

BACKYARD BIRDING

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reports that one in five Americans watches birds making birding one of the top activities in the United States. Many Americans watch birds from home and over a dozen species of birds may visit the average yard. You can attract even more species of birds by making your garden bird-friendly. You can make your yard bird-friendly and help resident and migrating birds by creating a naturescape and incorporating three key habitat elements: food, water and shelter.

FOOD

Native Plants & Trees

Birds consume up to 80% of their body weight daily and need a steady source of high-energy foods, especially during the winter and breeding season. You can provide natural food for birds by planting native plants and trees in your yard. Native plants support up to 50 times as many species as non-native plants. Plant a variety of native plants, shrubs, vines and trees to insure year-round sources of food for the birds from berries to bugs. Contact your local Audubon or native plant society to find native plants for your area.

Feeders

You may supplement natural food sources with feeders. See Noah's Notes Bird Feeding for more information.

WATER

Nothing attracts birds like water – it is as important as food for birds. Just like kids, baby birds seem to especially enjoy playing in water. Provide year-round sources of fresh water for birds in a birdbath or other water feature. You will be rewarded with many hours of enjoyment watching your feather friends drink and bathe.

Birdbaths

The bowl should have a rough texture and gentle slope from 1 to 3 inches deep – birds do not like smooth steep slopes like glass.

- Do not paint birdbaths
- Keep the area underneath the birdbath clear for a minimum of six feet of any place a cat or other predator could hide
- Place the birdbath within eight to ten feet from an evergreen shrub or tree so birds have a safe place to dry
- Flush birdbaths out and refill every day
- Clean regularly with a scrub brush and 9:1 solution of water and hydrogen peroxide, rinse well
- Keep water from freezing in winter by using an approved outdoor electric birdbath heater per directions
- Do not add chemicals to keep water from freezing!

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Ponds

Ponds and water gardens are an attractive source of water for birds and other wildlife. Create areas with varying depths of water for birds and other wildlife to drink and bath safely.

- **Important:** Make sure there is an easy way for any creature to crawl out of a pond, pool, or water container so they don't drown.

Moving Water

Birds LOVE moving water and misters, bubblers, fountains and waterfalls will bring your garden to life!

- **Misters** create a fine spray that attracts hummingbirds, which will fly back and forth through the mist or take leaf baths by fluttering against wet leaves.
- **Bubblers** create a gentle bubbling motion in the water that is irresistible to birds
- **Fountains & Waterfalls** and waterfalls range from simple to elaborate and provide a beautiful and soothing feature for your garden.

SHELTER

Native Evergreen Vines, Shrubs & Trees

Birds need shelter in the form of shrubs and trees to raise their young, and escape severe weather and predators. Make your garden bird-friendly by planting an assortment of native evergreen vines, shrubs, and trees.

Snags/Dead Trees

Dead trees, or snags, are extremely valuable in providing food and shelter for wildlife from woodpeckers, owls and hawks to squirrels, opossums, and raccoons.

- Leave dead trees as long as they don't pose a safety threat
- Do not trim or cut down trees or shrubs during nesting season from March through August and always check for nests and wildlife before trimming or cutting

Nest Boxes

You may supplement native evergreen plants and trees with nest boxes that provide shelter for wildlife. See our [Nesting Boxes PDF](#) for more information.

SAFETY

Windows

Collisions with windows injure and kill between 400 million and 1 billion birds in the U.S. each year. You can help make a difference by:

- Keeping curtains or blinds closed
- Keeping screens on windows
- Placing static cling decals on windows

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- Placing bird feeder within 3 feet or over 30 feet from windows
- See [Noah's Notes Wildlife First Aid Guide](#) for information about aiding injured birds.

Cats

Each year millions of birds are killed by cats. Be a responsible pet owner and keep your cat indoors. The average life span for an outside cat is less than 5 years – half of that of an indoor cat.

Bird-friendly Coffee

Did you know you can make the difference for birds every day with a simple cup of coffee? Many of the birds you love to watch in your garden migrate to Central and South America during the winter. Their habitat in these areas is being destroyed for agriculture and development. Many of the birds in your garden will not make it back in the spring.

You can help our feathered friends make it back home by buying bird-friendly shade grown coffee. Shade grown coffee plantations in Central and South American provide vital habitat for migrating birds. Coffee on these plantations is grown under native trees in shaded forest environments. This reduces habitat destruction, conserves water, and eliminates the need for fertilizers and pesticides harmful to wildlife. The result is over 150 species of birds will inhabit a shade grown coffee plantation compared to only 20 species in a non-shade coffee farm.

To find bird-friendly coffee near you visit [Smithsonian Bird Friendly Roasters](#). Ask your local coffee shop to use bird-friendly coffee.

Recorded Bird Calls

Although they are helpful identification tools, do not play recorded bird calls outside to attract birds as they may also attract hawks looking to feed on the bird responding to the call. Play them inside instead.

BIRDING TOOLS

Binoculars

Invest in a quality pair of binoculars that are comfortable and easy to use. Visit your local nature store for help in selecting a pair that is right for you.

Bird Guides

Visit your favorite bookseller to find bird guides that meet your needs. A laminated pocket guide is also helpful for quick reference.

- [Audubon Field Guide to North American Birds](#)
- [The Audubon Society Guide to Attracting Birds: Creating Natural Habitats](#)
- [The Bird Garden](#)

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Apps

Download apps online for convenient reference at home or in the field. Consider these apps:

- [Audubon's Online Guide to North American Birds](#)
- [iBird Pro](#)
- [BirdsEye Bird Finding Guide](#)

BIRD COUNTS & CITIZEN SCIENCE

Participating in a bird count and citizen science projects is fun and will help improve your birding skills while also providing valuable data for researchers.

- [Christmas Bird Count](#)
- [Great Backyard Bird Count](#)
- [Hummingbirds at Home](#)

RESOURCES

- [Noah's Notes Bird Feeding Guide](#)
- [Noah's Notes Nest Box Guide](#)
- [Noah's Notes Purple Martin Guide](#)
- [Noah's Notes Wildlife First Aid Guide](#)
- [Audubon](#)
- [American Bird Conservancy](#)
- [The Cornell Lab of Ornithology](#)