

# Mecklenburg Audubon Society

## Backyard Notes: Bird Feeding Myths



**Myth:** If birds eat uncooked rice, it can swell up in their throats or stomachs and kill them.

**Fact:** A lot of birds eat uncooked rice in the wild. Bobolinks, sometimes called "rice birds," are a good example. While rice is okay for birds, many wedding parties now throw birdseed instead.



**Myth:** Birds can choke on peanut butter.

**Fact:** There is no documented evidence for this. However, mixing peanut butter with grit or cornmeal will break up the stickiness if you are concerned.



**Myth:** Birds become dependent on bird feeders.

**Fact:** Birds become accustomed to a reliable food source and will visit daily. However, birds search for food in many places, so if your feeder goes empty, most birds will find food elsewhere. During periods of extreme ice, snow, or cold, the sudden disappearance of food might be a hardship. If you are leaving town during freezing weather, consider having someone fill your feeder while you're away.



**Myth:** Birds' feet can stick to metal perches.

**Fact:** This is not likely. A bird's legs and feet are made up mostly of tough tendons that have little blood flow to freeze during cold weather.



**Myth:** Feeding hummingbirds in late summer can stop their migration.

**Fact:** Some people believe they should stop feeding hummingbirds right after Labor Day because the birds' southward migrations will be interrupted. However, a bird's migratory urge is primarily triggered by day length (photoperiod), and even a hearty appetite won't make a bird resist that urge. In fact, your feeder might provide a needed energy boost along a bird's migration route. So keep them up until Thanksgiving. You might wind up with a Rufous Hummingbird that will stay the winter!

Adapted from a web site titled 'Educator's Guide to Bird Study' by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.