



Garden Patrol: Ten Birds That Help Control Garden Pests

By Sarah Boyle

Read this article and more in the NWF [National Wildlife Magazine](#).

AS A GARDENER, it can be your worst nightmare: watching helplessly as hordes of destructive insects attack your plants. With a little planning and simple landscaping, however, you can help moderate garden pests naturally in your yard. Your weapon: bug-eating birds. "During the late spring and summer months, insects make up the great majority of many avian species' diets," says NWF Chief Naturalist Craig Tufts. The trick to enticing these birds to your property, he notes, is to first learn which of them range in your area, and then to plant appropriate types of native cover that provide insect- and bird-attracting natural foods--leaves, fruit, pollen and nectar--to sustain both adults and their insect-dependent nestlings. Tina Phillips, project leader of Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Bird House Network, adds, "The most important thing to do to attract birds to

your yard is to provide an enticing habitat, not just a nest box. Birds choose a nest site based on its surrounding habitat."

Along with native vegetation, offer birds a water source and a few different nesting sites: brush piles, ledges, nest boxes, shrubs and various types of trees--including dead tree limbs and trunks. "As long as they don't create a safety hazard for people, dead trees provide nesting areas and are a great food source for insectivores," says Tufts.

Needless to say, birds will not completely rid your yard of insects, and even if they could, you wouldn't want them to do so. Some insects are imperative for a healthy garden, and birds do not discriminate between destructive and beneficial bugs. But they can help keep insect populations in your neighborhood at a stable, balanced level, benefiting both you and your neighbors. Subsequently, you'll have a nicer garden to show for it throughout the summer.

Which bug-eating birds are the best ones to attract to your yard? There's no simple answer. Scientists cannot say for sure how many insects a certain bird will eat in a summer day. But depending on where you live, the following ten species can be valuable allies in your efforts to sustain a vibrant garden:

Purple Martin

Red-Eyed Vireo

Chipping Sparrow

Downy Woodpecker

Yellow Warbler

Eastern Bluebird

Common Nighthawk

Eastern Phoebe

Baltimore Oriole

House Wren

These ten birds, of course, are not alone in consuming backyard pests. Many other species--such as the northern cardinal and black-capped chickadee--eat insects or feed them to their young during the summer. Yet as summer winds down, your efforts to attract birds shouldn't come to a halt.

Volume 4 Issue 6

June 2007 Newsletter

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"The natural foods you provide in your yard throughout the year will encourage these songsters to visit again," says Tufts. As a result, the birds may return and combat a new generation of insects the next year.





OPEN HOUSE



Displays and.....

On Saturday May 19, 2007 the Crooked Creek Environmental Learning Center had its annual Open House. There were displays from various organizations, as well as food, nature walks, and a presentation from Terry Laux talking about his reptiles. It was a fun day with the Litter Bug buzzing around and a couple of new additions: Butch Laney who was dressed in period attire and had a bark hut. He also had some Native American items for sale. You can find more information about Butch and his hobby at:

<http://www.naeskahonitown.com>

The other new display this year was by Bob Chilko. He had amazing wooden carvings of wildflowers and some other items from nature. He gave an indoor wildflower walk that he does for nursing home residents, as well as for other groups. This was some amazing artwork.

more displays.



Act 48 Teacher Workshops

June 19-20

Watershed Education:

This course will introduce and train teachers in the Pennsylvania State Park's *Watershed Education*, a statewide, comprehensive, watershed-based program for grades 6-12. This long-term interdisciplinary education program encourages students to explore all aspects of their watershed including history, culture, economics, ecology and human impact. *Water-*

shed Education involves students in classroom and field research, hands-on investigations, mapping, networking, partnerships, stewardship and community service. The program provides a web site and database for students to share information about their watershed research and data, generate reports, and enhance their own data interpretation. Participation in this program provides the teacher with an opportunity to meet several of

the environment and ecology, math, and social studies education standards. Teachers will be participating in hands-on activities and should come dressed for the outdoors and wet conditions (we will be working in a stream). The workshop will be 15 hours. **Sponsored by PA DCNR.**

June 21-22 – **Pennsylvania Amphibians & Reptiles Educator Workshop:**

Participants in these 10-15 hour workshops will receive a copy of the new curriculum guide: Pennsylvania Amphibians and Reptiles. The Amphibians and Reptile Curriculum guide is a multi-disciplinary curriculum designed for classroom educators, K – 12. The guide is divided into four units: Aware-

ness (basic biology), Identification, Habitat, and Responsible Human Action. Participants will also get an introduction to the biology, ecology and identification of PA's herps. **Sponsored by PA Fish and Boat Commission.**

To sign up or for more information contact our program director,
Dennis Hawley
Phone 724.763.6316
Email: elcaet@alltel.net

Summer Camp

IUP, Crooked Creek Environmental Learning Center, and the Armstrong Conservation District are presenting *Young Naturalist Outdoor Adventure Camp* for children ages 8 -12. This camp will be held July 16-20, 2007 from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The cost is \$200 and will be held

at the Crooked Creek Environmental Learning Center. To receive more information or a complete flyer, contact Dennis Hawley at 724-763-6316 or e-mail him at elcaet@alltel.net

Registration required by July 6



Canoeing with Dennis Tubbs



Meeting Space Available

The Crooked Creek Environmental Learning Center is a great place to hold business meetings or classes. We have tables and chairs, a kitchen, bathrooms, and media equipment all located in secluded, beautiful surroundings. Why not have your next meeting at the ELC?

Contact Dennis for more information.



Summer Festt at the Kittanning Belmont

Wow! That was a lot of children in one place! Dennis and I had a booth along with dozens of other agencies and businesses. There were games, crafts, prizes, and even a D.J.

We did a craft using burlap sacks that we reused from another

agency. We had the kids sew a string around the top to create a draw string and then we gave them a pencil for their "pencil bag", along with an ELC insert. We got several dollars worth of donations and the kids enjoyed their crafts.



Created by Donna Livengood
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