



10 Tips for Helping Migratory Birds

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Provide places where birds can nest and raise their young.

Each year, more than 250 species of birds migrate from the United States and Canada, where they breed, to Mexico, Central and South America, where they spend the winter. Generation after generation, these neo-tropical migrants follow the sun through the seasons, flying between continents to meet their basic needs for food, shelter, and reproduction.

The majority of other birds also migrate, though they don't travel as far as the tropics. Each year, they fly hundreds of miles between breeding grounds and wintering sites within the U.S. and Canada.

As they travel, birds face tremendous obstacles in making a successful journey. In fact, an estimated 60% of most songbirds hatched in any given year do not survive to see their first birthday.

Migration has always been perilous. The potential of starvation, competition, disease, storms, and drowning face all migrants. But increasingly, human hazards make the journey even more dangerous. Collision with cars and buildings, pesticide poisoning, cat predation, shooting, and loss of key resting and feeding habitats are among the threats birds may encounter.

Of these, finding habitat—places that provide food, shelter, and water—along their route is the single most critical need of migratory birds. With suitable habitat, birds *can* survive the journey.

You can help

How ordinary citizens manage their backyards, combined with the actions of local communities to protect open space can have a dramatic impact on the survival of migratory birds. Here are 10 tips from Audubon International to help you help birds and the environment where you live:

1. Plant fruit-bearing shrubs and trees that are native to your local area to provide birds the fuel they need for their journey.
2. Don't overly manicure your yard. Removing "wild" areas, such as hedgerows, woodland understory shrubs, or meadow areas, reduces places where birds can feed, rest, and seek protection from predators and inclement weather.

Take advantage of opportunities to protect and enhance habitats for birds.

3. Keep your cat indoors. America's 30 million cats kill hundreds of millions of migratory songbirds each year.
4. Limit or eliminate pesticide use—insects provide an essential source of protein for birds.
5. Put up a bird feeder to supplement natural food sources. In addition to fueling birds heading south, your feeders will sustain birds that spend the winter in your area.
6. Put up additional feeders, if needed, to eliminate overcrowding and prevent the spread of disease.
7. Mount and monitor nest boxes to provide breeding sites for tree swallows, wrens, bluebirds, and other birds that nest in cavities.
8. Maintain a clean water source, such as a bird bath or backyard pond.
9. Identify the birds that visit your yard to gauge the success of your efforts.
10. Urge your community to protect wetlands, woodlands, stream corridors, and other open spaces. A local land trust or nature preserve may be able to offer additional resources for conserving open space in your community.

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