

Bird Town News

Creating Bird-Friendly Habitat in Your Backyard

New Britain Borough became a Bird Town in 2014. The mission of PA Audubon's Bird Town program is to "create a culture of conservation *where everyone is a potential steward of nature in their own backyard.*"

What You Can Do

The power of the Bird Town program comes from individual property owners taking action to create healthy bird habitat on their own landscapes. Specifically, this means:

- Planting more native plants and fewer non-native species.
- Removing alien invasive plant species that crowd out native plants.
- Eliminating the use of pesticides.
- Providing for and protecting the birds that visit your yard.

Why Native Plants?

To bring more birds into your yard, the single best thing you can do is plant native grasses, perennials, shrubs, vines, and trees. Native plants provide food for native insects, including pollinators, that can't survive on non-native plants. Natives also serve as host plants for butterflies and moths that only lay their eggs on specific native plants. More native plants mean more native insects and since many birds eat insects and almost *all* birds feed insects to their young, fewer native insects simply mean fewer birds.

Native plants are also easier and cheaper to maintain than non-natives. They don't need fertilizers or extra water because they're adapted to local conditions. Pesticides aren't

required because native plants have defenses against native insects. Natives also provide four seasons of interest and as much beauty in the landscape as the non-native ornamentals so common to much of suburbia today.

What to Plant?

Here are a few of the best native trees and shrubs that provide food, cover, and nesting sites for birds: Oaks (Red, white, pin), Maples, Black Gum, Dogwoods (Flowering, red-osier, alternate-leaved, gray, silky), Cherries (Black, pin, chokecherry), Holly (American, winterberry, inkberry), White Pine, Eastern Red Cedar, Birches, Serviceberries, Blueberries, Elderberries Viburnums (Arrowwood, cranberry, maple-leaved, blackhaw), and Northern Bayberry.

Many of these trees and shrubs produce berries for birds. Try to plant a mix of plants that provide fruit throughout the seasons, especially in winter when food is scarce. And be sure to include evergreens in your landscape that provide winter cover.

What Else Can You Do For Birds?

- Provide a source of water in which birds can bathe and drink.
- Create a brush pile to provide shelter.
- Rake leaves under shrubs to create mulch and natural feeding areas for ground-feeding birds.
- Reduce the size of your lawn and replace it with native meadow plants and taller grasses.
- Stop using lawn chemicals and pesticides, which kill millions of birds every year. Remember, no insects mean no birds!
- Install nesting boxes.
- Keep your cats indoors! Hundreds of millions of birds are killed by cats each year.

“Healthy Yard Pledge”

As part of the Bird Town program, property owners are encouraged to take the “Healthy Yard Pledge.” You can take this pledge online at pa.audubon.org/pledge.

Bird Habitat Recognition Program

Property owners who create bird- friendly habitat are also encouraged to register their property with PA Audubon and join its Bird Habitat Network. After you register your property you’ll be provided with this yard sign.



To register your property in the “Bird Habitat Recognition Program,” or simply learn more about the Bird Town program, go to <http://pa.audubon.org/bird-town>. There is also information about the Bird Town program on the Borough website under “Committees / Parks and Recreation.”