

FEEDER STATION

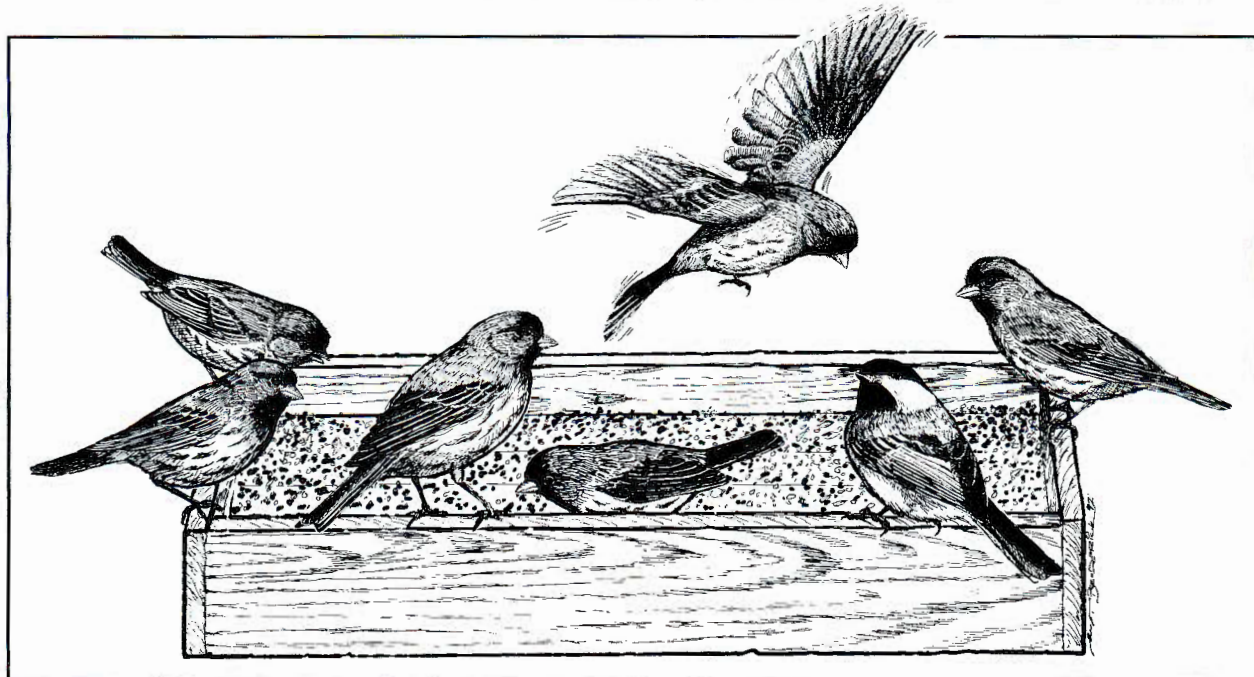
by Sue Friscia

Why feed birds in the summer? The best answer I've found is the joy watching birds during courtship and nesting brigs. These activities produce my favorite backyard visitors:

say, "Hey, Junior, will you close your mouth for a minute and just look down? There's a smorgasbord all around you." But do kids ever listen anyway? For the Northern Cardinal, it

Soon after the nestlings fledge, the male takes over all the feeding chores, while his mate starts a new brood.

If you provide a supply of sunflower seeds this summer,



Drawing by Emmet Broderick.

baby birds.

These fluffy little balls have eyes only for their parents; they will plead for food while sitting on a mountain of bird seed. The fledglings' mouths, with their two gorgeous yellow rims, resemble the Grand Canyon.

They flutter their wings and peep until Dad or Mom deposits a variety of seeds down their throat. The poor parents are exhausted. If they could only

starts in late winter when the days start getting longer. The male cardinal fluffs his crest and chest and spreads his tail feathers to look his best. Then he nestles next to a prospective mate and tempts her with freshly shelled sunflower seeds. If she accepts, they begin housekeeping.

The male cardinal is a feeding machine. He will nourish his mate all through incubation and then help feed the nestlings.

expect Papa cardinal and his family to visit. The young look just like the female except for their dark beaks. Another clue to identifying young: they are the ones continually harassing their father for food.

The really good chuckles come at my feeder when baby Black-capped Chickadees get lessons in feeding. Throughout the winter, chickadees maintain a pecking order. Watch them and you'll notice that