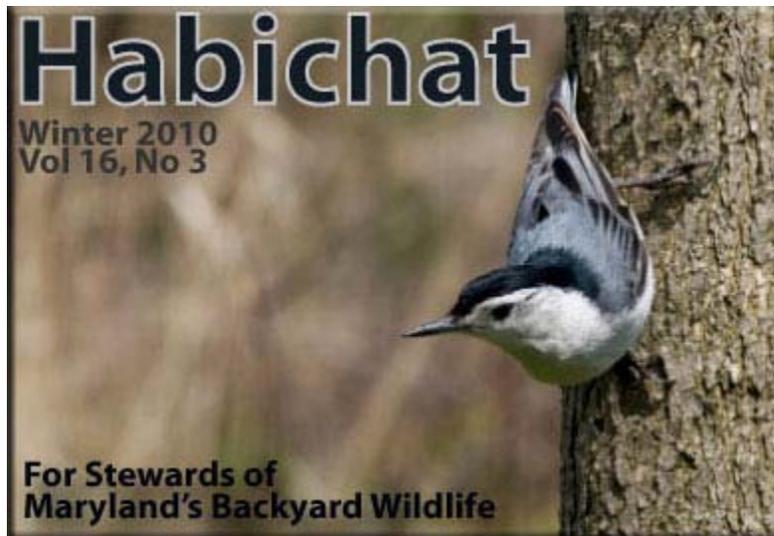


## Maryland's Wild Acres



**HABITAT - the arrangement of food, water, cover, and space - IS THE KEY.**

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Winter Bird Feeding

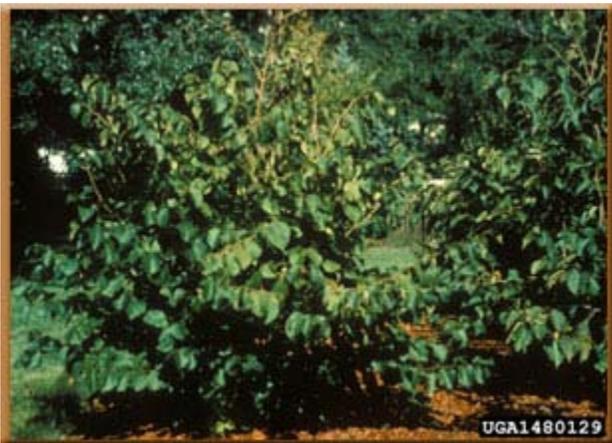
Backyard Wildlife Fun for Kids

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## Native Plant Profile.....American Hazelnut (*Corylus Americana*)



**Common Name:** American Hazelnut

**Family:** Betulaceae, the Birches

**General Description:** A deciduous multi-stemmed tall shrub. Young branches have a pubescent look which turns brown as it matures.

**Leaves:** Simple deciduous, heart-shaped leaves with an alternate leaf arrangement. Leaf can grow 3-6 inches long and 1.5-2.5 inches wide with a serrated leaf base. Dark green color in the winter, changing to copper-red in the fall.

**Flowers/Fruit:** Flowers are yellowish brown and flowers in early spring. Produces edible brown nuts (1/2 inch diameter) enclosed in a hairy, leaf-like husk with ragged edges.

**Height:** 8-15 feet tall; spread is slightly greater than the height.

**Growth:** Fast growth rate

**Soil/Sun:** Grows best on rich, moist, well-drained soils. Shade tolerant, it can grow under a light of 15% or less.

**Importance to Wildlife:** The seeds/nuts are a good food source for a variety of wildlife including bobwhite quail, ruffed grouse, blue jays, squirrels, and white-tailed deer. The dense, low growth habitat provides cover and nesting sites for many wildlife species.



### Did you know?

- The American Hazelnut has been cultivated as an ornamental since 1798.
- The hazelnut was used by Native Americans to flavor soups.
- The sweet nuts may be eaten raw or ground and made into a cakelike bread.



## Maryland Wildlife.....White-breasted Nuthatch (*Sitta carolinensis*)

**Common Name:** White-breasted Nuthatch



**General Description:** Like all Nuthatches, they climb down trees headfirst. This small but stocky songbird is the most widespread species of nuthatches and is known by its black cap (gray if female) and a chestnut lower belly. The upperparts are pale blue-gray, and the face and underparts are white.

