

For the Birds

Bathing Beauties

In the hot summer days of late July and early August, we have been watering our potted plants on our deck, which consist of a lot of petunias, million bells, cannas, dahlias, agapanthus and fuchsias. All of these plants have been attracting hummingbirds and we have come to recognize three of the birds who frequent our yard.

My husband also has a garden planted about thirty feet away from the deck, which he waters each evening. We were surprised to see the hummers watching for us to come out and start watering. They would then fly through the spray, sometimes landing on a branch of corn, or one of the flowering shrubs, soaking up the "rain".

These three hummingbirds, Rufous, seem to enjoy our company outside, as one or more of them will always make their presence known, and have often hovered just out of reach, watching us. It is such a thrill to see them!!
Emily Chase, Master Gardener

Pavlov's Birds?

Ever since we moved into our house seven years ago, our pantry door has had a very distinctive creak. This door is opposite our patio door and you can hear the creak from the deck. Being a bird lover, I've always kept a jar of peanuts just for the blue jays. When I'd see them in the back yard I'd open my creaky pantry door, grab the peanut jar, and feed the birds. It didn't take long for the blue jays to associate the creaking of the pantry door to snack time. Now whenever I open my pantry door for any reason, several blue jays fly in, perch on the wisteria branches and start squawking for their treats. Susie Bjordahl, Master Gardener

Scrub Jay Airport

We found out quite by accident that a scrub jay will land on our hand to take peanuts. One bold bird didn't wait for us to load the feeder, but landed on the railing of the deck right next to my husband. He opened his hand and extended it palm up towards the bird who hopped up on his fingers, reached into his palm, chose a peanut and loaded it into his beak lengthwise. He chose another peanut, jammed it in crosswise and flew off. If my husband is late bringing the peanuts out, the jay sits on the railing of the deck and calls in a loud raucous cry until the meal is served. As the jays have become steady customers, they take more time choosing their peanuts and if it is not to their liking will push it off his hand to the floor.

Soon the jay began to bring friends. The number has grown to where we can have up to 12 jays sitting throughout our yard and into the neighboring yards. There is a definite pattern to their waiting. As one jay leaves, the whole group moves up a station. This will continue as long as you stand holding the peanuts or until the feeder is empty. We have found from our up close and personal experience that scrub jays have eyebrows.

Karla Jans, Master Gardener