

WINTER

Tweety, It's Cold Outside

NewsUSA

(NU) - Wintertime. Love it or hate it, it arrives every year. Some of us dread the cold, some of us revel in it. While a lot of us head toward the equator, many of us 'hibernate' by hunkering down at home, protected from the elements. We stay warm in winter by layering clothing, wearing socks and hats, adding layers of blankets to bedding, blocking drafts and even baking which helps warm the house without touching the thermostat.

Coping with the cold, dark days of winter can be challenging for humans and it's also a trial for birds. Our feathered friends have evolved in some ingenious ways to cope with wintry weather.

Some species migrate to warmer places, some flock together to share their warmth and if they stay put, many have developed some unique physical characteristics that protect and defend them from the cold.

So how do wild birds stay warm in winter? They've adapted physically: many grow extra feathers or shed all their plumage (called molting) and replace it with a new 'outfit' for the new season. So that blue jay or cardinal you saw last spring may have a whole new look this autumn. Plus, they produce a feather-coating oil that offers additional insulation and waterproofing.

Birds' legs and feet, covered in specialized scales, also have a separate "HVAC" system that sends cold blood up and warmed blood to their toes to keep them warm. That's how the ducks at the local pond can stand round on the ice and still be 'chill.' Pretty cool, huh?

There's also some particular 'coping' behavior like fluffing (using air between feathers to trap heat); tucking (picking up one foot and tucking it into their bodies); roosting (sitting on feet and legs for warmth); shivering (we do it too, it expends extra calories but in a pinch, generates needed warmth); sunning (warming up solar-style) and lastly, torpor - a state of greatly reduced body temperature and metabolic rate that enables animals to survive in extreme weather when food supply is reduced. Oh, and just like humans taking great pleasure in 'comfort foods' like stew, this time of year birds need to up their fat intake to beef up for the cold.

There's plenty of enjoyable indoor activities for us to engage in during winter, like baking, reading, games, puzzles and even redecorating, making it easier to cope with extended time indoors. Another rewarding pastime, which more than 65 million Americans participate in, is birdwatching. If you haven't tried it, fall and winter is a perfect time to start. To jumpstart the show of colorful birds and beautiful birdsong outside your window hang a Cole's feeder, stock up on quality birdfeed, and



Photo Credit: Cole's Wild Bird Products Co.

you've set the stage for your easy enjoyment, while simultaneously offering your feathered friends much needed energy during cold, wintry weather.

Cole's Wild Bird Products Co. offers select all-natural seed, suet and specialty feed options to sustain and nourish the avian population in your yard throughout the winter season. You may not realize that some commercial birdfeed is treated to prevent spoilage or packed with cheap "filler" seeds like milo, wheat and red millet - that birds seldom eat. Offering top quality feed means less waste and ensures an increase in birds at your feeders. Cole's products contain only high quality, pure seed ingredients; no filler, synthetics, dangerous chemicals, or mineral oil is ever added. Cole's feed is as close to a natural state as possible.

Your seed choices this winter should provide birds with the biggest energy boost possible. Sunflower is a great seed option for winter because it's rich in oil, which attracts birds and provides plenty of energy. Cole's Oil Sunflower is the highest-grade black oil sunflower seed, at over 99 percent pure! Hulled, whole peanuts are another high-energy option - and more nutritious than peanut pieces.

And don't forget high-fat foods, like suet, the solid fat rendered from beef, or vegetables that provides concentrated energy to help birds maintain their increased metabolic rate during winter when their normal food sources are scarce. Or, try an energy-packed suet-seed mix like Nutberry Suet Blend.

Cole's is renowned for their expertise in researching, sourcing and offering feed that birds eat and enjoy. The Cole Family has spent the last 35+ years enjoying birds themselves while formulating, refining and offering the very best seed & suet for birds across the U.S.A., while encouraging others to enhance their lives by feeding birds at home.

This winter, with Cole's help, you can add another enjoyable indoor activity to your daily routine and discover delight from a toasty perch right inside your home, while providing backyard birds with a much needed, highly nutritious, energy-packed quality food source. For more information visit Cole's website!