

2011–12 Project FeederWatch End-of-Season News Note



Thank you for being a part of the 25th season of Project FeederWatch! Since the project began in 1987, participants have counted more than 106 million birds and sent in more than 1.8 million checklists.

As we begin to analyze the data from the 25th season, you can see initial results online in the Explore Data section of our website. Look for more details about the 2011–12 Project FeederWatch season in *Winter Bird Highlights*, sent to all project participants in October.

Time to renew

Please take a moment to renew your participation for next season. With each additional year in the project, your counts become more valuable to researchers studying the distribution and abundance of feeder birds. Thank you for your continued support. **Please renew your FeederWatch membership today by following the instructions on the back page of this letter.**

Why renew so early?

Renewing now will allow us to save resources on future reminders and will help us better plan for the upcoming season. Further, postage costs are greatly reduced if you renew early so that we may send your research kit via bulk mail in September. We are doing our best to limit expenses in order to keep the FeederWatch fee low. **Renewing today will help us keep the FeederWatch fee at the same rate it has been for more than ten years.**

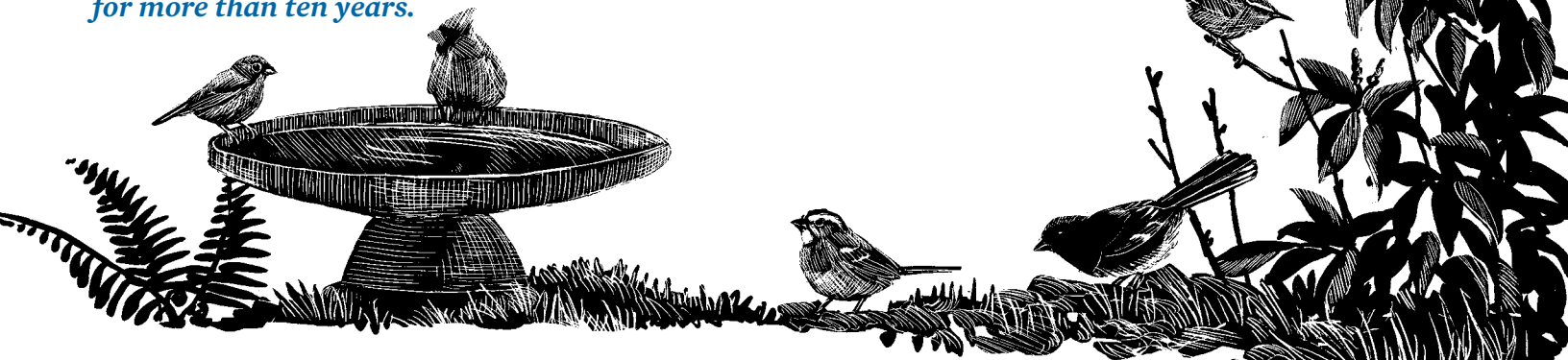
Save paper—skip the forms, or skip the whole kit

All renewing participants receive a kit—either one with paper forms or one for submitting data online—unless you choose the “no kit” option. Last season we noticed that we shipped 3,000 kits with data booklets but only received 2,000 data booklets back. If you can submit data online but would still like to receive a calendar and a tally sheet, please choose the **kit for online data** entry on the enclosed renewal coupon.

If you would like to forego the kit altogether, please select the “no kit” option on the enclosed renewal coupon. You will still receive *Winter Bird Highlights* by mail in October.

If you choose the “no kit” option:

- ◆ Please **write down your ID number** (printed near your address on the renewal coupon) and save it in a safe place, as you will need this number to enter data next season.
- ◆ Please **note that next season starts on November 10**. Unless you are subscribed to our electronic newsletter, **you will receive no reminders by email**.
- ◆ Be sure to **maintain your electronic newsletter subscription** to get the latest updates and reminders. If you think the newsletter may not be reaching you, visit the Cornell Lab’s eNews management web page: www.birds.cornell.edu/page.aspx?pid=1639 to check on your subscription. Note that spam blockers may prevent you from receiving this newsletter. Set your spam filter to allow email from **feederwatch@cornell.edu**.



Memories from 25 years of FeederWatch

To celebrate 25 years of FeederWatching, the Cornell Lab featured Project FeederWatch in the centerfold of the fall issue of *BirdScope*. The spread includes lots of tidbits from the project's 25 year history. For those of you who joined the project after that issue was mailed, you can find the issue online on the Lab's website at <http://bit.ly/PFWarticle>.

Researching for that *BirdScope* spread, we looked through some of the FeederWatch archives. In the early years of FeederWatch, the project published *FeederWatch News*. On the back of the Spring 1991 issue of *FeederWatch News*, we noticed this photo. Diane Tessaglia-Hymes, pictured in the photo, is now the Cornell Lab's Design Director, but at one time she was the data analyst for Project FeederWatch. And in this photo, Diane is shown with the project's first computer! The article accompanying the photo said project staff had figured out that "with mountains of FeederWatch data accumulating, we could do our analyses faster and cheaper if we bought our own computer instead of using Cornell's mainframe." Times have really changed!



TIM GALLAGHER

Project FeederWatch's first computer!

2010–11 season I had an Orange-crowned Warbler at my suet feeder every day. I often think of that bird and wonder where it is now and if it will return again.

— Jade Hems, Rosenberg, Texas

I remember identifying (for the first time) a little Ruby-crowned Kinglet who returned to our feeder for about three seasons.

