

Morning View Kentucky
12 March 1957

Hello Mr McCarthy,

As I replenished the suet supply in the feeder this morning, all the while enjoying the sunshine of which we have had so little this winter, I remembered that some of your listeners were rather uncertain as to what suet to feed and how to best do it.

I frankly admit I know little of the scientific feeding of wild birds, but I have been feeding them since before I could pronounce them and have evolved a fairly complete pattern of what they like best and how they prefer it served to them. I know, for instance, that, if he cannot find any elsewhere, a Red Bird will pick a sunflower seed out of one of those fancy little seed-filled suet cakes; but he does it with the utmost distaste, pausing frequently to polish the suet from his bill. Redbirds are much happier when sunflower seeds are loose in a feeder or merely heaped on the ground.

As to suet, I always ask the butcher for that from around a beef kidney. It is flaky and crumbly so even the smallest birds can easily worry off a bite, and larger fellows such as the Red Bellied Woodpecker can triumphantly haul away pieces the size of marbles. I use so much suet here in the woodpeckery tree patch that I get the entire great mass of it which surrounds the kidney and pop it in the freezer, cutting off appropriate chunks as it is needed in the feeder.

The feeder is a simple thing, made to specifications out of a book, and given to me by a friend. It consists of a back board about 18 inches long, 6 wide, and $3/4$ of an inch thick, which fastens to the tree. About 4 inches up from its lower edge, a little shelf 8 inches wide and 6 inches from front to back is nailed. It is sufficiently high from the end of the board to allow for a brace beneath. Around the edge of the shelf stands a half inch high strip of molding to provide better footing.

Near the top of the backboard, its peak 9 inches above the shelf, and its sides each about 6 inches long, is a little peaked roof, extending outward about 5 inches. It is almost no protection from weather, but gives the birds a feeling of protection from attacks from above. Furthermore, it is a convenient perch when waiting in line for the suet.

Above the shelf, driven into the edges of the backboard, two on each side, are four nails, with their heads left sticking out about an inch. The suet itself I wrap in a piece of the smaller mesh chicken wire which has openings about an inch across. The holes in the wire are ample for any bird, but such raiders as cats, possums, and coons cannot haul it away. The wire containing the suet is stood on the shelf against the backboard and tied to the nails above mentioned.