



# Ways Citizens Can Contribute to the Conservation of Wild Birds

*International Migratory Bird Day (IMBD), held annually on the second Saturday in May, is an invitation to celebrate and support migratory bird conservation.*

## **Create Backyard Habitat**

Creating backyard habitat is something nearly everyone can do.

**Provide food.** Provide plenty of natural bird food by planting native plants that bear small berries or that support ample insect populations. A bird feeder is also useful for attracting many birds. Position feeders to avoid deadly window collisions.

**Plant shelter.** Birds require dense cover, like shrubs and evergreen trees, especially during winter.

**Furnish water.** Commercial bird baths, small pools, and natural ponds are sure-fire ways to attract birds, especially if water is dripping or moving.

**Supply nest sites.** Put up a birdhouse for cavity-nesting birds like chickadees and wrens, and platforms for robins and barn swallows.

For more information on creating habitat, contact your state wildlife agency or National Wildlife Federation's Backyard Wildlife Habitat Program at 703/790-4000 or [www.nwf.org/habitats](http://www.nwf.org/habitats).

## **Think Before You Spray**

Each year 4 million tons of pesticides are applied in the United States exposing 672 million birds to the harmful effects of these chemicals. One-tenth of those exposed, or 67 million birds, are estimated to die as an immediate result. Before using pesticides consider the following alternatives.

**Exercise prevention first.** For example, drain away standing water in your yard; elevate stacks of wood off the ground and move them away from your house; use naturally pest- and disease-resistant native plants; and rotate vegetables in your garden from year to year.

**Use non-chemical controls.** Mulch, spade, hoe or pull weeds in the garden.

Frequently mow and water (if supplies permit) your grass to encourage a resistant, healthy lawn.

**Use low-impact pesticides.** If you must use chemicals, use the most specific chemical pesticides for your need. Always follow label instructions.

**Learn more.** Many sources of information on pesticides and plant care can be found at bookstores and libraries, or on the Internet. Contact your county agricultural extension agent with any questions.

For more information on pesticides, contact the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's Division of Environmental Contaminants at 703/358-2148 or [www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov).

## **Be a Responsible Cat Owner**

Biologists estimate that free-ranging cats kill hundreds of millions of birds each year. The number of pet cats in the United States has grown from 30 million in 1970 to 60 million in 1990. In addition, millions of stray and feral cats roam our cities, suburbs, and rural areas.

**Remember cats need care all their lives.** Keep only as many cats as you can manage. If you don't want your cat anymore, do not release it into a rural area. Contact your local animal shelter or welfare organization instead.

**Keep your cat indoors whenever possible.** It's safer for your cat as well as for wildlife.

**Spay or neuter your cat.** There are millions of kittens and cats already born that need homes and human care.

**Locate bird feeders away from heavy cover** so cats cannot surprise unsuspecting birds.

For more information on bird-friendly cat ownership, contact the American Bird

**IMBD Information**  
web <http://birds.fws.gov/imbd.html>  
phone 703/358-2318

**IMBD Sales**  
web <http://www.BirdDay.org>  
phone 1-866/334-3330

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Conservancy's Cats Indoors! Campaign, at 202/778-9666 or [www.abcbirds.org](http://www.abcbirds.org).

### Buy Shade-grown Coffee

You can help conserve vital rainforest habitat and protect more than 150 forest-dependent migratory bird species just by drinking shade-grown coffee.

In many parts of the neotropics, shade-grown coffee farms are the only forest-like habitat remaining. Due to the increasing demand for coffee worldwide, many of these traditional farms have been converted to "sun coffee" plantations, which are devoid of trees.

Unfortunately, sun-grown coffee, while yielding higher short-term output, requires higher levels of fertilization and plant replacement, suffers increased risk of failure due to drought, leads to soil damage, and means the destruction of the forest a long-term resource for native peoples. Loss of the canopy also means loss of habitat for migratory birds; studies have found that the diversity of migratory birds plummets when coffee plantations are converted from shade to sun.

When purchasing coffee, check the label or ask your grocer for certified shade-grown coffee.

For more information on shade-grown coffee, visit the Coffee Section on the IMBD website at <http://birds.fws.gov/imbd.html>, or Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center's Coffee Corner at [www.si.edu/smbc/coffee.htm](http://www.si.edu/smbc/coffee.htm).

### Buy a Duck Stamp

One of the easiest and most effective actions anyone can take for birds is to purchase a Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp, commonly known as the Duck Stamp. This stamp, required for hunters of migratory birds, but also popular with stamp collectors, art enthusiasts, and wildlife fans, is available for \$15 from national wildlife refuges, post offices, and Wal-Marts, K-Marts, and other sporting goods stores around the country. Ninety-eight cents of every dollar raised by Duck Stamp sales are used to buy wetland habitat, which benefits migratory waterfowl and a host of other bird and wildlife species.

To request more information on the Duck Stamp, call the U.S. Fish & Wildlife message line at 800/344-WILD, or visit <http://duckstamps.fws.gov>.

### Get Involved in Community Planning

Community decision-makers are usually receptive to input from citizens, especially if they have a good understanding of the issues.

Listen to what your county commissioners or land use planners are saying about future use and zoning of lands in your area. Make sure those plans consider the interests of wildlife, as well as other members of the community. Remember that "green space" raises all property values and improves the quality of life for everyone.

### Join a Conservation Group

A good way to become more informed about birds is to join a related organization; options span a broad spectrum, from animal welfare leagues to sporting groups to garden clubs. Simple interaction with other people who share your basic interests is likely to give you a more informed viewpoint about bird conservation and amplify your opinions.

### Volunteer at a Refuge or Park

Make a truly significant contribution by volunteering at a wildlife refuge, park, or other wildlife sanctuary. You may be able to help with litter control, trail maintenance, guiding tours for civic or school groups, developing a bird or tree list, or starting a nest-box program. Few facilities would turn down an offer of some additional help.

Join or start a support or "Friends" group at your nearest national wildlife refuge or park. These groups provide a consistent source of volunteer support. The help you provide can make a real contribution to the future of wild birds.

For more information about "Friends" groups, contact U.S. Fish & Wildlife at 703/358-1744.

### Participate in Citizen Science

Help scientists track the status of bird populations. Participate in Christmas Bird Counts, the Great Backyard Bird Count, the North American Migration Count, Project Feeder Watch, and other projects.

To find out more about bird science you can do, visit <http://birdsource.org>, a website managed by the National Audubon Society and the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology.



*There are many simple ways you can help protect wild birds.*

### Donate Your Old Binoculars

Give new life to your old binoculars by passing them on to new birding enthusiasts. If your old binoculars are in good condition or only need a little work, they can be refurbished and given to a budding birdwatcher.

Check with local nature centers or bird groups for binocular recycling programs. The Birder's Exchange at [www.americanbirding.org/consbex.htm](http://www.americanbirding.org/consbex.htm), distributes binoculars and other gear internationally.

### Celebrate International Migratory Bird Day!

Share your interest, enjoyment, and concern with others. Find and attend an IMBD event in your community, or better yet, start something yourself. Integrate IMBD into a conversation, lecture, class, newsletter, or exhibit; host a bird walk or shade-grown coffee hour; or purchase IMBD products for use or sale.

Celebrating IMBD is a good way to generate community spirit, ensure a better environment, and raise awareness about and promote the conservation of migratory birds and the habitats they need to survive.

For more information on IMBD, call 202/358-2318 or visit <http://birds.fws.gov/imbd.html>. To purchase IMBD products, call 1-866/334-3330 or visit <http://www.BirdDay.org>.