

Homemade and Easy as Pie

Would you like to trim a tree for the birds this season, but you don't have a pine or spruce in your yard? Deciduous trees work as well, and have the advantage of keeping the birds in full view.

Edible ornaments can be made from bagel halves spread with peanut butter or coconut halves filled with a winter breakfast of chopped suet, peanut butter, cornmeal, cooked oatmeal and birdseed.

Scooped out orange halves make colorful "baskets" that can be filled with seeds and nuts. Another treat is seed bells, commercially prepared treats of mixed seed held together with corn syrup. A do-it-yourself alternative can be made from a cutout shape of stiff cardboard, spread with non-toxic white glue and sprinkled with birdseed.

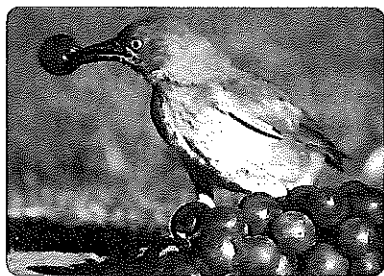
Another do-it-yourself project is making a holiday bell from a clean, 4-ounce yogurt container. Cut a cardboard circle to fit over the top. Poke a hole in it and the bottom of the container, through which you thread a length of yarn. Knot it on the bottom. Now mix together 1/2-cup peanut butter, 1 cup bird seed, 2 1/2-cups cornmeal, 1/2-cup melted suet or vegetable shortening.

Press the mixture into the yogurt cup, cover with the cardboard circle, pull up the yarn

tightly and knot on top. Chill to harden, then cut away the container and add the bell to the birds' tree.

Some simple tree decorations:

- cranberry garland, spiced with apple pieces
- brightly colored yarn tied around the middle of individual unsalted, unshelled peanuts
- pine cones dipped in melted suet, then rolled in birdseed
- grapes on the bunch



Debra Kiser

Putting out bundles of wheat for the birds is a custom with ancient roots. After the harvest in Scandinavian countries, some of the best grain always was set aside. Later it was mounted on poles and put out on Christmas Eve to let the birds share in the holiday feasting.

Nanci Ferguson, Blacklick, Ohio has good post-holiday advice for her fellow Society members. "Head out and gather up some discarded Christmas trees. Many neighborhoods have tree removal scheduled for one particular time and everyone puts the trees at the end of the drive at the same time.

This makes for good pickings. I carried off almost a dozen trees and made two different shelters for my large yard. Long needles seemed to be the favorite of my bird residents, as they provide better protection from the wind. It was great fun!"

retailer doesn't offer ready-made gift baskets, consider making your own. Combine a Nyjer tube feeder and a small bag of seed for finches and siskins; a peanut feeder and woodpecker mix for the take-a-nut-and-run bunch; or a platform feeder and safflower seed for cardinals. If your budget allows, add a mug and a bag of shade-grown coffee for the person who fills the feeders.

Introduce everyone on your gift list to the wonderful world of birds. It sure beats a tie.

Carla Davis, a Habitat Consultant from New York, is a director of the Society.

AKA

Are you ever confused by the common or colloquial bird names? It's no wonder, since you may recognize the American goldfinch, but a friend in another part of the country calls it "wild canary."

That's why ornithologists prefer scientific labels. However, you probably don't want to be waiting for the "Bombycilla cedrorum" to appear. Cedar waxwing is so much easier, even if others call it the "cedar bird."

Other mix-and-match appellations are:

- Indigo BuntingBlue Canary
- Rufous-sided TowheeChewink or Ground Robin
- Pileated WoodpeckerCock of the Woods

What's in a Name?

While bird names often are apt and logically descriptive — red-winged black birds for example — there are questionable appellations. The red-bellied woodpecker looks as though it should be called red-headed or at least red-naped. What red there is on its belly is pale to almost indistinguishable.

The common nighthawk neither confines its flights to the evening, nor is it a hawk. It is a member of the nightjar family. The bird captures insects like a hawk, though, and is so adept at snagging them on the wing that it can catch more than a thousand bugs per day.

Birds frequently are named for the locations where they first were identified (the Kentucky warbler), for specific characteristics (yellow warbler) and for people. The Baltimore oriole was named for a colonial landowner, Lord Baltimore, because its colors were the same as his family crest. Bachman's warbler, Baird's sparrow and Harris' hawk honor colleagues of John J. Audubon. Audubon himself was commemorated with Audubon's warbler (now called yellow-rumped warbler) and Audubon's shearwater.

When you see a Brewer's blackbird, remember that it was named after a 19th century Boston editor, Thomas Mayo Brewer, who championed the introduction of the house sparrow into the United States.

The Bewick wren gets its name from Thomas Bewick, an English wood engraver and author of the illustrated *A History of British Birds*.

The mourning dove was so named because it was thought that the markings on its breast were suggestive of grief for the dead.

Famous Americans whose names are attached to birds they discovered include Merriweather Lewis (Lewis woodpecker) and fellow explorer William Clark (Clark's nutcracker). Both birds first were identified in the summer of 1805 while the two men were on their famous cross-country expedition.

GROUP THINK

Many words exist to describe gatherings of birds. Some are funny (bouquet of pheasants), others are practical (paddling of ducks).

- | collective noun | species |
|-----------------|-------------|
| covey..... | partridges |
| descent..... | woodpeckers |
| gulp..... | cormorants |
| host..... | sparrows |
| kettle..... | hawks |
| murder..... | crows |
| parliament..... | owls |
| rafter..... | turkeys |
| richness..... | martins |
| spring..... | teal |



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