

2023–24 Project FeederWatch End-of-Season News Note

Thank you for being part of the 37th FeederWatch season! *See inside this letter to read the latest FeederWatch news and more.* As we begin to analyze the data from this past season, you can see initial results in the Explore section of our website. Look for more details in *Winter Bird Highlights*, which will be emailed to all participants in the fall.

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. FeederWatch is supported almost entirely by you, the participants, and renewing early helps us keep our expenses low and make the most of your financial support.

Renew Online or by Mail

- ◆ To renew online and instantly attach your registration to your data entry account, visit our online store at join.feederwatch.org.

- ◆ To renew by mail, fill out the enclosed renewal slip and send it with your payment in the enclosed envelope.

Maintain Your eNews Subscription

Please maintain your FeederWatch electronic newsletter subscription to get the latest updates and reminders. If you opt out of print materials, the eNews might be the only communication you receive from Project FeederWatch. If you think the newsletter may not be reaching you, subscribe by entering your email address in the “Sign up for our newsletter” form near the bottom of our home page or on the right side of any of our other web pages (there’s no risk of double subscribing). Learn more about the newsletter on our website: feederwatch.org/about/enews-archive. Note that spam blockers may prevent you from receiving this newsletter. Set your spam filter to allow email from feederwatch@cornell.edu.

Submit Your Counts

If you have already submitted your counts, thank you! If you still have counts to submit, please enter your data today. Counts submitted by the end of May will be included in this fall’s *Winter Bird Highlights*.



An Early Peek at New Data Coming In From This Past Season

As FeederWatch participants from past seasons who submitted counts through the website this season know, we added several new data entry opportunities this season thanks to new funding from the National Science Foundation. Additions included counting mammals and providing more details on sick birds and bird mortality. Early in the season, excited researchers took a look at some of the data coming in. At that point in the season, 93% of participants had looked for mammals during their counts, and 81% had reported mammal observations. Not surprisingly, the vast majority of mammals reported were squirrels. Well behind squirrels, the next most commonly reported mammals were chipmunks, followed by dogs and cats. Almost 3% of participants reported symptoms of eye disease in House Finches, and about 1.5% of participants reported dead birds, with window strikes and predation being the primary causes of death. We are eager to dig deeper into the data as the season wraps up and hope to be able to report some initial findings in *Winter Bird Highlights* this fall.



Gray squirrel in the suet feeder of FeederWatcher Janice Davis of Ocean City, Maryland.

App Updates Planned for Next Season

We had hoped to be able to launch a new FeederWatch mobile app in January that would include all the data entry expansions we added to the website, as well as fix ongoing bugs in the current version of the app, but the revisions proved too complex to complete on such a tight

timetable. As this News Note went to press, we were still hoping to release the new version of the app before the end of the season. If that doesn't happen, watch for an updated app to be released before the start of the 2024–25 season.

More Ways to Support Project FeederWatch



Steller's Jay by FeederWatcher Steve Pearl

Contributing data to Project FeederWatch is an important way to leave a lasting legacy. A pledge of financial support through a gift in your estate plans is a way to help ensure that FeederWatch thrives into the future. To learn more about planned giving, please visit birds.cornell.giftplans.org.

Or donate to FeederWatch today by visiting feederwatch.org and clicking on the Join, Renew, or Donate button on the home page and then clicking the Donate button. If you renew by mail, you can add a donation to your renewal payment using the enclosed renewal slip and return envelope. Thank you for your support!

Let's Talk Emotions: FeederWatchers Invited to Report Feelings

When you think about a memorable wildlife moment and how you responded, do words like excitement, surprise, happiness, sadness, anger, or fear come to mind? These kinds of emotional reactions infuse our everyday experiences with meaning. Emotions play a critical role in memory and are probably the most basic human response to animals. This season participants could report on the emotions they experience while observing their count site, making Project FeederWatch one of the first participatory science projects to bring together social (human) and ecological (bird, mammal, and disease) data.

From an evolutionary perspective, emotions help us react to our environment and improve our chances of survival. For example, when we see a bear, we feel afraid and our bodies prepare for “fight-or-flight”—our hearts start pounding and we breathe more rapidly. Not only does emotion influence how we interpret experiences with wildlife, but it also can change our behavior. Emotions interact with our thoughts to help us make decisions. Once we feel fear in response to a bear, we might choose to back away rather than move closer. Thank goodness for emotion!


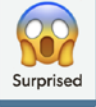





Beyond a single moment in time, the quality (negative to positive) and intensity (low to high)



An observation that might trigger an emotional reaction—a Black-capped Chickadee “drinking” from an icicle. Photo by Sarah MacLean.

4 Total mammals

How did you feel during your mammal observations?
Please select the primary emotions you felt (you may select multiple emotions).

 Angry	 Surprised	 Sad	 Neutral	 Content	 Happy	 Love it
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1	Domestic cat (your household)
1	Chipmunk
1	Squirrel (gray, red, 12-striped, etc.)
4	Mouse-like small mammal (mouse, vole, shrew, etc.)

FeederWatchers can select one or more emoticons to indicate how they feel about the observations they record during their counts.

of an emotion indicates the presence of an experience that may have an impact—positive or negative, strong or weak—on our overall well-being. With all these processes in mind, if we want to better understand relationships between humans and birds, it is important to consider the role of emotion. Scientists have systematically studied emotions for a long time. Just like animal behavior, components of human behavior, like emotion, can be studied scientifically.

