

## Create a Bird-friendly Yard

Migrating birds' survival may very well depend on whether they can find a safe place to rest and feed in your neighborhood. With a little extra effort, you may even be able to create a place for birds to nest!

The following checklist will allow you to create a "bird friendly" backyard. It is important to consider each of the different elements together. Creating bird habitat but ignoring hazards such as cats and pesticides can create a situation that does more harm than good. Audubon's Urban Wildlife Resource Office is available 365 days a year to help you with your backyard wildlife questions. Call us at 503-292-0304 or use our online [Ask the Expert form](#).

Create a bird-friendly yard:

- **Feed birds responsibly:** The best way to help birds is to provide them with natural habitat and food sources. However, bird feeders can add additional nutrition to their diets and provide you with better opportunities to view the birds in your yard. Always use natural, fresh seeds, feed small amounts daily and clean feeders once a week with a 10 percent bleach solution. If you see sick birds at your feeders, stop feeding for at least three weeks and allow birds to disperse. The Audubon Society of Portland's [Nature Store](#) can provide you with bird-feeding supplies, feeders and expert advice.
- **Provide a source of water:** Birds need water to survive. Providing a source of clean water for drinking and bathing is a surefire way to increase the number and diversity of birds in your yard. A flat-bottomed, shallow bowl with ½-1 inch of water in it will work best. Water should be changed every other day.
- **Naturescape your yard:** Plant a combination of native plants and trees to provide birds with cover, food and nesting opportunities. Group several of the same species together with the largest species towards the edge of the yard to create a songbird border. Include evergreens for cover, thorny species to create nesting opportunities and berry-producing shrubs such as snowberry, salmonberry, red flowering currant and huckleberry to provide food.
- **Install bird nest boxes:** Nest boxes can provide birds with important nesting opportunities urban landscape. Audubon Society of Portland's nature store provides a variety of different types of bird nest boxes and expert advice on which species are likely to be found in your neighborhood.
- **Keep cats indoors:** Free-roaming outdoor cats present one of the greatest hazards for backyard birds. Cat predation accounts for nearly 40% of the injured and orphaned animals brought to Audubon's Wildlife Care Center each year. Studies show that even well-fed cats

kill birds. Please wherever possible, house cats indoors or in secure outdoor enclosures. It will keep your cats safer too! [Learn more.](#)

- **Reduce window strikes:** Scientists estimate that window strikes may be second only to habitat loss in accounting for bird deaths each year. Window strikes can be reduced by hanging bird feeders either within 3 feet of windows or at least 20 feet away from windows. If windows are frequently struck by birds, try hanging mylar tape strips from the top of the window. The flashing tape will often alert birds to the hazard ahead. [Learn more.](#)
- **Reduce pesticides and fertilizers:** Pesticides and fertilizers pollute our streams, poison our wildlife and destroy beneficial insects on which many birds depend for survival. Planting with native plants that thrive in our environment and reducing lawn area can help reduce weed problems. For more information on natural gardening, visit [Metro's website.](#)
- **Remove invasive, non-native plant species:** Many invasive, non-native plant species destroy native habitat and with it, plants on which our birds depend on for survival. While there are many species of concern, five of the most common and problematic are English Ivy, Himalayan blackberry, Garlic Mustard, Japanese Knotweed and Clematis. For information on identification and removal of invasive plant species, check out East Multnomah County Soil and Water Conservation District's excellent website: [www.naturescape.org](http://www.naturescape.org).
- **Create a brush pile:** Pile up downed tree limbs to create a brush pile, a great source of cover for birds during bad weather.
- **Report the birds that you see to eBird or Project Feeder Watch:** Keep track of the birds in your neighborhood and then add your observations to one of these online bird databases. When you add your observations to eBird or Project Feeder Watch you help bird scientists across the country. eBird gives you a special password that allows you to access a permanent record of the birds that you have seen. Project Feeder Watch provides a starter kit to help you identify your birds. Go to: [www.ebird.org](http://www.ebird.org) or [www.birds.cornell.edu/pfw/](http://www.birds.cornell.edu/pfw/).