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You will be amazed by the variety of birds you will attract to your backyard wild bird habitat if you include trees and shrubs that produce berries in your landscaping plan. In fact, it has been reported that the fruit of different dogwoods has attracted more than 90 species of birds. Your berry bearing trees and shrubs will attract not only the familiar bird species that visit your feeders and nest in your yard like cardinals, woodpeckers, mockingbirds, blue jays, sparrows, robins, and bluebirds but also the less familiar like towhees, waxwings, warblers, thrushes, thrashers, catbirds, and kingbirds.

Birds will not only benefit from the food produced by your new shrubs and trees but you'll also be providing them with additional nesting sites and good cover that serves as protection from predators. The dense foliage of dogwood

Wild About Birds is owned and operated in Milford, Ohio by Peggy Flierl. *BirdChat* is a periodic newsletter written by Ms. Flierl for customers of *Wild About Birds*. Material appearing in *BirdChat* may not be reprinted without permission. Any comments should be directed to Ms. Flierl at:

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Wild About Birds Spring 2006

BirdChat

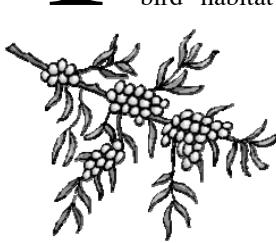
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This Issue:

- Turning Your Backyard into Wild Bird Habitat: Berries for Birds
- Species Specifics: Eastern Screech-Owl

- Bird Flu and You
- What's New?!
- Dear BirdGal
- Bird Behavior: Songs and Calls

Turning Your Backyard into Wild Bird Habitat: Berries for Birds



bushes is a safe haven for birds' nests and thorny berry bushes will be a welcome retreat for the birds when the neighbor's cat is wandering through your backyard!

Your landscaping project should begin with a diagram of your property showing buildings and existing plantings. As you are researching the new plants you want and start to plot them on your drawing, you need to consider the amount of sun/shade the plants will receive, the general soil conditions, and the amount of space available for growth. Birds are more attracted to areas with a variety of plants so make your yard as natural as you can. Try to create an edge effect, where two or more plant communities come together—for example, shrubs and trees in a bed adjacent to lawn or meadow. Plant in groupings of three or more and combine trees and shrubs whose berries will ripen at different times of the year. Choose native species as they will be more adapted to the growing conditions of your specific area.

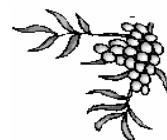
To the right is a list (common species name) of popular berry bearing trees, shrubs, and vines that are hardy to the Cincinnati Tri-State area. When you are shopping for your new plants, check nursery tags carefully as some specific species of these plants are not native to our area and some are not fruit producers.



Summer Fruit
Bayberries (M/F)
Blackberries/Raspberries
Blueberries
Cherries
Chokecherries
Gooseberries
Grapes
Honeysuckle
Red mulberry (X)
Serviceberries



Fall/Winter Fruit
American holly (M/F)
Barberries
Bittersweet
Blue holly (M/F)
Crabapples
Dogwoods
Eastern redbud
Euonymus (Burning Bush)
Hawthorns
Red cedar
Sumacs
Viburnums
Virginia creeper



Notes:
(M/F) = both male and female plant needed for flowers/fruit
(X) = very messy tree/shrub, keep away from patios, driveways, sidewalks

Resources:
Wildbird Magazine 12/99 "Berry Merry Birds" & 09/00 "The Fruit and Fat Factor"
Birder's World Magazine 06/00 "Hedgerows for Berry Birds"
Bird Watcher's Digest [Creating Your Backyard Bird Garden](#)
Donald & Lillian Stokes [Bird Gardening Book](#)
Denny McKeown [The Gardening Book for Ohio](#)

Species Specifics: Eastern Screech-Owl (*Otus asio*)

Have you ever heard an eerie whinny-call or spooky monotone tremolo in the middle of the night or have you seen a small owl face peeking out of a tree hole or nesting box during the day? That sound and that face belong to the eastern screech-owl. This 9" owl has yellow eyes, occurs in red or gray morphs, and is the only small eastern owl with ear tufts.

"This 9" owl has yellow eyes and...ear tufts..."

