

Winter's Wonderful Backyard Birds

MADISON AUDUBON

Wisconsin is home to a wonderful diversity of birds, many of which stay here through our cold, snowy winters. You may see many of these birds in your backyard in Wisconsin's coldest months, but your chances are greatly increased if you provide winter shelter (shrubs, trees, and native grasses), food (seed or suet), and water (heated bird bath). Keeping house cats indoors will ensure your feeder birds are safe from feline hunting too.

Below are 13 common species you might see in a Madison-area backyard through the winter. You can hear their calls and find details about their food preferences on apps like Audubon or on websites like AllAboutBirds.org. Happy birdwatching!

BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE



USFWS Midwest

Eats a variety of seeds
Says "chicka-dee-dee-dee" and "cheeseburger."

HAIRY & DOWNY WOODPECKERS



Snowshoe Photography Alaska

Kelly Colgan-Azar

Both prefer suet
Look similar; downy (R) is a "downsized" version of hairy (L).

AMERICAN GOLDFINCH



Mr. inDC

Prefers sunflower and nyger seeds
Males and females have a duller winter plumage than in spring.

BLUE JAY



Christine Lamothe

Prefers peanuts and sunflower seeds on tray feeders
A smart, noisy, bold bird!

NORTHERN CARDINAL



James St. John

Eats a variety of seeds
Male (red) and female (olive) - both with orange beaks.

WHITE-BREADED NUTHATCH



USFWS Midwest

Prefers sunflower seeds, peanuts, and suet
Often perches upside down.

DARK-EYED JUNCO



Kelly Colgan Azar

Eats a variety of seeds
Migrates here for the winter
from further north.

RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER



USFWS Midwest

Prefers suet
Makes a "churr" call that
sounds similar to a squirrel.

MOURNING DOVE



Wesley Thompson

Prefers millet on the ground
Their call is sometime mistaken
for an owl's "hoot."

AMERICAN TREE SPARROW



Eric Bégin

Eats a variety of seeds
Native winter species, with a
tell-tale dark dot on the chest.

HOUSE FINCH



Monica Hall

Eats black oil sunflower or nyger
Non-native, less red and purple
than the native purple finch.

HOUSE SPARROW



Paul Cooper

Eats a variety of seeds
Non-native with a signature
black eye and throat.

Bird Conservation, Close to Home

If you're reading this, chances are you love birds. We do too! Madison Audubon is the local Audubon chapter in southern Wisconsin, a separate but similar organization to National Audubon. We focus on bird conservation, right here in your backyard!

We encourage you to explore our website (madisonaudubon.org), wildlife sanctuaries (Faville Grove near Lake Mills; Goose Pond near DeForest; Otsego Marsh near Rio, and other properties), and programming to dive deeper into the wonderful world of birds.

MADISONAUDUBON.ORG



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