

# 6 STEPS TO TURN YOUR YARD INTO A

# Sanctuary for Birds

## Birds need your help!

Today there are 2.9 billion fewer breeding birds in North America than there were in 1970.

Habitat loss and degradation, outdoor cats, collisions with man-made structures, and a host of other factors contribute to these declines.



You can make the world a better place for birds. The most important step you can take is to get started!

Here are six steps you can take to make the future brighter for birds:



For more information on backyard birding, visit [www.wbfi.org](http://www.wbfi.org)

## STEP

### 1

## PUT OUT THE WELCOME MAT!

Habitat loss is the biggest challenge facing birds. To help, make your neighborhood more attractive to birds:

- Landscape with native plants to provide natural food sources, including vital insects, shelter from the elements and predators, and nesting sites.
- Leave the leaves! In fall, don't remove all the leaves and dead plant material – this gives your yard a more natural look, helps insects survive the winter, and is valuable foraging habitat and cover for birds.
- While a well-manicured lawn provides for environmental cooling and CO<sub>2</sub> exchange, native plants are ideal for providing habitat.

Convert some of your lawn to native plants and consider adding flowering plants like clover to your grass to help pollinators.

- Feeders, nest boxes, and water sources also benefit birds. Bird feeders provide an important year-round supply of food. Actively maintained water sources will attract a larger variety of birds and are especially important in colder climates.

### Resources:

Local wild bird food retailers, nature centers, garden centers, & land trusts

[Wild Ones](#)

Audubon's [Plants for Birds](#)

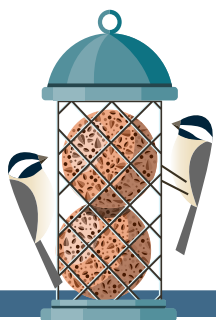
[WBFi's Create a Backyard Sanctuary Guide](#)

## STEP

### 2

## PREPARE A BANQUET FOR BIRDS.

Provide appropriate foods year-round to attract more birds to your yard and help ensure that they have a safe and nutritious diet. To maximize birds' use of your yard, keep feeders full to make your yard a part of their routine and provide a variety of feeders and birdbaths because birds have different feeding preferences. Look for the WBFi Quality Standards logo when purchasing bird food to ensure quality products that will attract the birds you want.



### Resources:

[WBFi Locate a Retailer Map](#)

[WBFi Bird Feed Basics](#)

[Feederwatch: Guide to Common Feeder Birds](#)

[BirdsFood, Feeder Types & Preferences](#)

## STEP

### 3

## KEEP FEED & FEEDING AREAS CLEAN

Clean feeders and feeding areas at least once a month to keep your birds from getting sick. Generally, plastic and metal feeders are easy to clean. When it comes to feeders, keeping it basic is best. Look for the WBFi quality standards logo to ensure you are investing in a quality product. Feeders can be rinsed with a 10% solution of bleach and warm water. Scrub birdbaths with a brush and replace the water every 3-5 days to discourage mosquito reproduction. Rake up and dispose of seed hulls under feeders and consider moving feeders periodically to prevent waste buildup. Always keep seed and foods dry and discard any that is wet, moldy, or smells musty. Hummingbird feeders should be cleaned every 3-5 days and every other day in warm weather. And don't forget to wash your hands!

**STEP****4****KEEP CATS INDOORS.**

Together, owned and unowned cats that roam outdoors kill 2.6 billion birds a year in North America. This is a huge problem, but you can make an impact by keeping cats indoors and refusing to feed or shelter unowned cats. Indoor cats live longer, healthier lives, and keeping them inside makes your yard safer for birds and mammals. Cats allowed to roam outdoors can spread a number of serious diseases to people, including toxoplasmosis and rabies. Collar bells, de-clawing, and keeping cats well fed will not solve this problem, but you can still let your cat outside on a leash or in a variety of enclosures called “catios”.

**Resources:**

American Bird Conservancy's [Cats Indoors Campaign](#)  
[Cat Wars](#) by Pete Marra

**STEP****5****REDUCE WINDOW COLLISIONS.**

Collisions with glass windows kill up to 1 billion birds each year in North America. Windows are deadly because: 1) they reflect vegetation/sky and/or 2) are clear and birds think they can fly to what they see on the other side of the glass – an especially dangerous situation if you can see habitat on the other side of the building or have large indoor plants. To reduce collisions, add bird-friendly patterns to the outside of your windows or add permanent insect screens to prevent reflections. Start by treating windows where you have witnessed a collision and windows across from bird feeders/baths – also consider large, reflective windows. Visit the [American Bird Conservancy's site](#) for a list of products you can use to reduce collisions.

**Resources:**

American Bird Conservancy's [Glass Collisions Campaign](#)

**STEP****6****BIRDS & CHEMICALS DON'T MIX.**

While valuable in protecting plants and grass from disease and destruction from insects, pesticides, herbicides, and fungicides may be toxic to birds. A chemical-free yard is safest, but at a minimum avoid using these products where birds feed, bathe, or rest. Ensure that you are using high quality seeds like those that follow the Wild Bird Feeding Institutes guidelines to ensure purity and finest nutrition. Always follow directions provided by chemical manufacturers.

**Resources:**

Local bird food retailers  
 American Bird Conservancy's [pesticides at home](#) page

**WBFi hopes these resources help you create your very own wild bird sanctuary. We wish you many years of happy viewing and feeding!**

**Representatives from the following organizations contributed to the development of this brochure:**

[American Bird Conservancy](#)

[Aurora University](#)

[Cleveland MetroParks](#)

[Muhlenberg College](#)

**For additional resources, visit:**

[American Birding Association](#)

[Bird Conservation Alliance](#)

[Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology](#)

[eBird](#)

[Massachusetts Audubon Society](#)

[National Audubon Society](#)

[National Fish and Wildlife Foundation](#)

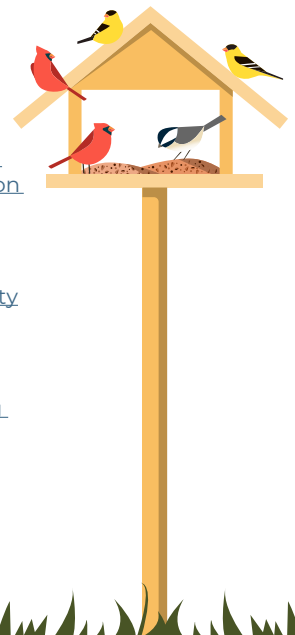
[National Wildlife Federation](#)

[The Wildlife Society](#)

[U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service](#)

[Wild Bird Feeding Institute](#)

[Project Beak](#)



**View, print, and download this document, and find links to all resources at: [www.wbfi.org/resources](http://www.wbfi.org/resources)**



The [Wild Bird Feeding Institute](#) (WBFi) sponsored this brochure. WBFi is an association dedicated to the progressive expansion of the wild bird feeding industry.

For more information on backyard birding, visit [www.wbfi.org](http://www.wbfi.org) or other organizations' websites listed herein.

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