



## Attracting and Taking Care of Wild Birds



Here's a great activity for the whole family:

For more information on the February 17-20, 2012

**Great Backyard Bird Count** visit <http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/>.

Click on the link to learn how to participate and download your own checklist.

### WHAT TO CONSIDER FOR ATTRACTING BIRDS

To attract birds at any time of the year, there are a number of things to consider – plants, food, water and shelter. Begin by selecting plants that provide nectar, fruits, berries or nuts. There are many trees and shrubs that offer fruit or berries long into fall and even through winter. Crabapples are a favorite of purple finches and many other birds.

Beautyberry are a winter treat for several Georgia native birds.

Hawthorne, privet, dogwood, hollies, sumac, elderberries, oak, plum, pyracantha, red cedar, sassafras and viburnum are a few of the many plants that provide birds food from autumn into winter.

### COVER AND NESTING AREAS

Birds and small wildlife need protection from the elements and predators. If you can, avoid trimming lower branches on bushes. Plant tall grasses like miscanthus and pennisetum to provide ample hiding places. Be sure to include tall, mature trees in your wildlife refuge. If your trees are not yet large enough to support a bird family, nest boxes, and bird houses can be mounted on poles and trees to attract sparrows, tree swallows, bluebirds and house wrens.

### RECOMMENDED BIRD FOOD

**Suet** attracts birds that cling to vertical surfaces: nuthatches, titmice, chickadees and woodpeckers.

**Thistle seed** is a favorite of finches but requires a special tube with small holes to dispense the seed.

**Black oil sunflower seed** brings titmice, cardinals, chickadees and wrens by the score. It assures that birds won't scratch uneaten food to the ground beneath the feeder. You can find black sunflower seed in **COLE'S Blue Ribbon, Special Feeder** and **Blazing Hot** mixes. Inexpensive bird food mixes often contain wheat, millet and hemp seed. These are not bird favorites and the birds will simply pick through what they don't want while looking for the food they desire. The mixes listed don't have worthless additives.

### SQUIRREL PROOFING

Squirrels are the bane of bird feeders. They are crafty little creatures and have figured out most feeders. There are some pretty good solutions though. [Brome Squirrel Buster](#) has a weighted, adjustable perch which allows lightweight birds to feed but slams a door over the feeding portals when a squirrel gives it a try. [Droll Yankee](#) has four squirrel proof feeders that can be very enjoyable to watch birds feeding and squirrels NOT!

### INSECT PESTS

Improperly stored birdseed can bring flying creatures *indoors*. Indian meal moth is a common insect pest of birdseed. If you keep birdseed indoors you might soon notice small, slow-flying moths and larvae in your kitchen. Be sure to store birdseed in a metal container in your garage or outdoor shed. A medium-sized galvanized trash can with a tight lid which easily holds a twenty-five pound bag of seed and works great.

### WATER, SHELTER

According to bird experts, our feathered friends need three other basic things to keep them happy -- water, cover and nesting areas.

Birds need a source of water for drinking and in summer they also enjoy a place to bathe. Whether you provide a small bird bath or an excavated pond, locate it in an area where it can easily be seen from the house or patio. The result will be hours of entertainment as the birds drop by for a drink and dip in the pool. To keep the water ice-free during the winter, consider installing a small heating element available from a garden center or through garden catalogs.

Evergreen shrubs furnish shelter for over-wintering birds. Wax myrtle, large hollies, cryptomeria, arborvitae and Leyland cypress are good choices. They also make good sites for summer nests. Bird houses are not only functional for the birds but can enhance any garden's beauty.

### ATTRACTING MIGRATORY BIRDS:

- A birdbath or fountain with circulating water in a protected shady area gives birds a habitat with a clean water source.
- Plant a number of native shrubs, trees and flowers for shelter, nesting and food.
- Stock bird feeders regularly with quality bird seed.
- Avoid the use of chemical pesticides in and around feeding areas.