**Song:** A rapid series of low, nasal, whistled notes on one pitch: whi whi whi whi whi whi or who who who who etc.

**Range:** Found year-round in Maryland; from Canada to Mexico.

**Reproduction:** The White-breasted Nuthatch is monogamous. Females will build their nest on their own, lining a nest cavity with fur, bark, or dirt and then filling it with fine grass or other soft materials. They will build their nests in natural tree cavities in either deciduous or coniferous trees. They will sometimes use nest boxes. Clutch sizes range from 5-9 eggs.

**Habitat:** The White-breasted Nuthatch can be found in forests, woodlots, groves, river woods, shade trees, and will visit birdfeeders. They are birds of mature forest and are more often found in deciduous than coniferous forests, though you can find them in either.

**Food:** The nuthatch is omnivorous eating mainly insects, including the weevil larvae, wood-boring beetle larvae, stinkbugs and spiders. They also eat seeds and nuts including acorns and sunflower seeds. At birdfeeders they'll eat sunflower seeds, peanuts, suet, and peanut butter.

**Interesting Fact:** In winter the White-breasted Nuthatch will join foraging flocks led by chickadees or titmice. This may be because it makes food easier to find. Also foraging in flocks allows more birds to keep an eye out for predators.

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***Now is the time to be thinking about our fine-feathered friends who remain in our area for the winter.***

Providing food and water will attract a variety of birds during the winter months.

As winter approaches many birds change their feeding habits. Those who depended mainly on insects may start to eat berries to supplement their diets. They will start looking for reliable food sources during these difficult months.

If you feed birds during the winter months it is important to provide high calorie and high fat foods. Oil sunflower is a great overall seed to offer in the winter. It has a high calorie/ounce ratio due to its high fat and protein content and its relatively thin shell. They also have twice the calories per pound than striped sunflower seeds. Suet is also a great food - high in fat and calories. Peanuts are also another great option for birds in the winter.

Remember, when you start feeding birds in the winter you will be taking on responsibility for those birds. They will come to depend on you since natural food is limited in the winter.



**Black Oil Sunflower Seeds  
have twice the calories per  
pound than striped sunflower  
seeds.**



## Pruning Trees & Shrubs in Late Winter

Trees and shrubs will be healthier after a good pruning. Pruning enables a plant to produce more leaves, nuts, fruits, or flowers, which will provide wildlife with more food and shelter. Shrubs and trees that produce berries fair better if they are pruned during their dormant time. This is late winter or early spring.

Diseases which affect trees and shrubs are less active during the colder months of late winter.

A good rule to remember is it is best to prune a tree or a shrub when it is neither flowering nor producing fruits.

Pruning in the later winter can also help you create branch interest in the design for your backyard wildlife. Trees and shrubs have a natural shape that they could grow into if they have perfect conditions of light and water.

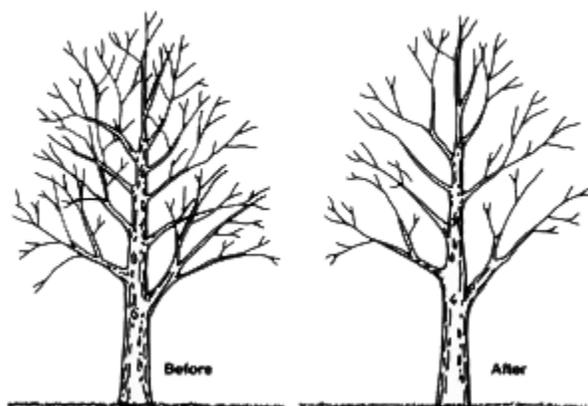
However, perfect conditions are rarely found and shrubs and trees grow leggy and unbalanced in response to lack of light, or too much moisture. Thinning, (pruning) helps bring these plants back to their

natural shape instead of always doing the traditional hedging of the plant. Even topiary, pruning plants into formal shapes, can be used to recreate the shape of a shrub that you saw in its natural shape in the wild.

Ice storms can damage long, leggy branches. Pruning produces stronger stockier stems and branches that can tolerate ice damage. Prune summer – flowering shrubs, which flower on new wood in late winter and early spring.



### Crown Thinning



For the details on what to prune and how to prune check out our fact sheet:  
[www.dnr.state.md.us/wildlife/Habitat/WildAcres/waprune.asp](http://www.dnr.state.md.us/wildlife/Habitat/WildAcres/waprune.asp).

