Pinecone Bird Feeder

Why make these?

Winter is a hard on birds. Days are rainy, windy, and cold, and nights are even colder. Berries on plants are gone, and insects have died or gone dormant. So, it is difficult to find food, especially if it snows. Feeders, especially ones using suet or other fats, give birds an extra boost of energy to help them survive.

Materials:

- One or a combination of rendered suet (tallow or lard), vegetable shortening or peanut butter (chunky is best)–we will call all this **fat**
- Wild bird seed like black oil sunflower seeds, which more species of birds prefer (adding corn meal, chopped peanuts, dried apples, blueberries, cranberries, raisins…optional)
- 2 bowls; 1 for fat, 1 for seed
- Cookie sheet to limit the mess
- Cones (Pinecones work well because they are woodier, and their scales are tough.)
- Pipe cleaners or wire for hanging
- Waxed paper to place goopy cones on until they harden up
- Field guide or good website to help you learn the identity of your feathered friends that visit

Directions:

1. Tie or wrap the pipe cleaner securely around the tip of the cone—the thin end.
2. Pour the birdseed into a bowl, large enough for a pinecone.
3. Put fat into a bowl. If it is hard, soften it up a bit in the microwave. Start with 10 seconds and check if it's soft. If not, try another 10 seconds and repeat until it is soft enough <u>and</u> cool enough to smear on the cone.
4. Use a table knife, spoon, or your hands to smoosh the fat into and all over the cone. Hands are best.
5. Roll the cone in the seed to cover all the fat. If necessary, sprinkle or push seed inside the scales.
6. Place the cone on a piece of waxed paper and let it firm up. Put it in the refrigerator to speed this up.
7. Hang the feeder someplace where you can see it and the birds, but also a safe place for birds. If possible put it close to a window and 10 feet or less away from protective cover, like a tree or bush. They will often take a bite and go back to the protective place to eat and perch.

Bird identification help https://feederwatch.org/learn/common-feeder-birds/
Feeding tips https://feederwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/BirdNote01-Winter-Bird-Feeding-_for-PDF_2012-10-22-RGB.pdf