



## COUNTING IS FOR THE BIRDS by Frank Mazzola, Jr.

A single bird feeder waits in the early morning fog for the day to begin and for the birds to begin to feed. There is someone else waiting, too. The hungry cat is waiting for the activity to begin so it can catch an unsuspecting bird. The birds begin to arrive in pairs and the numbers grow quickly. The first birds to arrive feed directly from the feeder, but then some ground feeders come - the cardinals.

The cat begins to stalk and plan his attack. He waits until there are twenty birds before he decides there are enough to pounce. But someone pounces first! The grey squirrel dives for the feeder and scares away the birds. There is no lunch for the cat.

**MATERIALS:** bird feeder outside classroom window, binoculars (optional), space for viewing feeder, cubes for counting birds at feeder, data chart (see teacher notes)

**ACTIVITY:** Establish a time each day for observing the birds to identify which birds visit the feeder. Once this is determined, decide on the amount of time your class wants to spend counting birds at the feeder. The months of January and February are good months for counting birds.

**TEACHER NOTES:** You can make a simple data by listing the birds that visit your feeder and keep a tally of the number of visits during the established time. If you take one additional step and join Project Feeder Watch at Cornell School of Ornithology, you will help in a nation-wide project. The website is <http://www.birds.cornell.edu/pfw/>. The attached data sheets can be downloaded from this website. Next year, I hope to have our middle school students help the PreSchool students enter and send the data they have collected. Project Feeder Watch has just turned 20!

**RECIPE FOR SUET:** 1 cup of peanut butter, 1 cup vegetable shortening (Crisco),  $\frac{1}{2}$

cup of any or all of the following: corn meal, peanuts, raisins, cracked corn. You can vary the amounts as long as the mixture stays together. The square wire/plastic-coated baskets work best and they are easy to refill. You can "mold" your suet in a deli container as long as you don't make it too thick. The "Crisco" suet keeps better.

**STANDARDS:**

**BSL:** 1.1, 1.2, 1.5, 1.7, 1.9, 1.11, 1.13, 2.2, 5.1, 5.3, 9.1, 9.4, 12.2, 12.7

**NCTM:** 3d, 4a, 4b, 4d, 4e, 6a, 6b, 6c, 10a, 10b, 10d,

**SCS:** A1, A2, C1, C3, G1, H3

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