An additional bonus for wildlife: Take the twigs and branches from your pruning and build bush piles for additional shelter for wildlife in late winter [www.dnr.state.md.us/wildlife/wildlife/Habitat/WildAcres/wabrush.asp](http://www.dnr.state.md.us/wildlife/wildlife/Habitat/WildAcres/wabrush.asp)

If you would like more information on tree and shrub pruning, contact the Maryland Forest Service, [www.dnr.state.md.us/forests/](http://www.dnr.state.md.us/forests/) or the Home and Garden Information center of the Maryland Cooperative Extension, University of Maryland, (online Bulletin 150)

Pruning Ornamental Trees & Shrubs: <http://extension.umd.edu/publications/PDFs/EB150.pdf>

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## Backyard Wildlife Fun for Kids

During the doldrums of winter when your children or grandchildren are looking for something to do, let them make bird treats for a fun backyard wildlife project. Making bird treats is an easy project for children to do under the supervision of adults. These treats can be hung outside on any tree or shrub with sturdy branches.

If you're ready to recycle your cranberry and popcorn garland from the Christmas tree, just drape the garland outside on branches. Other garlands can be made strung with large raisins and other chunks of dried fruits and peanuts – in-the –shell. Children love making peanut butter and jelly pine cones and orange treat cups. And for the bakers in the family, you can make cranberry hasty pudding cakes.

### Peanut Butter and Jelly Pine Cones



the  
pine  
of  
peanut  
butter  
on  
pine  
cones  
on  
one  
pile.  
Smear  
jelly  
on  
the  
other.  
Hang  
on  
tree.

Pine cones  
String or yarn  
Peanut butter  
Apple or grape jelly

Tie the string or yarn to the tops of pine cones for hanging. Divide the cones into two piles. Smear globs

### Orange Treat Cups

Oranges (grapefruits and/or coconuts can also be used)  
Chopped nutmeats (peanuts, black walnuts, pecans, almonds, coconut)

Fresh fruit cut up, fruit cocktail or dried fruit  
Black oil sunflower seeds

String or yarn



Cut oranges, grapefruits, or coconuts in half to serve as the treat cup. Scoop out insides and reserve. Poke three holes near the top for the string to serve as a hanger. Fill one cup with nutmeat mixture. Fill a second cup with fruit mixture. Fill a third with sunflower seeds. Repeat as necessary and hang.

### Cranberry Hasty Pudding Cakes

#### Ingredients

2-2½ c. chopped or ground fresh suet  
½ c. sunflower or other salad oil  
1c. white or brown sugar  
2 c. yellow cornmeal (yellow has vitamin A)  
3 c. water, more if needed  
2 c. cranberries  
1c. peanut hearts or nutmeats  
1 ½ c. crumbled dog biscuits



In a big pot, combine all ingredients in order listed except dog biscuits and mix well. Cook over medium heat, stirring constantly until thick (about 5 minutes). Remove from heat and stir in dog biscuits. Mold into cakes. Chill. Place chilled cakes in onion bags and hang from sturdy branches.

**HINT:** Bluebirds don't often visit feeders but are more inclined during cold weather. Peanut hearts, pecan meats, suet, raisins, currents and baked apple are good foods to offer.

If you enjoyed this issue of Habichat, you might want to check out our [Online Habichat Archive](#) and the [List of Habichat Articles](#) by Topic.

### **Acknowledgements:**

- Photograph of American Hazelnut Tree, courtesy of Steve Hurst @ USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database.
  - Photographs of hazelnut catkins covered in snow and hazelnuts, I-Stock Images.
  - Photographs of White-breasted Nuthatch, I-Stock images.
  - Winter Bird Feeding photo of male cardinal on feeder, i-Stock image
  - Tree Crown Cleaning, Illustration courtesy of Bryan Kotwica, Bugwood.org
  - Photo of Proper pruning cut on small branch, courtesy of Joseph O'Brien, USDA Forest Service, Bugwood.org
  - Crown Thinning, Illustration courtesy of Bryan Kotwica, Bugwood.org
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### **We want to hear from you!**

Letters, e-mail, photos, drawings. Let us know how successful you are as you create wildlife habitat on your property.

### **Write to Me!**

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