**Winterize Your Yard for the Birds.**

**Food:**

• Messy provides safe places and food for the birds.

• Resist the urge to tidy up. Leave seed heads in place, piles of leaves on

 the ground (or at least rake them into piles a few feet from your

 feeders. Lots of bugs and wiggly things will hide out there and create a

 bird banquet.)

• Adding a reliable source of high calorie food to help them survive will

 keep them healthy for a reproductive spring.

• An array of foods: nuts, seeds, fruits, nectars will attract a variety of

 birds and support them through the winter.

• Fill your feeders and continue to do so through out the winter.

• Suet feed stations: Birds need high levels of saturated fat, such as

 raw suet and lard.  These high energy foods will keep the birds warm in

 during the worst of the winter

 weather. Their body reserves are quickly used up, particularly on cold

 winter nights. (THINK SHELTER TOO)

• Make your own suet cake by pouring melted fat (suet or

 lard) onto a mixture of ingredients such as seeds, nuts,

 dried fruit, oatmeal, cheese and cake. Use about one-third fat to two-

 thirds mixture. Stir well in a bowl and allow it to set in your container

• Going native: Nothing beats native vegetation to feed the birds in your

 area. So plant a variety of native plants that supply food year-round.

 (We will get to that in another article in the late winter in time for spring

 plantings.)

**Shelter:** Birds need places to tuck in out of the weather, to hide

 from predators and to spend the night.

• In the winter, evergreens and dense thickets offer critical cover. Trees

 shrubs and rock walls all provide shelter.

• The eaves of your house may sound an unlikely place, but it can offer a

 shelter, a warm place.

• Place you Xmas tree a few feet from you feeders so ground-feeding

 birds can have a wide field of view and can make a fast get away if

 needed.

• Lacking a dense thicket, a rock wall or evergreens for shelter?

 • Make a brush pile with fallen branches, your raked up leaves, a pile of

 firewood or rocks can provide escape places. Start with the larger

 pieces on the bottom then start layering.

• Snow insulates and under the snow-covered vegetation is a refuge.

• Lock up those predatory cats. Please keep them from hunting.

**Water:** During the winter months when natural supplies may be

 frozen, water is particularly important. Birds get the

 liquid they need from their food, and by drinking.

 Seed-eating birds have a dry diet s0 they do need to

 drink more.

• Providing a clean, fresh source, you will attract more species than will

 visit bird feeders, but please place your bird bath/waterer about 15 feet

 from their escape hideouts.

• Water heaters will keep the water free of ice during winter months in

 colder climates.

**Tend to your wild and you will be graced with the presence of a bird.**