



## Winter Food For Bluebirds

Joan Lane

I have read with interest all the foods put out to attract bluebirds to feeders. We have had great success with "Magic Meal" or "Miracle Meal" which was printed in *Sialia* a few years ago. Since it is so successful, it is worth mentioning again. My proportions may be a bit different from the one printed, but it works well.

- 1 2-lb. bag of yellow cornmeal
- 1 lb. of all purpose flour
- 1 lb. of lard
- 3 tbsp. corn oil

Melt lard and add other ingredients. Stir until mixed. Let set and cut into chunks for suet feeders or press into wire grids.

Hang under baffle because squirrels like the mix, too! We hang ours from a suction cup at the window or on a baffled post.

We also pick dogwood berries in the fall and freeze them for the bluebirds. We have 10-12 coming regularly all winter.

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Bluebirds eating suet mix at winter feeding station  
Photo credit: Cherie Layton

### **BLUEBIRD BANQUET**

Recipe developed by Linda Janilla Peterson  
with assistance from the Bluebird Recovery Program of Minnesota

- MIX 1 cup peanut butter
- 4 cups yellow cornmeal
- 1 cup unbleached or whole-wheat flour
- ADD 1 cup fine sunflower seed chips
- 1 cup peanut hearts (or finely ground nuts)
- 1/2-1 cup Zante currants (or raisins cut in halves, or chopped dried cherries)
- DRIZZLE and STIR IN 1 cup rendered, melted suet, cooled.

Resulting mix will be crumbly and should have bean/pea sized lumps from the drizzling of the melted suet. If too sticky after cooling, mix in a bit more flour. If too dry, drizzle in more melted suet. Refrigerate any mix you are not using to prevent suet from turning rancid. You can use a commercial pure bird suet cake, or render your own suet. Grind or cube butcher store suet. Melt over low heat. Watch carefully as suet is a fat and can start on fire with too high heat. A microwave can be used. Strain out the stringy bits (cracklings). Cool

NOTE: This mixture is very popular with bluebirders. Some say you can use solid shortening in place of the suet and it works fine. You may want to double up on the amount of suet if the recipe is too crumbly.

Nutritional analysis: Protein 12.7%, Carbohydrates 45.9%, Fat 32.7%, Fiber 5.9%

# Miracle Meal for Bluebirds

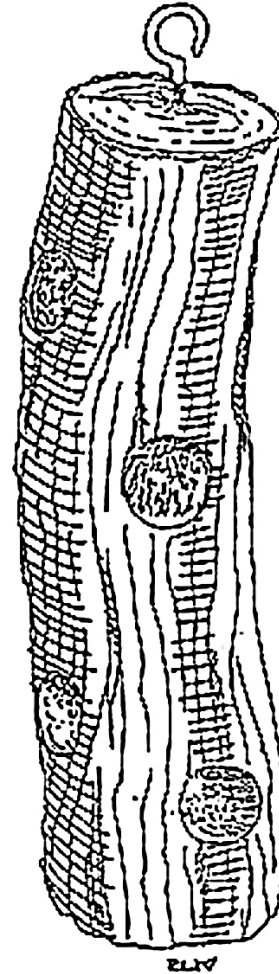
Carol Harmon

*"What can we feed bluebirds in winter?" is a question that is asked repeatedly by our members. We hope Mrs. Harmon's suggestion will be helpful to many readers.*

Susan Weil in a recent Issue of *Sialia* (5(4):136) asked If someone had devised a food for bluebirds In winter. In *Songbirds In Your Garden* John K. Terres provides a recipe for Miracle Meal which we have used with modifications, for many years. The first year we stopped feeding it in late spring when insects became numerous and birds did not seem to need it. The next year so many more species were eating It that we have continued ever since. During the second winter bluebirds began eating It and when spring came they fed it to their nestlings. As the first broods fledged, the males brought them to the yard; while the fledglings perched on the wire fence under the big oak. The various males fed their young with chunks of the mixture. Ever since that time there has been a constant stream of Eastern Bluebirds feeding in the yard year round.

Our recipe consists of one part flour to three parts yellow corn meal, placed In the largest mixing bowl of the electric mixer. Add spoonfuls of lard (NOT shortening) and mix until the mixture will make firm balls. The original recipe also called for peanut butter, but when that became scarce and expensive a few years ago we switched to peanut hearts which can be purchased where we purchase bird seed. It works very well. Never add regular birdseed as insect eaters usually do not care for seeds.

We pack this mixture Into 1½ inch holes drilled into vertical logs with a hook In one end hung from a tree limb. The second year we also made a horizontal log with holes drilled into the top for birds who cannot cling; however, bluebirds can and do use either one. We now have one of each type in both the front and back yards. They are used by all the woodpeckers, titmice, chickadees, cardinals, nuthatches, mockingbirds, jays, five or six species of sparrows, wrens, etc. I have to mix such huge quantities of Miracle Meal now that I buy 25 lb. bags of cornmeal and flour and 25 lb



cans of lard and keep a mixing bowl just for that purpose. I cut down on the amount of lard in the summer as it is apt to melt in the heat. Every two years the logs become so saturated with lard that has gotten rancid that we discard them and make new ones

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