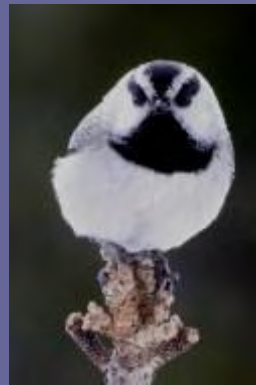


“BIRDS IN YOUR BACKYARD”

RESIDENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAM SERIES



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WHY IS WILD COLORADO A GOOD PLACE FOR BIRDS?

- Little bit N, E, S, & W
- Elevational diversity
- Many habitat/vegetation types
- Varied topography (plains/desert all the way to mountain tops above timberline)
- Location in relation to migration flyways and weather systems
- Plenty of public land
- 1000's of miles of riparian habitat

DIVERSITY OF HABITAT IS WHAT
MAKES THE WILDS OF COLORADO A
GREAT PLACE FOR BIODIVERSITY.

IF YOUR FORT COLLINS BACKYARD
MIMICS THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS
PRESENT IN WILD HABITATS, THE
POTENTIAL FOR A VARIETY OF
WILDLIFE IS VERY GOOD.

WHAT MAKES A “HABITAT”?

- FOOD
- WATER
- COVER
- [NESTING SHELTER]



The combination of these elements, in large measure, will determine the numbers and kinds of wildlife on your property

CATEGORIES OF BIRDS

- **RESIDENT** (here all year, usually requires a food switch from summer to winter)
- **MIGRANT** (usually only seen during spring and autumn while passing through)
- **SUMMER ONLY** (species that nest in our area and go somewhere else the rest of the year)
- **WINTER ONLY** (species that only occur here during the cold months, usually breed at high elevation or north/east of Colorado)

EXAMPLES OF “RESIDENTS” (birds seen year ‘round in FC)

- Great Horned Owl
- Red-tailed Hawk
- House Finch
- Northern Flicker
- Song Sparrow
- Belted Kingfisher
- European Starling
- Black-capped Chickadee



THE URBAN LEGEND



THE URBAN LEGEND



[DON'T TELL ANYBODY YOU SAW THE "FIRST ONE OF SPRING" –
THEY'RE HERE ALL THE TIME]

EXAMPLES OF “MIGRANTS” (within the city limits of FC)

- Rufous Hummingbird
- Wilson’s Warbler
- Western Tanager
- White-faced Ibis
- Snow Goose
- Sandhill Crane
- Swainson’s Thrush



EXAMPLES OF “SUMMER ONLY” BIRDS IN FORT COLLINS



- Western Meadowlark
- Bullock's Oriole
- House Wren
- Yellow Warbler
- E. and W. Kingbirds
- Osprey
- Warbling Vireo

EXAMPLES OF “WINTER ONLY” BIRDS IN FORT COLLINS

- Bohemian Waxwing
- Bald Eagle*
- Cassin’s Finch
- Golden-crowned Kinglet
- Northern Shrike
- Merlin
- Mountain Chickadee



FOOD ISSUES



YUM, BUGS FOR LUNCH

- Insects are common food for birds in summer
- Lack of insects in winter is a major reason for migration
- At right, a rare pic of a flycatcher with a fly



HACKBERRY NIPPLEGALL PSYLLIDS (great example of a “blemish” insect)



- Coming out of galls during spring migration
- Fat and plump nymphs in late summer/early fall within galls
- Coming out of galls during fall migration
- Over 25 spp. of birds observed eating them at Grandview Cemetery (FC)



Hackberry psyllid adult
(actual size is 1/8 in.)