— Chanda Blitch, Hickory, North Carolina

I've been FeederWatching since 1996, but I cannot come up with one fondest memory. Each day provides such a bunch of joy. We go all out for our birds and critters and enjoy all their many antics immensely. At the worst of winter, I have over 50 feeding stations, and we are greatly entertained by all the goings on from before daylight until darkness falls.

— Sarah Wirth,
West Salem, Illinois

For about 4 years I saw the same leucistic House Finch at the feeder. If it hadn't been for counting for Project FeederWatch, I don't think I would have been observant enough to realize both the bird and the duration.

— Christina Shaver Kelly,
Melrose, New York

In late November 2007 a White-winged Dove appeared at my feeders for 15 days. How it ever got up here to Northwest Ontario, I'll never know!

— Tammie Chouinor Hache,
Manitouwadage, Ontario

Participants share their favorite memories

We asked project participants to share their favorite FeederWatch memories on our Facebook page and FeederWatchers' Forum. Here's what some participants had to say:

Something wonderful happens every season. I loved having a Monk Parakeet all winter in the 2007–08 season, which was my first as a FeederWatcher. In the

Year-end Reminders for Online Data Entry

Describe your count site

All participants need to fill out the Count Site Description Form each year. Find the form from the "Your Count Site" page inside Data Entry. Follow the "describe" link next to the Count Site that you used this year.

Email address accurate?

If you are entering data online, please take a moment to check your online profile to be sure your email address is up-to-date. Your online profile is unrelated to our electronic newsletter subscription list, so even if you are getting our eNews messages,

your address still could be wrong in your online profile. If we need to contact you about your data, we will use the address in that online profile.

Write down your login name and password

Be sure to write down your login name and password and keep them in a safe place, where you will find them in November. If you are not sure what login name and password you used, get an automatic reminder sent to you by email, once you have verified that your email address is correct in your online profile.

Chipping Sparrow winters in South Dakota



MICK ZERR

The mild winter across much of North America likely contributed to many reports of individual birds lingering in the north longer than expected. This Chipping Sparrow, hosted by Mick Zerr in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, was found well north of the typical winter range. Many FeederWatchers reported Baltimore Orioles wintering to the north of their typical range as well. On the other hand, a few lucky FeederWatchers hosted Snowy Owls in their yard as a large number of these remarkable birds of the Arctic moved south in search of food last winter.

Submit your counts

April 6 marked the end of the 2011–12 FeederWatch season. If you have already submitted your counts, thank you! If you still have data to submit, you may report your counts online through the end of August or via paper data forms at any time. We will use data submitted prior to May 31 in analyses to be published in this fall's *Winter Bird Highlights*.

Sign up a friend

Give FeederWatch to a friend by clicking the Join/Renew button on our home page and following the instructions for giving FeederWatch as a gift. You can also call the Lab's membership office toll free at (866) 989-2473.

Look for Winter Bird Highlights, a summary of the 2011–12 FeederWatch season, mailed to all project participants in October.

Snoozing opossum

We greatly enjoy seeing all of the stories and photos project participants send us every year. Last fall Jo and Dave Johnstone of Batavia, Ohio, sent us a photo of an opossum in their bluebird feeder. Jo told us that she and Dave woke up to discover the opossum had crawled into the feeder overnight. Jo wrote, "He had to climb the shepherds hook, which I found to be amazing, but then to get INTO the feeder was even more amazing!"

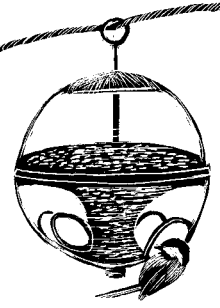
Jo told us that she kept an eye on the opossum all day as it slept. Then in the evening, she and Dave took the feeder down and opened the lid. When they walked away, the opossum climbed out and



headed on its way. After the opossum left, Jo inspected the feeder and found that the opossum had eaten most of the bluebird nuggets. Jo concluded, "It is something I will never forget."



Three easy steps for renewing your FeederWatch participation



Step 1. Select a renewal option

- ◆ **Receive a kit with paper data forms.** This kit contains a welcome letter, instruction booklet, paper data forms, and Bird Watching Days calendar. Please only select this option if you are unable to submit data online. Your kit will be delivered in the fall.
- ◆ **Receive a kit for online data entry.** This kit contains a welcome letter, Bird Watching Days calendar, and tally sheet and will be delivered in the fall.
- ◆ **Receive no kit.** With this option, you need to **keep track of your ID number** (printed above your address on the enclosed return coupon) in order to submit data, and you need to maintain your eNews subscription to receive project updates and reminders via email (see electronic newsletter information on the front page of this letter).

Note: *Renewing FeederWatchers do not receive the FeederWatch Handbook & Instructions or the Common Feeder Birds poster, so be sure to save them from your first kit. All FeederWatch participants receive the year-end report, Winter Bird Highlights, published in October.*

Step 2. Send \$15 (\$12 for Lab members) annual fee

- ◆ **By mail.** Indicate your renewal option on the enclosed renewal coupon and return the coupon with your personal check or credit card information in the enclosed envelope.
- ◆ **Over the Internet.** Sign up using a credit card (VISA, Mastercard, DISCOVER, or American Express) over our secure server at www.feederwatch.org by clicking on the Join/Renew button on our home page. If you have a new name or address, please renew by mail and include your name or address change with your renewal to assure that you are not assigned a second ID number.

Note: *A tax-deductible contribution to FeederWatch above your \$15 renewal fee will help fund bird research and conservation at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Thanks for your support!*

Step 3. Renew by May 31

Your early renewal helps us plan how many kits to print and saves us the cost of sending another reminder. We will transfer the savings into research and project improvements.



Illustrations by Julie Zickefoose

