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Many residents in the foothills enjoy feeding the birds. If you decide to feed the birds, here are some suggestions:

Hummingbird feeders are available at Highway Variety and the feed store.

If your neighbor is already feeding, the birds will probably find it the first day you hang it out.

Boil four parts of water to one part of sugar.

Wash the feeder between fillings and keep it free of fungus with a little clorox, well-washed out.

Perhaps the easiest method of feeding birds, and a very satisfying one, is to simply scatter chicken scratch on the ground for Gambel's quail, preferably in view from a window from which you often look.

The most economical way is to buy a 50-pound sack.

One source is the Cave Creek Feed Store, where the cost is currently \$7.

Many people who buy in quantity keep the feed in a garbage can (with the lid on tight to keep out mice and pack rats) in their utility storage area.

In addition to quail, white-crowned sparrows, other sparrows (some of which may present a challenge in identification), mourning doves, house finches, curve-billed thrashers, other birds, rabbits and Harris ground squirrels will invite themselves to partake.

Cardinals, brown towhees, and probably some others, prefer sunflower seeds (although they'll take scratch if sunflower seed is not available).

Since it costs considerably more than scratch (a 50-pound sack costs about \$35), you may not want to scatter it on the ground where the Harris squirrels may harvest most of it.

Instead, you may want to invest in a simple bird feeder — either hanging from a tree limb, on a pole or post in the ground.

The Cave Creek Building Supply has one for \$12.

Another effective way is to set a post about 5-feet long in the ground and nail a piece of

plywood (at least a half-inch thick and about 18-inches square, to the top of it. It makes a level platform that squirrels can't reach.

Nail some strips of wood around the sides to form a lip that sticks up a quarter- or half-inch to keep the seeds from rolling or blowing off.

Veinte Uno, in the Spanish Village, has this type for sale.

If you don't want to buy feed in 50-pound lots, bird feed mixes can be found in small quantities at the grocery store.

At this time of the year it's feasible to put out suet for woodpeckers, cactus wrens and others.

The easy way is to hang it in a net bag from a tree or the house overhang. The plastic netting that held the Thanksgiving turkey can be used.

The butcher used to give away suet. Now you can buy it at A.J. Bayless.

Finally, some people put out most of their table scraps.

Birds relish crumbs, and some are not above eating meat. They also enjoy pecking at orange and grapefruit halves speared on twigs.

Ground squirrels like melon rinds and seeds.

Foxes come for meat, and if the area is illuminated, they can be viewed after dark.

Coyotes will eat almost anything.

An occasional, rare and unexpected visitor may be a bobcat — or maybe . . .