

What You Can Do to Help Birds

The simple things you do every day, from the cup of coffee you drink in the morning to the lights you turn on at night, all have an effect on birds. Our everyday activities impact birds and their habitats. Human activity can deplete their food supplies, create new dangers for them to face, and present them with many challenges.

If we want to protect the birds around us and preserve their future, we need to begin to conduct our lives with consciousness about how our actions affect the world around us—not only the people, but the wildlife, the air, the water, and the land. Below are a few things you can do to help ensure healthy bird populations for future generations.

Drink shade-grown coffee. Coffee produced from shade-loving varieties means wintering habitat can be preserved for key migrant species such as the Cerulean Warbler. Many coffee companies now provide a range of coffee products that are shade-grown and friendly for birds. Ask your local grocery or coffee shop to stock a shade-grown alternative.

Reduce your use of pesticides. Not only can they be toxic to birds, but they kill the insects that birds eat. Weed instead of spraying! If you must use pesticides, look for biopesticide alternatives. Prevent pests from entering your home by replacing worn weather stripping and screens, and filling in gaps in floors and around windows and plumbing fixtures.

Keep your cat indoors. Even well-fed, cats kill birds. Keep cats inside. Not only will the birds be safer, your cat will be healthier and safer, too.

Plan your yard for diversity. Instead of a lawn with no benefit to wildlife, plant a mixture of native grasses, flowers, and shrubs. Use native species—birds like these best and they are best adapted to where you live. Your state or local native plant society can help you choose species that will work best for you.

Prevent window strikes. Hundreds of millions of birds die each year as a result of hitting windows on every type of building. To reduce night lighting that interferes with migration, ask your office or apartment building manager to turn off exterior and interior lights during spring and fall migration. Place bird feeders within three feet of your windows. Break up the reflections of habitat in your windows by covering the outside of them with taut screens or window film.

Donate your old binoculars to conservation. If you have any old birding equipment just lying around, not being used, you can help our long-distance migrants and rare Latin American endemics by donating your old gear to biologists across the hemisphere through the Birders Exchange program or the Optics for Tropics program.

Reduce your carbon footprint. Do your part to help reduce our reliance on fossil fuels that cause global warming. Use an electric lawnmower; carpool, bicycle, or use public transport when possible; turn off lights when not in use; use low energy bulbs and Energy Star-rated appliances; call your power company and ask if you can buy your energy from renewable sources. Help organizations purchase conservation areas and forests that provide valuable habitat for birds, and helps lower atmospheric CO² levels.

Take action for birds and familiarize yourself with contemporary bird conservation issues. Knowing the issues will help you let your elected officials know which policy and programs can help bird conservation.

Participate in volunteer monitoring activities that help to document the status and trends of bird populations. There are many opportunities in this area, depending on your level of interest, ability to commit time, and level of expertise in bird identification.

Join a bird conservation organization. As individuals, there is only so much we can do for birds. But as a part of an organization with the expertise, broad reach, and partnership capacity of organization, you can make a difference for wild birds and their habitats locally, nationally, and internationally.

--from <http://www.stateofthebirds.org/>