



The Junk Food Effect: Why Feeding Bread Products to Birds is Bad

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What's Wrong with Bread?

It is with good intentions that people bring bread and human food products, to the park. Unfortunately, bread products are **not** nutritionally complete diets for wildlife. Okay, so what harm can it possibly cause if a bird gets fed a "treat" once in awhile? Well, *everyone* visits urban parks offering bread due to lack of education on this issue. This means that while *you* may only partake in this activity once in awhile, it's going on frequently because other people are visiting the park doing the same thing. This equates to birds getting fed A LOT of bread items!

Bread actually *hurts* birds more than it *helps* them, and can be likened to junk food; birds fill up on it and no longer have the hunger to forage on what nature intended: insects, aquatic/terrestrial plants and for some species, fish. This causes debilitating nutritional deficiencies which can actually lead to "injuries," like "angel wing." Birds that once could fly away to another location when local food runs low, or when migration dictates, no longer can because this deficiency causes their wings to grow the wrong ways, **impairing flight**. You can see this condition at the urban park.

What's "Angel Wing" Look Like?

To the untrained eye, angel wing appears to look like a broken wing. Some of the wings stick outward from the body and generally they are lacking feathers, leaving only the quills to stick out. See the picture on this flier.

Are Bird's With "Angel Wing" Suffering?

No evidence suggests that birds with this condition are in pain despite the uncomfortable appearance of their wings. However, angel wing **disables** a critical feature of birds: flight! These birds cannot fly away to find available natural food sources. This is bad because birds are forced to become dependent on humans. And in areas where humans are not

feeding them, birds will starve to death or die due to predation. It's a PREVENTABLE injury!

The Good News Alternatives

Perhaps you've done it for years, and you feel that you can't "let the birds down"? Perhaps feeding birds is an activity you enjoy doing with your child? Perhaps there are disabled birds at the site that **require** food hand-outs because they **can't** fly away due to injuries and angel wing? The good news is that there *are* healthier ways to feed wildlife without causing the harmful impacts of bread-feeding.

Safer Feeding Alternatives

- ✓ Cracked corn
- ✓ Poultry scratch (a mixture of grains & cracked corn)
- ✓ Dry cat food (especially good for protein during the harsh winter months)
- ✓ Greens (turnip or dandelion greens ripped into smaller pieces)
- ✓ **NEVER buy food that is "medicated."** Poultry diets often are—this can kill ducks!

Cracked corn and scratch can be bought: directly from farmers, Horrocks (you can even buy it bulk for cheap!), Farm Bureau and Tractor Supply Stores. If you plan to feed on a regular basis, it is cheapest to buy a large bag. Food should always be kept dry; moldy food can **KILL** birds.

Better Interactions with Wildlife

Feeding birds can cause unnaturally high congregations of birds in small areas increasing the following risks to birds: Increased disease transmission, water pollution, sanitation issues, increased concentrations of **domestic farm** ducks and geese with wild waterfowl. It is **ILLEGAL** to dump domestic birds at the park; they are bred flightless and will not survive without humans feeding them. Bird-watching is a safe and great alternative! A.S.K. recommends helping birds by only feeding those that are truly in need of food due to injuries or flightless-ness.

For more info or to report injured/orphaned wildlife, please call All Species Kinship (A.S.K.): 877-596-7776. Learn more about helping animals at our website: www.allspecieskinship.org. A.S.K. is a nonprofit based in Battle Creek, Michigan.



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