

# WHICH BIRD SEED MIXES ATTRACT WHICH SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA SPECIES?

Guidelines from Acorn Naturalists

As is the case with any product, there are tremendous differences among seed mixes. Generally speaking, because most of the chain stores centralize their purchasing and distribution out of state, most of the bags of seed you see in such stores are for species not found in southern California (most are designed for Eastern species) and thus the mixes often do not produce the ideal results for southern California species. Over the past ten years, we have experimented with just about every seed mix available locally. We have been very pleased with the results obtained from the Wild Delight products that we now offer. There are several reasons for this, as discussed below.

One of the problems with most seed mixes sold today is that they contain a tremendous amount of inert material that can clog feeders and even cause harm to birds. Wild Delight employs a unique cleaning process that removes unwanted dirt, debris and dust that can be harmful to birds by causing nasal problems, blockage in the birds' crops and other problems. In addition to providing a clean seed, Wild Delight also uses only premium grade seeds, which again reduces waste and adds nutritional value to their mixes. Finally, many of the "fruit and seed" mixes contain artificial fruit flavorings rather than real fruit. Wild Delight fruit mixes contain real, whole berries and fruits which are both better for the birds and better at attracting them. For these reasons (and the fact that Wild Delight is an independent family-owned business with integrity) we are proud to be a direct distributor of their products. Listed below are descriptions of the various mixes and what southern California birds will be attracted to each mixture:

- 1. Feast for Wild Birds Seed Mix:** This mixture of grain products, millet, sunflower seeds and safflower seeds is the most economical of our mixes and will attract a variety of southern California seed eating birds such as finches, doves, jays, sparrows and towhees.
- 2. Gourmet Wild Bird Food:** This mixture will attract a similar group of birds as the above mix, but this mixture is unique in that it is fortified with essential amino acids, vitamins, minerals, electrolytes, calcium and other ingredients that round it out nutritionally. We suggest alternating this mix with the above mix, or blending the two. No other mixture on the market is as healthy for birds as this one is - the simple, "cheap" seed mixes available in markets and discount chains are the equivalent of eating white flour versus whole wheat - both are edible but the nutrient value of one is much higher than the other. Read through the label on this mix and compare it to any other seed mix - the difference is clear.
- 3. Fruit and Berry:** Similar to the Gourmet Wild Bird Blend listed above, this mixture is fortified with essential amino acids, vitamins, minerals, electrolytes, calcium and other ingredients, but in addition contains generous quantities of cranberries, cherries, raisins and apples. We have this mix on a separate feeder where it attracts (in addition to songbirds) seasonal western tanagers, various warblers and even an occasional wild parrot! If this seed mix does not produce similar results for you, switch to either of the two seed mixes listed above.



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(continued)

**4. Premium Grade Whole Inshell Peanuts:** The peanuts we offer are unprocessed, raw peanuts (be sure to never feed jays the salted inshell peanuts found in grocery stores). Peanuts are “magnets” for local scrub jays, who will become regular visitors if you have a separate feeder with inshell peanuts on it. We also occasionally just enjoy tossing a handful of peanuts on the roof or picnic table, which usually creates an instant peanut grabbing free-for-all among all the jays in the area.

**5. Premium Grade Black Oil Sunflowers:** These seeds are a favorite of just about all seed eating birds. We often mix in extra quantities of these into the above listed seed mixes which seems to bring even more birds in. As is true with most seed mixes, not all black oil sunflowers are the same. Many of the bulk bags sold in the chain stores are “bin run” seeds that contain sticks, dust, dirt, cocklebur and other debris along with up to 20% empty hulls (with no sunflower meats). Wild Delight Premium Black Oil Sunflower Seeds are meticulously cleaned and then gravity blown to remove the seedless hulls. Again, the old adage “you get pretty much what you pay for” applies to most wild bird seed found on the market today.

**6. Nyjer Seed (“thistle”):** This is the food of choice for the two goldfinch species that occur locally. Please see the separate write-up on goldfinch feeding for complete details. Wild Delight Premium Grade Nyjer is triple cleaned (this is really important because nyjer feeders clog very easily and finches will quickly abandon the feeder when they can not easily remove the seed). The nyjer is also heat sterilized to prevent germination - you can hang these feeders from trees over lawns without any worry of regrowth). We offer nyjer in several size bags as well as both empty and full “socks” (both are refillable).

**7. Wildlife Feeding Blocks:** These will attract squirrels, raccoons, grosbeaks, tanagers, squirrels and other wildlife that occur in the more rural areas of southern California. Customers report bringing these food blocks with them to cabins or retreats in local mountain areas where they are quickly devoured by chipmunks, squirrels, chickadees, nuthatches, thrushes and other species. In addition to the nutritious nuts, fruits, and seeds found in these treats, these blocks are fortified with vitamins, minerals, amino acids, electrolytes and vegetables. Read the label - you don't have to worry that you are feeding “junk food” to the animals with these special treats!

**We hope these guidelines help. Remember, however, that there is no one right answer to feeding birds in southern California. We have been feeding for decades, and hardly a day goes by when we don't learn or see something we have not seen before. There is no end to the joy that a lifetime of “living with the birds” can bring. Generally speaking, individuals who feed birds also become more interested in their conservation and protection in their pristine, wild habitats. Some start journals documenting the birds they see at their feeders, on trips, or begin “life lists” and take special joy in adding a new bird to their list. At the Center we are experimenting with a number of feeders and bird houses to see how many species we can attract here, in the heart of Old Town. Birding can be enjoyed by all individuals of all abilities and ages. We hope that whether or not you “get into” feeding birds, that you take some time on your next walk to enjoy the wonderful diversity of avian life found in southern California.**



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