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Contributed by Pam Keeton

OUR FEATHERED FRIENDS!

Today seemed to be a perfect day in nature – we caught (and released) six fish, caught (and kept) four large crabs off the end of our dock, and enjoyed an amazing show of birds at our feeders and in our bird bath. For the first time we had two Northern Flickers!

As fall creeps toward us, it's a good time to think about our feathered friends. Here are a few tips from the Maryland Department of Natural Resources:

- The choices of feed are numerous, from various seeds, berries and nuts, to suet and mealworms. Selecting feed kind of depends upon what birds you typically find in your yard and what types you'd like to attract. A little research and quality feed are important. For the first time this year we are only using black oil sunflower seeds and they seem to be a favorite of a large number of birds.



- The type of feeder is important – both for the birds and for keeping squirrels from stealing the food! Some birds are ground feeders, others eat from hanging feeders. Some feeders only accommodate small seeds, such as Nyjer (formally known as thistle). I have seen people put sunflower seed in feeders with tiny openings.

Birds cannot get sunflower seeds through a hole designed for Nyjer seeds!

- Clean your feeders at the beginning of the season and every two weeks or so afterwards, especially if there's been a lot of rain.
- Please do not feed bread or table scraps to birds. It's not good for them in a variety of ways.



If you grow flowers like Black-eyed Susans, Coneflowers and Sunflowers, leave the seed heads on during the winter for the birds. It's free seed!

Finally, birds need fresh water year round. Consider adding one or more birdbaths to your landscape. During the summer be sure to rinse and refill every two to three days to prevent mosquitoes. In the winter, consider a bird bath heater. I have found them at Robin's Nest and through Amazon.

