean the area under your feeders. Take up any uneaten seed or shells as they may not only mold, but can attract unwanted visitors.

Birdbaths also need to be kept clean. Empty the birdbath. Wash it with a 10% bleach solution, scrubbing away any gunk that may have accumulated. A 10% white vinegar solution can also be used. Once it is cleaned, rinse and refill.



If you find a dead bird (not one that was obviously killed by a cat or struck a window), do not touch it. You should pick it up in a plastic bag, and contact Florida Wildlife Conservation Commission at **888-404-FWCC [3922]**. Cellular **phone** users can

also **call** *FWC or #FWC, or send a text to

They may want the carcass for testing or they will instruct you on proper disposal.



The good news is hummingbirds have not been victims of this mysterious ailment. Hummingbird feeders also need to be cleaned on a regular basis. If your feeder is in direct sun, the nectar may need to be changed daily this time of year.

