



How to make a mini sanctuary FOR CITY BIRDS



Due to the dispersed nature pockets and nooks and crannies in concrete buildings, Dhaka hosts more birds than we tend to be aware of. Numerous bird species inhabit our urban neighbourhoods, from commonly sighted house sparrows and red-vented bulbuls to the scarce purple sunbird and green bee-eater. With a little bit of effort and patience, you can easily make your house a mini sanctuary for them.

If you want to make your house more accommodating for birds, makeshift bird feeders and bird baths will do wonders on their own.

Bird houses can be difficult to construct and are not as crucial as they seem. On the other hand, bird feeders can be made with ease from materials found at home such as paper plates and twine.

To craft a feeder out of paper plates, you need to stack two plates on top of one another and prick four holes, with one at each quarter turn. Then, using some twine, thread along the diameters and connect each pair of holes. This should form a threaded 'X'.

After you knot the twine at the underside of each hole, just tie both strings together at the top to form a loop and your feeder will be ready to hang.

Low hanging tree branches in your roof or garden or plant holders in your balcony will provide optimal support for your bird feeder.

Some birds like sparrows and doves are often quite reluctant to consume food from elevated surfaces. If you want to capture their attention as well, placing a small tray of bird food at ground level near a secluded part of your roof or garden will do the trick.

If you want to attract parrots, you can lay out chopped chilli peppers as they are especially fond of them.

The placement of the bird feeder plays a significant role in determining whether or not birds choose to visit it. Since birds tend to avoid feeders they feel vulnerable around, picking a quiet and protected area away from possible predators and the cacophony of the city will make your feeder more hospitable. Above all, it is vital to keep the feeder out of the reach of predatory cats and snack hogging squirrels.

Placing the feeder around shrubs or vines which birds can use as potential hiding spots or rest stops will also help attract frequent visitors.

Most ingredients used for bird feed can be found in your kitchen pantry.

Fruits, lentils, cracked corn, unsalted nuts, and millet will help you whip up a feast for visiting birds. Salt, onion, garlic and chocolate should be avoided as they can cause toxicity.

Putting out a shallow baking pan filled with water near a feeder will provide birds with a source of drinking and bathing water.

Small birds are a delight to watch when they play with water or consume it from makeshift bird-baths. Make sure to change the water in the baking pan once every few days to keep it safe and clean for your guests.

When you have all that covered, all you need is patience. Even though it might take birds some time to discover their bath and treats, it will be highly rewarding in the end.

By Tasfia Ahmed
Photo: NB Mansoor

Kindness to all kinds

Many of us remain unaware of the many small acts of mercy and kindness that could raise our station in the eyes of God all through the year. One of those aspects is continuous charity, or sadaqa, and while most of us are aware of the necessity and benefits of sharing our fortunes with the less fortunate, we often forget that human beings are not the only kind that Allah created!

One of the silent and often unseen casualties of our towers and glass buildings are the birds of the regions. The glass confuses them, the building obstructs their flight paths and influence their routines permanently. Not to mention the rampant denuding of city areas of old and sturdy trees— it is not just the tree that are lost, but entire ecosystems and homes of many creatures, of many kinds, including birds.

Keeping all that in mind, what could we do create a real impact? While planting trees is always an option, the space to do that might not be available to all. However, most of us have access to a roof or balcony, and one of the easiest ways to do so is to keep a bird feeder, and a water trough, with fresh clean water, for the little birds to come and drink from during these soaring temperatures of our blazing tropical summers.

As Muslims, imagine the rewards you reap each time a thirsty or hungry bird eats or drinks from your balcony, its relief translates to a reward for you as *sadaqa*, without much effort too. Sounds like a real easy deal, does it not? And even if we take out religion from the act, kindness, compassion, and caring for earth's beings is only one of the ways we can show our love to this planet, after all, it's our only home in this universe.

By Sania Aiman