If participants opted into reporting emotions, they could click on one or more of the emoticons listed in each section of their count summary and indicate the overall quality of their emotional experience during their count. They could report more than one emotion in each section, since they may have felt angry in response to the neighbor's cat visiting their count site but neutral towards the chipmunk and squirrel. We hope the FeederWatchers who opted into these questions enjoyed experiencing a new kind of data collection. We also hope that this research can be used to support the well-being of birds and people.

Excerpted from a blog post written by Christy Pototsky of Virginia Tech, one of the collaborators on the new research launched this season. Read the full post on our website at feederwatch.org/blog/lets-talk-emotions.

Renew Today

Note: A tax-deductible contribution to FeederWatch beyond your \$18 renewal fee will help fund bird research and education programs. Thank you for your support!

Renew Online

Sign up at join.feederwatch.org.

- ◆ Click the Sign-in link in the top right corner to log into your data entry account and automatically apply your payment to your account.
- ◆ Fill in any missing contact information and select a print material option below the address fields. Those who sign up online have the option of receiving a poster and calendar, a calendar, or no print materials.
- ◆ Enter a payment method and click the red button to sign up. Then on the Thank You page, follow the Complete Setup link to see your renewed status on the Your Data home page.
- ◆ Follow the link in the Thank You email you receive to learn about any additional benefits, like a discount to *Birds of the World*, only available to those who sign up online.

Renew by Mail

Fill Out the Enclosed Renewal Slip

Select a Print Material Option

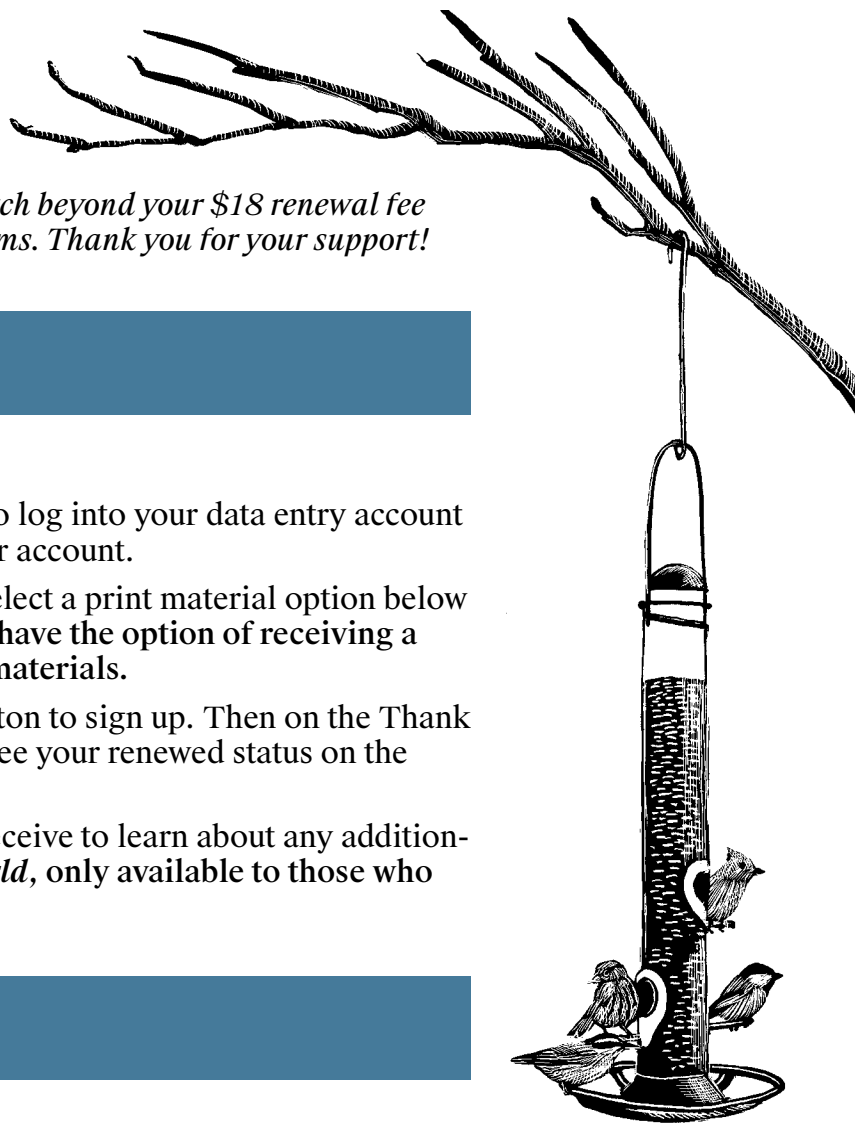
- ◆ Please send a calendar. With this option we will send you a Bird-Watching Days calendar in the fall and a letter with a summary of our counting instructions.
- ◆ Save paper—please don't send any print materials. We recommend that you keep track of your ID number (printed near your address on the enclosed renewal slip) and maintain your eNews subscription (see electronic newsletter information on the front page of this letter).

Select a Payment Method

Indicate how you would like to pay the \$18 annual renewal fee (\$15 for Lab members).

Return the renewal slip with your payment in the enclosed envelope.

Send the renewal slip, along with your check made out to Project FeederWatch or your credit card information, to us in the enclosed envelope, or mail them to Project FeederWatch, PO Box 37329, Boone IA 50037-0329.



Thank you for supporting Project FeederWatch!

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