

As faithful readers of the Wet Mountain Tribune know, the Arkansas Valley Audubon chapter has conducted a decades-long annual Christmas-time bird census within a seven and one-half mile radius of Westcliffe. We also have an annual field trip in August plus other occasional events in Custer County. As we are out searching for birds to record, sometimes property owners will ask us what we are doing. When we explain that we are trying to keep track of birdlife trends here they often are quite helpful and cooperative in reporting what they have seen around their properties.

One very important factor in our efforts is the presence of well-stocked bird feeders near Valley residences. Years ago, there was a time when we could count on checking feeders we knew about in many points throughout the Westcliffe Christmas Bird Count circle. We also knew of many bird feeders to observe outside the circle when we held warm weather outings.

Unfortunately, that number of feeders has declined drastically over the years to the point where now there are only a very few stocked feeders in the Wet Mountain valley and foothills. So this is a plea for residents to consider bringing back a Custer County tradition of helping our avian friends by providing regular feed and fresh water for their sustenance. The local hardware store has feeders, and wild bird food can be purchased from a variety of outlets. The cost is well worth the pleasure one gets from watching these fascinating winged creatures that will benefit from your generosity.

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