APHIDS (“plant lice”)

- Almost every plant hosts a species or two of aphids
- Important food source of many birds
- Aphids secrete “honeydew”, which in turn is attractive to other insects → attractive to birds



REGARDING INSECTS IN YOUR LANDSCAPE:

- Learn the difference between 1) true pest species, 2) those which just cause “blemishes”, and 3) beneficials
- Minimize pesticide use
- Let birds, bats, and other insectivores help you regulate their populations
- Seek subjective info, get second opinions
- When in doubt, be more tolerant of bugs than your mom or gut tells you to be

BERRIES, FRUITS

- Crabapple
- Juniper
- Mountain-Ash
- Hawthorn
- Rose
- Russian-Olive
- Buckthorn
- Cotoneaster
- Honeysuckle
- Highbush Cranberry



GREAT FOOD TREES FOR BIRDS IN COLORADO

- Ponderosa Pine
- Colorado Blue Spruce
- Juniper (RM, Utah & one-seed)
- Douglas-fir
- Pinyon Pine
- Scots Pine
- Engelmann Spruce
- True Firs (White & Subalpine)
- Aspen
- American Hackberry
- Plains Cottonwood
- Elms (Am. & Siberian)
- Russian-olive
- Gambel Oak
- Honeylocust
- Green Ash (female)



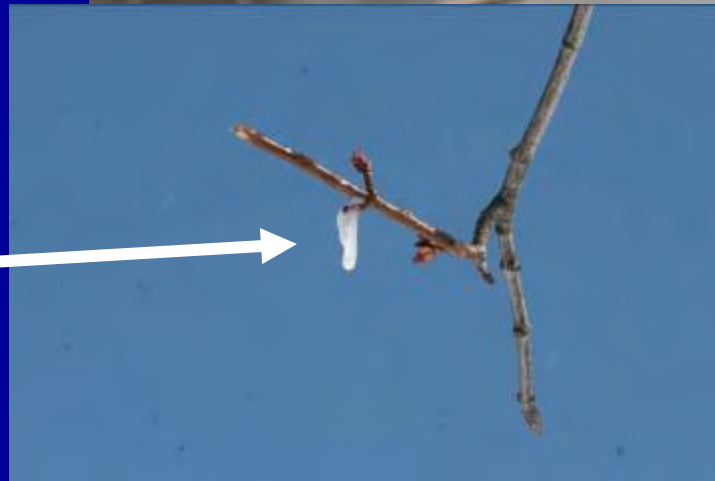
MORE WOODY PLANTS OF GREAT VALUE TO BIRDS

- Honeysuckle
- Mulberries
- Rabbitbrush
- Chokecherry →
- Wild Plum
- Viburnums
- Serviceberry
- Willows
- Saltbush (*Atriplex*)



“MAPLE SYRUP”

- Maple sap (from silver maple* and boxelder) is widely sought by birds and fox squirrels
- In late winter the flow may form conspicuous, “sapsickles”



* Essentially as high in sugar as Sugar Maple

FEEDERS

- Feeding is for us, more than the birds
- Black oil sunflower seed is the best
- Also consider safflower, thistle, sugar water & fruit
- Keep feeders clean
- Provide water
- Cover nearby helps
- Accipiters are OK



SQUIRRELS & BIRD FEEDERS



- They will inherit the Earth
- Don't like safflower (many birds do)
- Grandpa Leatherman
- Very few "squirrel-proof" feeders really are

WATER FEATURES

- A water source can greatly increase the attractiveness of your yard to birds
- Bird bathes probably the easiest – need to be kept clean and, in winter, unfrozen
- Birds like dripping + water/snow in the shade
- New rules about ponds and collecting water (check with State Engineer's Office (303/866-3581, when in doubt) (= Kansas has better lawyers than Colorado)

Black-crowned Night-Heron perched on a dragonfly sculpture in Larry Griffin's Fort Collins yard pond



Photo by Larry Griffin

BRUSH PILES



- Bigger the better
- Be sure to include coarse materials like large branches
- Plan for natural decay and breakdown of materials (i.e., add to the pile often)
- Place near food sources (and/or add food like millet near the edge of the pile)



NEST MATERIALS

- Dry grass
- Feathers
- Old nests
- Small twigs
- Mud
- Roots, root hairs
- Bigger birds sometimes can use bigger branches, platforms



