

Feeding our Feathered Friends



The 'omnivores'

Many New Zealand birds have an omnivorous diet and will eat a wide variety of seeds, fruit, food scraps and insects eg: all the different finches.

Also birds that are mostly nectar feeders such as waxeyes will also eat certain fruit and food scraps,

A great way to keep all these birds happy and healthy during the winter is to make a 'bird pudding'. Bird puddings combine a lot of different ingredients that will provide valuable calories to help sustain our feathered friends over the colder months.



► Bird Pudding Recipe

- Block of lard or dripping
- Bird seed
- Bread, biscuit or cake crumbs
(important to ensure these are free of mould, which can kill birds).
- Raisins or other dried fruit
- Cereal crumbs
- Raw, unsalted nuts **(important, salt can kill birds).**
- Sunflower or pumpkin seeds

Melt the lard or dripping in a pan on the stove. Wait until it cools down a bit, and then mix in any combination of the ingredients suggested above. Mould the mixture into a ball and allow to set, then put the pudding into a string or mesh bag (onion bags are ideal) or pour the mixture into plastic cups. Make sure a piece of string is put into the cup before it sets.

Hang the pudding over a high tree branch and observe birds feeding.

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The 'nectar-eaters'

Tui, bellbirds and waxeyes all have a 'sweet-tooth' – figuratively speaking, that is! They love sipping the nectar from our native flowering plants.

Over the winter you can supplement these natural sources by providing a nectar substitute such as sugar-water, or the syrup from canned fruit. These birds also love fresh fruit, and can be attracted easily to apples and oranges that have been placed in trees (you can skewer these whole or in pieces onto a twig – just make sure you cut some nicks in the skin of the fruit so they are able to get at the flesh).



► Automatic Nectar Feeder

- Attach a 1L plastic milk bottle inside a shallow plastic bowl.
- Make 2-3 very small holes $\frac{1}{2}$ cm from the bottom of the bottle - this allows the sugar solution to come out of the bottle up to the height of the holes.
- Attach wire or string to hang from a tree
- To make **sugar solution**, dissolve a cup of white sugar to 2 litres of water or 1 tbsp to 1 cup of water (Any stronger and it will attract wasps)
- Keep the feeder as clean as possible to stop the spread of disease (use warm water and bleach to clean)
- Replace the sugar-water every 2-3 days if not finished