

Creating Suburban and Urban Habitat for Late Fall, Winter and Early Spring

Life is becoming more challenging as our planet warms. Providing habitat; shelter, nesting areas, water and food have become even more important and necessary as our climate changes, forcing native wildlife to adjust faster than they might be able to adapt. As seasons shift and warm, birds may arrive to a destination before or after their food source is available.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/grrlscientist/2020/01/06/climate-change-is-affecting-the-timing-of-bird-migration-but-are-birds-adapting-fast-enough/?sh=fb86db376db2>

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5432526/>
Migratory birds may adapt better than resident birds.

We all have gardens that provide sustenance for our local wildlife from late spring through the early Fall. This, my presentation, focuses on creating an urban/suburban habitat yard from Late Autumn through early Spring, times that are especially challenging as birds and other wildlife prepare for winter or start migrating in a changing world. Offering a supplemental food source provides energy to sustain our wildlife for our urban deer and bunnies to our birds and bugs. Let's live with our nature friends by allowing a little "wild" to creep into our cultivated spaces.

I am **just** touching on ideas in my slideshow and we have a full agenda so I won't be taking questions after my presentation but **please** read my notes on the Conservation page for much more information, links to great articles, plant lists and resources.

Thank you.

Allow or create wild spaces in your yard, let it get a little messy, at least in the less seen places.

Leave your leaves. Leaf litter breaks down with the help of mycorrhizal fungi that move carbon into soil, extract nutrients for plants and protect them from disease, lessen soil erosion, and plays a very important role in **storing the gigantic pool of carbon within soil.**

Dead leaves left under trees and shrubs are also ideal spots for birds to forage for insects as weather gets colder. They also provide nesting sites for butterflies, ground nesting bees and other beneficial bugs and pollinators.

<https://www.realgardensgrownatives.com/?p=1639>

<https://www.seattletimes.com/pacific-nw-magazine/its-time-to-clean-things-up-and-mulch-things-down-in-the-garden/>

<https://gardenhotline.org/seasonal-tips/leave-the-leaves/>

My favorite tool is my chipper grinder which speeds up decomposition. I also have a leaf grinder that works well on just dry leaves

Create brush piles for winter shelter and ground nesting sites. Create habitat pockets, loose piles of debris. Leave a or move a rotting log to an area where it can decompose naturally.

Do leave some dead vegetation like vines and stalks, as these provide both valuable winter cover, hollow stems and nesting material for birds, bees and bugs.

Create a Hedgerow: Hedgerows provide shelter for nesting, weather and provide mixed food sources:

<https://www.whatcomcd.org/hedgerows>

<https://www.wildhomesteading.com/what-is-a-hedgerow/>

Incorporate plants that offer food. The best thing you can do is to **plant native fruit trees and shrubs** that will provide birds, bees and other pollinators with fresh, wild food.

A few shoulder season and winter planting ideas:

Fall: Cascara, Crabapple, Sunflower, Wild Cherry (chokecherry), Elderberry

Deep Winter: Pacific Dogwood, Holly, Russia Olive (elaeanthus angustifolia), Firethorn (Pyracantha), Mountain Ash, Sarcococca, Pieris Japonica

Late Winter, early Spring: Daphne, witch hazel, hellebore, mahonia, <https://www.monrovia.com/be-inspired/best-early-spring-flowering-plants-to-attract-pollinators.html>

If you have **berry bushes or fruit trees, don't pick them bare**, leave some fruits are which are excellent food sources for birds migrating through or overwintering in your area.

Add bird feeders to your yard for millet, sunflower, niger thistle, suet, and hummingbird feeders will bring in a wonderful variety of birds. In snow, I spread birdseed under plantings and tables that still have bare ground which make access easier for the birds.

Keep hummingbird feeder's filled with fresh sugar water, it doesn't have to be colored. Do not let sugar water stay in the feeder for too long as it can develop bacteria. Invest in good bottle brushes, large, small and tiny and the job becomes very easy.

Consider bird tape on your window to prevent strike deaths. A stunned bird will be quick prey for a cat or hawk.

Provide a water source, invest in a birdbath heater

Add bird houses, especially important as habitat decreases. Cavity nesting birds are especially hurt by urban development. I am going to try a flicker box this year and maybe an owl box this year.

How climate change impacts birds: Audubon's Birds and Climate Visualizer. <https://www.audubon.org/climate/survivalbydegrees?>

Don't use pesticides or insecticides, go organic, your yard will find it's balance. https://www.llojibwe.org/drm/greenteam/pesticides_Article.pdf

Keep cats indoors!!! Predation by domestic cats is the number-one direct, human-caused threat to birds in the United States and Canada. In the United States alone, **outdoor cats kill approximately 2.4 billion birds every year**. Although this number may seem unbelievable, it represents the combined impact of tens of millions of outdoor cats. Each outdoor cat plays a part.

Cats #1 Threat to Birds -Instinctive Predators of Wildlife: **Even well-fed cats will hunt and kill**. Upon reflection, most cat owners will have observed this behavior. When a cat plays with a feather toy or laser, it is practicing predatory behaviors. When these behaviors continue outdoors, the results are deadly for birds and other wildlife.