UNNATURAL NEST MATERIALS



- Some natural fiber materials sold for this purpose are OK
- Bailing twine, monofilament fishing line, and other very durable materials (i.e. plastics or wire) can be fatal
 - Feet get entangled
 - Fish hooks impale

CAVITIES

- Used by about 50 spp. of birds for nesting in CO
- Also used for roosting
- Not permanent
- Can indicate “hazard” in some situations
- Woodpeckers make almost all of them



NEST BOXES



- Boxes can make up for natural cavity shortages
- This common “scout” project has pluses and minuses
- Dimensions are critical
- Expect surprises

THINGS THAT CAN GO WRONG

- Squirrels
- Other unwanted mammals like skunks, raccoons and mice
- “Wrong” species nest in your boxes
- Flickers terrorize your house/sleep
- Deer eat desirable plantings
- Feed prices go up, weed seed in bird seed
- State Engineer makes you drain your pond
- Blackbirds, Collared-Doves or House Sparrows dominate your feeders



cottontail



porcupine



elk



sapsucker



horse



vole

BE REALISTIC AND ENJOY
YOUR YARD, DEAL WITH
THE ISSUES, BUT DON'T
EXPECT PERFECTION
(IF YOU'RE A CONTROL
FREAK, FORGET ABOUT
CREATING BACKYARD
WILDLIFE HABITAT AND
TAKE UP MODEL
RAILROADING)



HUMMINGBIRDS



- Everyone likes hummingbirds
- Favor tubular flowers, many others: salvia, catmint, figworts, *Agastache*, trumpetvine, paintbrush, etc. (check out PERC)
- 3 species to be expected in FC
 - Broad-tailed (nests in the mountains, west edge of town)
 - Rufous (migrant, shows up about 4th of July)
 - Calliope (migrant, mostly August-September)

NORTHERN FLICKER



- Western ones “red-shafted”, eastern ones “yellow-shafted”
- Mostly eat ants and R. olives
- Wannabe percussionists?
- The main woodpecker guilty of putting holes in human structures

WESTERN TANAGER

- Breeds in ponderosa pine forests west of Fort Collins
- Often seen in town during migration (particularly late May)
- Should be our Colorado State Bird
- Likes tree flowers and their fruit (will come to oranges and bananas at feeding stations)



BLACK-HEADED GROSBEAK

- Often seen at feeders in May
- Breeds in foothills and lower mountains
- Like sunflower seeds, safflower, and other seeds
- Female tough to tell apart from Rose-breasted Grosbeak



male

BULLOCK'S ORIOLE



- Very closely-related to Baltimore Oriole (they sometimes hybridize)
- Makes the typical hanging-bag nest
- Vulnerable to discarded fishing line
- Prefer willows and cottonwoods

CEDAR WAXWING



- Very “classy” look and they love berries
- Red primary feather tips look like sealing wax
- Related to the more northern Bohemian Waxwing
- Sometimes get “drunk” on old fruit

WILSON'S WARBLER

- Nests in willow carrs in the mountains
- An ABUNDANT migrant in FC in the fall, uncommon in the spring (i.e., “circular migration”)
- Similar to Yellow Warbler except for black cap



SHARP-SHINNED HAWK

- The smallest of the accipiters or “chicken hawks”
- Eat mostly birds
- Commonly terrorize bird-feeding operations
- Amazing aerial “dog-fighters”
- When consuming prey, start with the “sweetbreads”



WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW



- Breeds above timberline
- Winters in Fort Collins area, likes brushy areas, feeders
- Adults have black and white “flat top”
- Immatures with brown and tan “flat top”

PINE SISKIN



- Small finch, often present in winter in large numbers.
- All brown and white-striped, with yellow in wings and tail
- May nest in large conifers in town, beginning in February



WHO KNOWS WHAT WILL
HAPPEN? MAYBE EVEN
WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILLS
WILL COME INTO YOUR LIFE.



HAVE FUN IN YOUR YARD!

