

How to Attract Birds to Your Garden and Keep Them Safe

Ireland may have considerably fewer breeding birds than England, Scotland, and Wales, but at over 450 recorded bird species currently calling the Emerald Isle home, it is no surprise that, as a nation, the Irish are seasoned bird lovers. Ireland's offshore islands and coastline is home to some of the world's most prolific breeding seabird colonies, while residential gardens often offer safe sanctuaries to a variety of birds ranging from wood pigeons to robins and wrens.

It is the responsibility of every bird enthusiast to ensure that their homes and gardens are as bird-safe as possible with extra attention needed on bird-proofing your windows. The British Trust for Ornithology estimates that up to 100 million bird window-strikes occur in the UK every year with up to a third of them being fatal. While these figures are staggering, windows do not pose the biggest problem to birds, cats do. It is unthinkable to even attempt to attract birds to your garden if you have free-roaming cats on the property. If you do however have a cat free yard there are many tips and tricks to follow to not only attract birds to your property but to keep them as safe as possible as well.

Put out a bird feeder but position it carefully

You can make your bird feeder yourself or buy it from a store. A lot of people hang their bird feeders in trees close to their home so that they can easily watch the feeding birds from a window. This is, in fact, the worst place to put them as it draws the birds close to the windows while giving them the space need to gain enough speed to hurt themselves should they fly into a window. Feeders and birdbaths need to be either placed within 1 meter of the window so that birds don't hurt themselves upon take off or further than 10 meters so that they have enough space to clear the house.

The bird feeder can be filled with birdseed, nuts, millet, rice and even pieces of fruit. As different birds eat different things it is best to offer a variety of foods so that you can attract a variety of birds to your garden.

Eliminate chemicals from your garden

Insects are the main food source for a lot of bird species and are an important fat and protein for young birds. An organic garden, seething with insects is a lot more attractive to birds of all shapes and sizes than one that is wiped clean of all insect life and sprayed with harmful chemicals. Rather make use of natural insect repellents such as citronella neem oil or a mix of garlic, ginger, and chillies. Chemicals do not only affect birds in terms of their food sources but can be very harmful when it comes into contact with their drinking water as well.

Pay attention to your lighting

Lights that are directed upward can disorientate birds tremendously when they migrate at night so make sure any exterior lights are either designed to shine towards the ground or, alternatively, covered. Installing motion sensors on all outdoor lights can also significantly contribute to birds not being perplexed by any artificial lighting.

You don't have to boast a perfectly manicured garden and home to attract birds to your property. Birds find clean gardens boring and would much rather scavenge for food amongst piles of leaves and long grass. As long as you can offer your feathered friends food and water in a safe environment they will continue to visit your garden and bless you with their beauty and song.

Sally Perkins