Unfortunately, the mere presence of cats outdoors is enough to cause significant impacts to birds. Because cats are recognizable predators, their presence near nesting birds has been shown to reduce the health of chicks and decrease nest success.
<https://abcbirds.org/program/cats-indoors/cats-and-birds/>

Consider bird tape on your window to prevent strike deaths. A stunned bird will be quick prey for a cat or hawk.

Put up a bat box. Bats are very beneficial to humans.
How to put up a bat box: https://www.batsnorthwest.org/bat_houses.html

Great article on PNW bats: <https://wdfw.wa.gov/sites/default/files/publications/00605/wdfw00605.pdf>

What benefits birds will also benefit the pollinators. The best thing you can do is to **plant native fruit trees and shrubs** that will provide birds, bees and other pollinators with fresh, wild food.

Planting for pollinators: Add a mini-meadow where locally native perennials — such as western columbine, fleabane, checker mallow, blue-eyed grass, milkweed and iris — grow and buzz with life.

<https://blog.nwf.org/2014/01/how-to-create-a-wildflower-meadow/>

More Than Flowers: How to Support Pollinators in All Their Life Stages

<http://www.realgardensgrownatives.com/?p=2888>

Add a mason bee box or bug hotel to your yard (make sure you keep your artificial mason bee home clean to prevent bacteria, mites and fungus).

[https://static1.squarespace.com/static/569ec99b841abaccb7c7e74c/t/](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/569ec99b841abaccb7c7e74c/t/5c40dbec562fa72bb082b489/1547754483171/bee+hotel+maintenance+instructions+2018.pdf)

[5c40dbec562fa72bb082b489/1547754483171/bee+hotel+maintenance+instructions+2018.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/569ec99b841abaccb7c7e74c/t/5c40dbec562fa72bb082b489/1547754483171/bee+hotel+maintenance+instructions+2018.pdf)

Planting for pollinators, best plant List source:

<https://xerces.org/publications/plant-lists/pollinator-plants-maritime-northwest-region>

http://library.oregonmetro.gov/files/native_plant_booklet.pdf

If you are confined to a deck garden, many of these ideas can be easily adjusted to accommodate your personal habitat with potted trees, appropriate plantings, a shallow dish of water and a hummingbird feeder! It will bring you great joy!

<http://www.ecosystemgardening.com/container-gardening-for-wildlife-habitat.html>

Please open my notes which have an abundance of links, allowing you to immerse yourself in the wonderful and desperately needed creation or recreation of habitats in our changing world.

And lastly, join the **National Wildlife Federation** and become a **Certified Wildlife Habitat** and display your sign proudly. I guarantee, you will get MANY questions about your certification and find your neighbors want to join the movement to provide habitat back into our developing society.

<https://www.nwf.org/Garden-for-Wildlife/Certify>

Our wildlife needs you!

I am always very happy to answer any questions regarding habitats and rain gardens.

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Resource Books:

The Wildlife Sanctuary Garden by Carol Buchanan

Audubon - Birdfeeder Handbook by Robert Burton

The Complete Book for Backyard Bird Lovers by Sally Roth

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Audubon-Vanishing Birds: https://www.audubon.org/magazine/winter-2018/how-many-birds-disappear-between-migration?ms=digital-eng-email-ea-series-engagement_dissapearing-birds_recently-wide&utm_source=ea&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=engagement_dissapearing-birds&utm_content=recently-wide&emci=cb72377c-e71d-eb11-96f5-00155d03bda0&emdi=cec72ee4-5f70-eb11-9889-00155d43c992&ceid=159434

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https://journeynorth.org/tm/robin/facts_migration.html

Q. What can I do to help robins in autumn and winter?

A. You can make your backyard bird-friendly. That means don't rake too much. Dead leaves left under trees and shrubs are ideal spots for birds to forage for insects as weather gets colder. You can also provide cover. Birds need shelter from harsh conditions, and vegetation in your yard will help provide it. Don't prune back dead vegetation like vines and stalks, as these provide both valuable winter cover and nesting material for birds in the spring. If you have berry bushes or fruit trees, don't pick them bare

because those fruits are food sources for robins migrating through, or overwintering in your area. The best thing you can do is to plant native fruit trees and shrubs that will provide robins with fresh, wild food. To feed them in winter, one Journey North friend set out fruit and mealworms in a heated birdbath filled with sphagnum moss rather than water.

Q. When do robins leave their wintering grounds?

A. Robins typically start moving northward from Florida and the Gulf states, and tend to follow the 37-degree average daily isotherm. Migratory restlessness builds up as day length increases. Scientists call this "zugunruhe," a German compound word consisting of *Zug* (move, migration) and *Unruhe* (anxiety, restlessness). Zugunruhe - ORIGIN OF ZUGUNRUHE

- German *Zug* a pulling, move, migration zugzwang *Unruhe* restlessness (from Middle High German *unruowe*) (from Old High German *unruowa*) (*un-* not ne in Indo-European roots) (*ruowa* rest)