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Photographing Woodland Birds - Setting up a mobile feeding station in your garden or local wood by Wildlife Photographer Kevin Keatley

I have had great success over the years with my home made log feeders.



The ideal size would be around 8-10cm dia. and about 1.8m high. Fix the end into a metal fence post spike to make it movable. Putting out regular food will encourage the wildlife to come in on a regular basis. Positioning the log feeder for the best light conditions (placed in an open area to avoid shadows) and with about 4m clear behind for an uncluttered background. Place your hide about 4m away from the feeder. For the best light have your hide positioned looking north. The hide position is important as photos look better with a side light. Using a free standing [Dome Hide](#) you can either slowly move the hide around to give you the best position at different times of the day or if you keep the hide in the same place you will get to know when the light will be good and plan your visits around that.

To make the feeder look natural, cut a groove down the back and cover with wire mesh, about 5-6mm square mesh will hold the peanuts in. You can get this mesh from local hardware stores or garden centres

I quickly realised that although my first feeder was a great success, the birds were feeding on the back of the log feeder and I only got glimpses of a wing or head. For my MKII feeder I put a strip of wood down the back so the birds would feed from the sides allowing good side on shots.

I also drill 8mm (3/8") holes down both sides of the feeder and push in peanuts. If you're photographing very early in the morning, just push the peanuts in the right side (east). If you put them in both sides, the left (west) side may be in shadow. It's the opposite for the late afternoon (northern hemisphere).

Both woodpeckers and nuthatches will take to the feeder readily. Other birds will take the opportunity for a free meal and in harsh weather the feeder will prove a real bird magnet.



Do continue to keep the feeder going if you have set it up over the winter as the birds will come to rely on the food supply especially during any harsh weather.



I've found that choosing a piece of wood with some good bark and possibly some ivy will not only look good in the photos, but will attract other insect eating birds like the wren or tree creeper. On one occasion I had the feeder and Dome Hide set up in a local orchard. The usual green finches and great tits were coming in regularly with fleeting visits from the local nuthatch and woodpecker. From the hide window I could see a tree creeper on a nearby tree. I watched as it moved around the orchard, I could see that when it flew to another tree it landed at the base of the trunk and circled its way up the tree looking for food. When it landed on the tree next to the hide I knew I had a chance of a photo. With the camera focused and set at the base of the log feeder I was ready. The timing was perfect, the tree creeper landed on the log feeder and quickly spiralled its way up. I had time to take just one photo as it was side on 'perfect' it didn't know I was there and the log feeder just another tree in the orchard. That's what I'm after in my wildlife photography, natural and relaxed photos. It may take hours waiting for the perfect moment but it's very rewarding when all goes to plan.

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