



MEALWORMS . . . THE OTHER BIRD FOOD

Mealworms? Eeeeewwww! Now, don't get squeamish, these are smooth, hard-skinned worms that are not slimy. Mealworms are the larvae of the darkling beetle (*Tenebrio molitor*).

Many people think mealworms are just for bluebird feeding. Not so! Insect eating birds such as mockingbirds, robins, brown thrashers, chickadees, titmice, woodpeckers love them!

Mealworms can be offered to backyard birds, year round. Place them inside a bluebird feeder, or in a small smooth-sided container (cat food can, tuna can, margarine tub, etc.), which you can thumbtack directly to a deck rail, fence post or bluebird box. Put out about 10 worms at a time in the beginning, then more as consumption increases. In winter, worms might freeze if they are put out in temperatures that remain below 32°.

To prevent the larvae from pupating and becoming beetles, keep mealworms in the refrigerator, or in an unheated garage or basement as long as the temperature is between 40° and 50°. Store them in a smooth-sided, covered, ventilated container with wheat bran, oats, or cornmeal (about 1.5"), and a small carrot, apple slice, or potato slice for moisture. You can also opt to not use a cover, as mealworms cannot climb out of the container. Mealworms can be stored for several weeks.

Mealworms are available at Wild About Birds in 3 sizes: 100 and 500 count in ventilated containers ready for your refrigerator, and 1,000 count in a cloth sack for you to package. Treat the insect eating birds in your backyard with an offering of mealworms, a new and different bird food!