

**Attracting birds to your backyard:  
Cover – Food – Water**

Consider cover (habitat) first:

- The general habitat around your home will determine what birds are in the area and may be attracted to your yard
  - Suburban neighborhood – close houses, yard landscaping, far from woods and open fields
  - Semi-rural setting – mix of open land, woods, yard landscaping
  - Farmstead – fields, woodlots, windbreaks between habitats, lanes bordered by trees or shrubs, ponds
- Nesting cover: Trees (Robins, Cardinals), shrubs, bushes, bird houses, dead trees w/woodpecker holes, barns (hay lofts and main working area)
  - Bird houses – for cavity nesting birds like bluebirds, chickadees, titmice, house wren
  - Plans for bird houses – see websites
- Resting/escape cover near feeders – trees, shrubs, bushes
- Healthy lawn w/o insecticides – promotes worms and insects that birds eat and feed their young
- Flower and vegetable gardens – provide birds with seeds (dry flower heads) and insects

Feeding birds:

- Types of feeders
  - Hopper, Tubes, socks, platforms, suet cages, nectar (hummingbird & oriole), scatter seed on the ground
- What to feed to attract the most variety of birds
  - Black Oil Sunflower (many species including Cardinals, Chickadee, Titmice, Woodpeckers)
  - Thistle (Goldfinch and Pine Siskins),
  - Peanuts (woodpeckers, jays, titmice, chickadees and more)
  - Suet (woodpeckers, nuthatches and other insect eating birds)
  - Freeze dried meal worms (expensive but bluebirds love them, as do most other birds. Use specialized feeder)
  - Nectar – sugar water for hummingbirds (May through October) and orioles
  - Oranges and grape jelly for Orioles
- What NOT to feed (attracts undesirable birds that take-over your feeders)
  - Corn – seed or cracked (favored by blackbirds and House Sparrows)
  - Striped Sunflower (hard shells = much waste on the ground)
  - Mixes containing millet (attractive to House Sparrows and blackbirds)

- Other wildlife that take advantage of your feeders
  - Squirrels, deer, raccoons, skunks (dig ground under feeders), chipmunks, hawks (after the birds), feral cats (after the birds)
  - Manage your feeders if these are present and unwanted. Feed only what can be eaten that day. Consider removing feeders at night to manage deer, racoons and skunks. Clean up under feeders regularly, especially as the weather warms. Some people don't feed seeds from May through September to cut down on chipmunks that can dig up your flower beds.
- Plant flowers that produce seed heads for fall/winter feeding (do not deadhead them – the birds will pick seeds from flower heads)
- Plant sunflowers for finches and let them stand until the heads are picked clean.
- If you are planting trees and shrubs consider those that produce berries in the fall/winter (Hawthorn, Serviceberry, Winterberry, Holly)

#### Water sources for birds

- Bird baths – management ... keep fresh ... not too deep
- Water features – running water attracts birds
- Natural ponds – depends on surrounding vegetation

#### Useful websites:

<https://www.audubon.org/native-plants> (The website of the National Audubon Society)

<https://feederwatch.org/learn/feeding-birds/> (a Cornell Lab of Ornithology website)

<https://www.allaboutbirds.org/types-of-bird-seed-a-quick-guide/> (a Cornell Lab of Ornithology website)

<https://nestwatch.org/learn/all-about-birdhouses/> (a Cornell Lab of Ornithology website)

<https://www.allaboutbirds.org/attract-birds-with-birdbaths/> (a Cornell Lab of Ornithology website)

<https://nestwatch.org/learn/general-bird-nest-info/landscaping-for-nesting-birds/> (a Cornell Lab of Ornithology website)