

# I'm pretty sure I have the happiest birds in town!

The sentiment shared by Sandi F. is mirrored by hundreds of volunteers who have chosen to participate in PROJECT WILDBIRD, a scientific study of feed and feeder preferences of wild birds.

What bird wouldn't be happy with a veritable smorgasbord of feeds, especially with nationwide high temperatures and drought?

"We certainly did not plan on these conditions when we launched PROJECT WILDBIRD a year ago," said Dr. David J. Horn, Principal Investigator for this study. "But it has worked out great for the birds."

Data collected this past year will be averaged over the final two years of the study. "The weather patterns over a four year period should average out, providing comprehensive data on feeding preferences by region and by season."

PROJECT WILDBIRD volunteers are separated into two groups; observers document the feeding habits in their existing

backyard setting. The experimental volunteers are provided with all the feed and feeders required for this study.

"My very hungry little birds appreciate the feast you are providing," offered Kathy P., an experimental volunteer.

"We've received numerous comments about the birds' appetites, and the request for more feed," Susan M. Hays, Executive Director of the WBF Research Foundation and PROJECT WILDBIRD said. "The continuing heat and drought nationwide has diminished natural food supplies. All of our volunteers have documented an increase in consumption."

An increase that the WBF Research Foundation anticipated, according to Hays. "The development of this study by the foundation included a scenario where we would have a large number of volunteers, each requiring a large amount of

the various feeds."

The majority of feed and feeders have been contributed by respected leaders in the bird feeding industry, according to a listing of contributors on [www.projectwildbird.org](http://www.projectwildbird.org).

"This list provides clear support among those of us in the bird feeding industry," stated Dick Hebert with D&D Commodities. "We will soon have a definitive answer as to which birds prefer which feed and feeders. This will help the consumer purchase preferred products for their birds; by region, and by season."

Early data collected over the past nine months is indeed showing a preference among birds' choices of feed.

Roger M. of Virginia, an experimental volunteer commented, "The birds are going through the Black Oil (sunflower) like a kid with

candy."

Another notation by Kathy P. states, "The finches, especially, love the millet."

Both volunteers documented the birds' ability to empty the feeders well before noon, saying "I could easily fill it twice a day!"

While Kathy's finches may seem to prefer a different feed, it's far too early in the study to draw conclusive results.

"The first year has been great, and the results are very impressive," Dr. Horn stated. "But we still have two years left in this study."

If the first year results are any indication, PROJECT WILDBIRD will soon be found in every state.

Just one year into the study, residents in 19 states have diligently recorded the feeding habits of backyard birds - and the number of volunteers continues to increase.

"This study is truly historic.

As we continue to increase the number of citizen scientists we will be able to answer key questions about bird feeding

preferences," Dr. Horn said.

To date, observers have recorded 4744 birds of 33 species. The experimental volunteers have documented over 28,000 birds of 48 species, including two that have not typically been documented in previous studies.

"This is a fantastic experience," contributed Jeff L. of Illinois. "It's a lot of fun."

Aside from individuals volunteering, PROJECT WILDBIRD also welcomes schools and community organizations.

"This is a project a classroom, an entire school or organization can participate in," Sue Hays stated. "It's a great group project."

Zack B., a home-schooled

"The feeders have arrived. I hung them and filled them. Those lucky birds!"

7th grade student in Tennessee, is excited to learn he will be participating in PROJECT WILDBIRD.

"This will be my first research experience," he writes.

Participants do not need extensive knowledge of bird species, thanks in part to the contribution of online bird identification by WhatBird.com.

"This certainly helps hobbyists and those new to birdfeeding in identifying birds at the feeders," Sue Hays stated. "This allows everyone the opportunity to participate in PROJECT WILDBIRD."

Anyone interested in volunteering for this study can log on to the website at [www.projectwildbird.org](http://www.projectwildbird.org).

"Contributions to help fund the study are needed," Hays said. "as are volunteers, both in the United States and Canada."

You could even help the birds by keeping your feeders and birdbaths filled.

It all adds up to happy birds, and happy birding!

