**Backyard Birding Part Two**

**By Shelly Colatskie**

What do you do during a cold, snowy winter day besides sledding? Birding from the comfort of your window is a fun, challenging, and rewarding activity. Birds such as the northern cardinal, Carolina and black-capped chickadees, tufted titmouse, and downy woodpecker reside in Missouri all year long. Other birds, like the dark-eyed junco and white-throated sparrow, migrate from Canada or the northern United States to spend winter in Missouri. This newsletter is part two of two and will discuss multiple species of Missouri birds, eBird (an online checklist for birders), and the Great Backyard Bird Count.

**Here's what you need for this activity:**

- Binoculars
- Bird identification book (Sibley and Kaufman are some of the most popular)
- Bird identification smartphone app (Merlin Bird ID is a free app)
- Bird feeders (optional)
- Notebook or scrap paper to document birds you spot

**This activity can go towards the following badges:**

- Bird Study Merit Badge
- Brownie Hiker Badge
- Nature Merit Badge
- Think Like a Citizen Scientist Badge
Here’s what you do:

- Choose a location in your yard; somewhere with trees or brush piles are fantastic spots to look for birds
- Placing bird feeders close to a window can be even more rewarding
- Feeders should be placed close enough that you can see, but not so close that your movements will scare the birds.
- Practice what you learned from the January issue on bird identification (see the white-throated sparrow and parts of the bird for a reminder)
- Participate in the Great Backyard Bird Count
- In your notebook, document the time of day, how long you are observing, the number of people in your group, birds you see, and the number of each bird spotted (for example, my daughter and I saw three northern cardinals, two white-throated sparrows, and six dark-eyed juncos. We started at 8am and ended at 10am).
- Create a free eBird account and enter your observations
- eBird is a free citizen science website/smart phone app that assists with tracking bird populations year round and worldwide.
- For more information visit: www.ebird.org
- Count all the birds in your yard at any time during February 12-February 15, 2021
- Enter your findings in your eBird checklist (via smartphone app, or desktop version) This awesome citizen science project will help gather population status and distribution information on birds around the world!
- For more information visit: www.birdcount.org/participate
Common winter birds in Missouri (specifically the St. Louis region) include but are not limited to:

- **Sparrows and finches**
  - White-throated sparrow (winter resident)
  - White-crowned sparrow (winter resident)
  - Dark-eyed junco (winter resident)
  - American tree sparrow (winter resident)
  - Eastern towhee
  - Eurasian tree sparrow
  - Song sparrow
  - Fox sparrow (winter resident)
  - House sparrow
  - House finch
  - Purple finch (winter resident)
  - American goldfinch
  - Pine siskin (winter resident)

- **Cardinal, chickadee, titmouse**
  - Northern cardinal
  - Cedar waxwing
  - Tufted titmouse
  - Carolina chickadee (depending on location)
  - Black capped chickadee (depending on location)

- **Nuthatches**
  - White-breasted nuthatch
  - Red-breasted nuthatch (fall-spring transient)

- **Warblers**
  - Yellow-rumped warbler (winter resident)

- **Woodpeckers**
  - Downy woodpecker
  - Red-bellied woodpecker
  - Pileated woodpecker
  - Northern flicker (yellow-shafted flicker)

- **Crows, Grackles**
  - Common grackle
  - American crow

- **Wrens, Starlings, Thrushes**
  - Carolina wren
  - Eurasian starling
  - Eastern bluebird
  - American robin
  - Hermit thrush (winter resident)
HOMEMADE SUET
BY BUD REBER

Birds are a fantastic way to begin learning about the world of nature around us. If you want to see and learn about a variety of birds, feeding backyard birds is a great place to start! While feeding seeds like sunflowers are an excellent food source for birds, you can also use suet as an additional food source that will attract an even greater variety of birds. Not only can you purchase suet from the store, you can make your own suet with ingredients found in your kitchen.

This activity can go towards the following badges:

- Nature Merit Badge
- Bird Study Merit Badge
- Think Like a Citizen Scientist

Here's what you need for this activity:

- Two microwavable bowls
- A heavy mixing spoon
- Measuring cups
- Several shallow bowls or sandwich bags to use as a mold for the suet cake
- A suet feeder cage
- 2 ½ cups of oats
- ¼ cup of cornmeal
- 1 cup of vegetable shortening
- ½ cup of peanut butter (can be substituted with coconut oil, lard, sunflower butter, or almond butter)

Here's what you do:

1. Place the birdseed, oats, and cornmeal in one of the mixing bowls and set to the side
2. In the other bowl, place the vegetable shortening and peanut butter OR substitute
3. Place the bowl in the microwave for 45 seconds or longer to get a thick liquid consistency. The contents may hot, so be careful when removing the bowl.
4. While the liquid is still soft, pour into the bowl of dry components and mix until well combined
5. Spoon the mixture into small containers or sandwich bags, then place in the freezer overnight to harden
6. Once the suet is solid, remove it from the container and place it in the suet feeding cage. If it is too hard to remove, place container in warm water and it should easily fall out.
7. For more information visit: https://mdc.mo.gov/xplor/2020-11/how