



## TURNING YOUR BACKYARD INTO A WILD BIRD HABITAT

Wild birds require four basic elements for their survival - food, water, shelter and places to raise their young. You will attract beautiful wild birds if your backyard meets their needs. Birdfeeders, properly placed and stocked with seeds, nuts and suet, will attract a wide variety of wild birds. A year round source of water, like a birdbath or small pond, is also a necessary part of your wild bird habitat. Cavity nesting birds may be attracted to your yard if you provide birdhouses. Birds will use the trees and shrubs in your landscape for shelter and places to build nests.

### **Food**

Establishing different feeding stations is the best possible way to attract the widest variety of wild birds. There are several types of feeders commercially available – tube feeders, hopper style, platforms, window type, ground feeders, peanut feeders, suet holders, nyjer (thistle) feeders, hummingbird feeders, oriole feeders. The wild birds you attract will be determined by the variety of feeder styles and food types you provide.

### **Water**

All wildlife, including birds, need a permanent source of water. There are many different types of birdbaths available. Make sure the one you choose is shallow enough (1”-2”) It is also a good idea to place a few small rocks in the bottom to help birds get a foothold. A small pond with a shallow, rocky wading area will also attract birds and other wildlife. Make sure shrubbery or other cover is nearby for protection, but not close enough to hide predators!

### **Shelter**

Birds seek cover for protection from predators (the neighbor’s cat?!), and for a place to rest. Dense shrubs and evergreens will provide shelter all year. Brush piles and dead or dying trees (snags) are also used for cover by birds and other wildlife. Roosting boxes can be purchased or constructed in the absence of snags, and also serve as a place of warmth for birds in winter.

### **Places to Raise Young**

There are many cavity nesting birds – chickadees, titmice, bluebirds, wrens – that may use a nesting box. Birdhouses, either purchased or made in your own workshop, should be built to “spec” for the birds you wish to attract. The dimensions vary, and the hole size is different for each species. For details, you can refer to any of the several books available about building birdhouses. Shrubs, trees, snags of varying sizes and density in your landscape will also provide places for wild birds to raise their young.