

Bird-Friendly Habitat Checklist

Support birds' full life cycle outside your home, work, school, or community space.

Create Habitat

PLANT MORE PLANTS

- You can create habitat regardless of the size or shape of your space. Studies show small patches of habitat have disproportionately high value for biodiversity.
- Plant native species with high wildlife value – berries with high fat content, seeds packed with minerals, flowers to attract pollinators, and most importantly, insects, especially caterpillars. Studies show nesting birds may require 75% or more native landscape. Use Audubon's Top 10s.
- Plant as many layers as possible to attract ground-foraging birds all the way up to aerial predators in the canopy.
- Plant densely – roughly one herbaceous plant / square foot. Plan for the full-grown size of shrubs and trees.

MAINTAIN LIKE NATURE

- Leave the leaves. Overwintering insects and ground-foraging birds need them. They're nature's mulch and fertilizer.
- Leave flower heads intact. They contain seeds (bird food) and leftovers will re-seed.
- Leave dried herbaceous stems standing. They harbor overwintering insects, including pollinators, which will emerge in spring. If you do cut dried stems, do so in early spring, and at varying heights.
- Store-bought mulch (especially the dyed stuff) can be avoided if you mulch with leaf litter, twigs, and dead perennial stems in late winter.



Ruby-throated hummingbird
Photo: Randy Streufert / Audubon

Reduce Threats

YOUR HABITAT IS PART OF BIRDS' HABITAT

- Remove and replace invasive plants.
- Eliminate the use of pesticides and inorganic fertilizers.
- Keep your cat(s) indoors. Cats kill up to 4 billion birds in the U.S. every year.
- Reduce unnecessary outdoor lighting during migration season. Turn off lights between 11PM – 6AM, April, May, September, and October. Down-shield outdoor lights and use warm-colored bulbs.
- Alleviate bird-window collisions, which kill up to 1 billion birds each year and injure many more, by addressing glass reflectivity. Apply patterns to the exterior glass surface, every 2 x 2 inches. Use screens, netting, or hanging cords. Or, fritted, acid-etched, or UV-patterned glass.
- Remember, climate change is the #1 threat to birds.

FOOD

Native trees
Native shrubs
Native flowers
Native grasses, sedges, or rushes
Dead wood
Nectar plants
Leaf litter
Seed, nectar, and/or suet feeder
Fruit and/or mealworms

WATER

Pond/lake
Stream/creek
Wetland
Vernal pool
Rain garden
Bird bath
Fountain/drip faucet
Other—depression, down-

SHELTER

Native trees/shrubs (incl. evergreen)
Native hedge/fence-row/bramble patch
High groundcover (grasses, ferns, etc.)
Dead herbaceous stalks in
Log, brush, or rock pile
Winter roost box

NESTING

Densely-planted native trees/shrubs
Standing dead trees
Meadow/grassland
Nest box
Nest platform
Accessible barn, chimney, silo, or structure
Chimney swift tower