The screech-owl's range can vary from 10-100 acres depending on the concentration of food, which consists of small birds, insects, and rodents. Cavities, up to 30' above the ground in trees, birdhouses, or buildings, are not just for nesting: Screech-owls roost in nest holes and because they are preyed upon by larger owls at night, they cache food and eat in them, too.

Males start to defend one or more nesting sites within their range in late winter. Courtship begins in late winter or early spring when the male

screech-owl leaves food in the nest hole or on a nearby tree limb in order to attract a female.

In early to mid-spring, 4-6 white eggs are incubated for about 30 days by the female only. For the first 2 weeks after hatching, the female broods the young and the male feeds them. During the third and fourth week both parents feed the young as many as 10-70 times per night depending on the size of the meal (insects to small rodents). The young fledge at about 4 weeks but cannot fly; they climb about the tree using their bill and talons. After another week or so the young start following their parents around, gradually learning to hunt and feed on their own. The family stays together until fall when the young disperse in all different directions but usually not more than a mile from their original nest hole.

The adult pair stay on their range and may continue to use the same cavity for up to seven years!



(Photo courtesy of Marc Alverson)

Bird Flu and You

With frequent media coverage raising concerns about avian influenza, Cornell University's Lab of Ornithology has compiled information to help us better understand the virus and assess the threat. The following is the summary from the report I found on the Lab's website (www.birds.cornell.edu/PFW/News/avian_flu.htm):

- ◆ The "bird flu" currently found in Asia and a few locations in Europe is caused by the H5N1 strain of the avian influenza virus. Approximately 60 human deaths in Southeast Asia have been attributed to the virus since 1998. Most of these victims were in close contact with infected poultry.
- ◆ As of October 2005, no cases of avian influenza (H5N1) have been detected in wild birds, domestic poultry, or people in North America.
- ◆ The current risks to human health are extremely low because the virus is not easily spread between people. However, if the virus mutates into a form that can be transmitted between humans, the risk of contracting the



bird flu from other people would be far greater than the risk of contracting the virus from wild or domestic birds.

- ◆ Although exposure to the bird flu is currently not a threat in North America, people can contract other illnesses from sick birds and their fecal material. Avoid handling sick birds and always wash your hands with soap and water after filling bird feeders.
- ◆ **The final word: There is no need to stop watching, feeding, or attracting birds to your yard because of the bird flu!**

"There is no need to stop watching, feeding, or attracting birds..."

Happy Mother's Day!



30% OFF
any one regular priced item
(Coupon expires 05/14/06)

What's new ?!

☺ Mark your calendars for this year's Summer Sidewalk Sale to be held Father's Day weekend, June 16-18. Customers indicated that they wanted this event (formerly the first weekend of August) held earlier in the summer! We are happy to make this change for you!!

☺ Check out these new products, perfect for Mother's Day:
>Flower Pot Cakes—ready-to-bake Gingerbread cake with wooden spoon, Chocolate Lover's cake with wire whisk, Happy Birthday cake with candles.
>Beautiful T-shirts in darling gift boxes.
>Stained wooden Dcuks & verdigris or bronze Dcuks.
>Potting Shed Creations garden seeds—Garden-in-a-bag, pocket gardens, garden sprinkles, and hummingbird, butterfly, & songbird scatter gardens.
>Fantastic new garden stakes, some are actually rain gauges.
>Casual Gourmet trays, placemats, napkins, tumblers with Susan Bourdet's "Spring Garden" design—just beautiful.

Dear BirdGal

Dear BirdGal, Now that the weather is warmer should I stop feeding the birds? Heather

Dear Heather, Don't let this warmer weather deceive you into thinking the birds are now able to "fend for themselves"; they are most vulnerable in late spring and early summer. Birds' energy needs are increasing as the nesting season approaches and natural food supplies have diminished significantly; all the fruits, nuts, and seeds that matured last fall were eaten during the winter months and we're weeks away from a plentiful supply of insects. Many of my customers prefer to feed the birds year round so they can enjoy their pretty colors and beautiful songs and calls all year. Besides, if you stop feeding the birds in the summer they will find birdfeeders in someone else's yard (MINE!!!) and it will be that much harder for you to get them back next fall. So...do yourself a favor, feed and enjoy the birds all year.



