



Attract Birds, Not Bears

You don't have to choose between watching birds and being BearWise. Just think outside the bird feeder, and you'll discover how easy it is to invite in birds without attracting bears.



Bird feeders are bear magnets. So many calories, so little work. And so easy to find. Teaching bears to rely on people for food creates big problems with no easy solutions.

What Attracts Birds?

Natural Foods • Shelter • Water • Safe Nesting Sites

Create a Natural Oasis

No matter how much or how little space you have, you can add features that will attract birds. Using native plants commonly found in your area, including trees, flowers and bushes, provides proven food sources and shelter from predators and bad weather. An added benefit for people: native plants attract more bird species and are often easier to grow and care for than non-native plants.

TIP: Avoid pesticides; many birds rely on insects for a big part of their diet.

Grow Your Own Bird Food

Sunflowers and marigolds are just two of the many common flowers that produce seeds birds like to eat. Colorful tubular flowers are Mother Nature's always-filled hummingbird feeders. Many bushes and trees attract insects and produce seeds while also providing safe places for birds to perch and nest. Containers, window boxes and hanging baskets make it easy to offer up a smorgasbord for birds, butterflies and pollinators.

CAUTION: Most fruits, nuts and berries attract bears and other wildlife. If bears are common in your area, it's best to avoid planting them. Even if bears are only occasional visitors, you should plant well away from the house, pick up fallen fruit daily or pick before fully ripe, and consider electric fencing around fruit and nut-bearing trees.



Many species of hummingbirds, butterflies and pollinators are attracted to brightly colored flowers. Ask your local native plant nursery for suggestions on what grows well in your area.

Offer Shelter and Perches

Birds need places to perch and to hide from predators. Small branching trees and dense bushes provide perches and shelter. A colorful wind chime, sculpture or other decoration can also provide a handy perch.

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Turn on the Faucet

All birds need fresh water for drinking and bathing and are always on the lookout for dependable sources. The sound of moving water is highly attractive. Adding a simple bird bath, hanging water feeder, fountain or a small pool with a bubbler is sure to bring in birds. Pea gravel in the bottom of your bird bath makes it easier for birds to use. Adding a few flat stones to a small pool also creates a handy spot for bathing.

Help Birds Stay in Great Shape

Birds take dust baths to remove excess oil and parasites; you can make a simple dust bath using fine sand surrounded by pavers or landscaping timbers. Position it near cover so birds are safe from predators. Birds don't have teeth; their gizzards digest food and need grit to work properly. Birds will appreciate a corner with sand and small bits of gravel and stone.

Benefits of Kicking the Bird-Feeder Habit

- A bird-friendly habitat attracts many more species than a bird feeder, including butterflies, pollinators and birds that don't visit feeders.
- Snakes, cats, foxes and birds of prey won't have a place to hang out and eat your birds.
- Skunks, mice, rats, raccoons and bears won't come to chow down your expensive birdseed.
- By creating year-round beauty and bird-friendly features, you'll always have something to watch.
- You will be helping to keep bears and other wildlife wild.

Provide Safe Places for Birds to Nest

Many cavity-nesting birds, including wrens, bluebirds, chickadees and some warblers, will use nest boxes because they resemble natural cavities in trees. (If it's safe to leave standing dead trees on your property, you'll provide a home for a variety of cavity-nesters.)

Summer is a great time to scope out locations and buy or make boxes so you're ready to put them up in late winter. Then you'll be all set to enjoy watching courting, nesting and baby birds growing up come spring.

Nesting boxes come in a variety of shapes and sizes designed to make the perfect home for many different species.



It is easy to attract and monitor birds with Gilbertson-style PVC nest boxes. (Photo: Alan Olander)

HELPFUL RESOURCES

- The Audubon Society's native plants database contains thousands of plants; just enter your zip code and you'll get a selection of best choices for your area, along with photos and local and online resources. Your local chapter of the Audubon Society may be able to offer in-person expert guidance. www.audubon.org/native-plants
- The Pollinator Partnership provides regional planting guides and recommendations. www.pollinator.org/guides
- Visit NestWatch.org for help finding the right boxes for the bird species nesting in your area.
- Contact your county's **Cooperative Extension Service**.



Learn More:
BearWise.org

