

Weird Science: It's The Great Backyard Bird Count!

Birds & scientists need our help! Learn how to help birds by making your backyard more bird friendly and discover how you can become a community scientist in your neighborhood!

You'll Need:

- ♦ Foil
- ♦ Sunflower/Peanut Butter
- ♦ 2 Types of Birdseed
- ♦ Yarn
- ♦ Toilet Paper/Paper Towel Tubes
- ♦ Stick
- ♦ Worksheets

From Home:

- ♦ Knife to spread butter
- ♦ Scissors
- ♦ Device to record Data (on different day)

Birds Matter!

Think about the last time you saw a bird. Where was it? What was it doing? We see birds around us every day—in fact, we see them so often sometimes we take them for granted. But birds are VERY IMPORTANT. Our lives wouldn't be the same without them. Can you think of why birds might be important? What are some jobs that birds do?

Here are some of the many ways birds help us:

- **Birds eat insects**—birds help us control pests! Farmers are especially grateful. Some scientists estimate birds eat 400-500 million *tons* of insects each year.
- **Birds spread seeds**—when birds travel they take the seeds they've eaten with them and spread them around through their poop (ew!). This helps grow new plants!
- **Birds help pollinate**—just like butterflies and bees, nectar drinking birds like hummingbirds are pollinators. At least 5% of plants are pollinated by birds alone!
- **Birds clean up waste**—birds of prey and scavengers like vultures help clean up dead animals. This can also help slow the spread of disease!
- **Birds make us smile**—birds can bring a smile with their silly antics & beautiful songs.
- **Birds tell us if something is wrong**—birds are what scientists call an *indicator species*. They can indicate (tell us) if something is wrong in their habitat.

What is The Great Backyard Bird Count?

Because birds are so important many scientists study them. The science of studying birds is called **Ornithology** (from the Greek word for bird). But scientists can't do it alone, they need *your* help! Every year for four days in February people around the world become **Community Scientists**, they watch and count the birds in their backyards and report their findings to scientists. This is the Great Backyard Bird Count! The observations from these days help scientists understand birds, how healthy they are, and how they migrate around the world!

*This year you can become a Community Scientist during the
Great Backyard Bird Count February 18-21, 2022*

Want to know how? Check out the information and tips from the experts below:

Participating is easy, fun to do alone, or with others, and can be done anywhere you find birds.

Step 1 – Decide where you will watch birds (your backyard, a local park, or natural area)!

Step 2 – Watch birds for **15 minutes or more, at least once over the four days**, February 18-21, 2022. Only count observations from these days.

Step 3 – Count all the birds you **see or hear** within your planned time/location and use the best tool for sharing your bird sightings:

If you are a **beginning bird admirer and new to the count**, try using the [Merlin Bird ID app](#). If you have **participated** in the count **before**, try [eBird Mobile app](#) or enter your bird list on the [eBird website](#) (desktop/laptop).

You can find more information at:

www.birdcount.org/participate

Look on the next page for some activities to get your ready for the big day!

Photo Credit: birdcount.org



Make A Bird Feeder

America's birds are disappearing! Many of the plants and insects they rely on are vanishing due to a changing climate, increased construction of neighborhoods and businesses, and **invasive species** (plants and animals living where they aren't supposed to).

You can help! Making your backyard more bird friendly helps native birds survive. You can plant native plants, provide water, provide places for birds to live and hide, and provide food (especially during late winter and early spring when they can't find many insects, seeds, and berries). Today make two easy bird feeders and conduct an experiment!

Today we have 2 types of bird seeds. By making a bird feeder with each and hanging them in our yards we can conduct an observation experiment to see if different types of birds prefer different types of seeds!

For each bird feeder follow these steps:

1. Lay out tinfoil on your work surface. This will keep the mess contained.
2. Using a knife or your fingers cover your cardboard tube with peanut or sunflower butter. (Sunflower and peanut butter are safe for birds to eat, but it's best to use organic types).
3. Cover your butter covered tube with bird seed. You'll probably need to use your hands to smoosh it on! Keep your bird seed types separate and cover one tube with each.
4. Place your seed covered tube on a stick (this will provide a place for birds to land)! Tie a piece of string to each end of the stick to form a loop. If you want to be extra fancy, you can tie a second tube through the first to make a multi-level feeder!
5. Hang your feeder in a tree in your yard. Use your observation sheet to keep track of what birds visit which feeder. Do different birds visit different feeders? Do your results surprise you?

Did you know

In the last 30 years over 3 billion birds in North America have died. That's a 29% decline and it's not a good thing!



Practice Your Bird Observation Skills

You can get ready for the Great Backyard Bird Hunt and practice your bird recognition and observation skills by playing the bird bingo in your kits! How many of these birds visit your backyard?

Did you know

Scientists think there are over 10,000 different species of birds!



Did you know

Colorado's state bird is the Lark Bunting. It looks like this