Bird Behavior: Songs and Calls

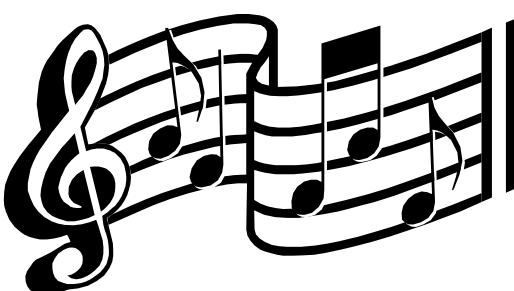
There are two types of vocalization that birds use to communicate: songs and calls.

A song is the repeated vocal display given by males predominantly during the breeding season; song is used to declare territory and to attract a mate. The Carolina chickadee's song sounds like "fee-bee fee-bay". The tufted titmouse sings "peter, peter, peter". The male hormone starts the seasonal cycle of song; weather and length of day trigger the production of the hormone. In some species, cardinals, bluebirds, and song sparrows for instance, the females also sing. In other species, like hawks, owls, jays, and crows, courtship calls replace song. Woodpeckers don't sing either, but declare their territory and attract mates

by drumming on trees...or the loudest downspout on your house!

Calls are the vocal displays used by adult birds for communicating alarm, distress, threats, and assembly. The most recognizable call of the Carolina chickadee is "chick-a-dee-dee-dee". This call is used in the fall and winter when the chickadees are in flocks to keep the members in touch with each other. And who hasn't heard the raucous "jay" call when blue jays encounter an owl in the woods or the cat in your backyard! This call is also recognized and responded to by other bird species.

Most birds use call notes year round to communicate with each other; songbirds use their songs for territorial advertisement and courtship.



"...two types of vocalization that birds use to communicate..."



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INSIDE:

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Did you know?

- ? Most backyard birds are nesting or will be soon; help them find nesting material by putting out short pieces (6-8") of yarn or string and the fur from your pet's brush.
- ? Tree swallows often use bluebird nest boxes.
- ? Because their lifespan is so short, most backyard birds are only 10 or 11 months old when they breed for the first time.
- ? Red-winged blackbirds are polygamous; males can defend 3-15 female mates at a time.
- ? The brown thrasher is a magnificent singer—researchers have recorded more than 3,000 song types.
- ? House wrens have been known to peck holes in the eggs of other nesting birds when nesting territories become too crowded.
- ? The rose-breasted grosbeak's nest is so loosely constructed

you can see through it from below.

- ? Orioles weave a basket-like nest; their favorite nesting trees are willows, elms, maples, and apples.
- ? Some male birds never let their mates out of their sight during the breeding season; this protects her from the unwanted advances of rival males.
- ? There are 100 billion birds in the world! About 7 billion live in the U.S. during the breeding season.
- ? Male house wrens build false nests in several different houses. When the female arrives, she chooses the house she wants and rebuilds the nest.
- ? When hovering, hummingbirds beat their wings about 55 times per second. During courtship, males can beat their wings 200 times per second.



Things to do!

- ✓ Hummingbirds are on the way; you should have your feeders cleaned and hanging out waiting for their arrival.
- ✓ It's also time to put out orange halves or grape jelly for the orioles that will be arriving soon.
- ✓ Keep birdbaths clean—scrub with water and 10% bleach. Rinse well!
- ✓ If you find a nestling out of its nest, try to put it back. The adults will continue to care for it; it is only a myth that your scent will keep them away.
- ✓ If you find a fledgling (feathered, wing-flapping baby bird) in your yard, leave it alone. The parents will continue to feed it.

- ✓ To attract birds throughout the year, include the following features in your birdfeeding station: a hanging feeder with black oil sunflower seed, a ground or tray feeder with mixed seed, a finch tube with nyjer seed, a suet feeder and/or peanut feeder, and a water feature.
- ✓ Are grackles and blackbirds a nuisance, overrunning your feeders? Switch to safflower seed. Songbirds readily accept safflower—grackles and blackbirds don't like it! (Most squirrels don't like it either.)
- ✓ Sparrows, thrashers, catbirds, and cardinals like brush piles. Build one near your feeders.