Utah Forest Facts

EXTENSION
UtahStateUniversity

Urban/Community Forestry NR/FF/024

How to Create a Wildlife-Friendly Yard

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Birds and other wildlife lose habitat as cities and human activities expand. You can reduce some of these negative impacts and increase the value of your yard and garden to wildlife by providing their four basic requirements: food, water, cover, and a safe place to rear young.

Habitat can be hard to come by for wildlife in urban areas. A wildlife-friendly yard provides **food, water, cover, and a safe place to rear young.**

Food

Native forbs, shrubs and trees provide food for wildlife and birds with their foliage, nectar, pollen, fruit (berries, seeds, nuts, etc.), and bark. You can select the landscape plants that will attract the birds and other wildlife you want to encourage from the list at the end of this fact sheet. When food is scarce in winter it can be helpful to place feeders for birds in your yard to supplement naturally occurring food. You can also attract butterflies to your yard by supplementing their food sources. Mix 9 parts water to 1 part sugar, pour the mixture over cut up old, mushy fruit–oranges, peaches or pears–on a plate and suspend the plate high in a tree to prevent unwanted wildlife from disturbing the feeder. Hummingbirds are attracted to red, tubular flowers and feeders can provide food when flowering species are scarce. Information on hummingbird feeders, nectar recipes and the importance of maintaining clean feeders can be found on the feeders page at http://www.hummingbirds.net.

Homemade Fat Cakes for Birds

Warm 1 part fat (lard or suet) in a heavy-bottomed pan, then mix in 2 parts dry mix (any combination of bird seed, cornmeal, unsalted seeds and nuts) and stir. Poke a hole in the bottom of a single serving yogurt cup, thread string through the hole, and press the warm suet mixture into the cup around the string. Place filled cups in the freezer and when hardened, cut the yogurt cup away and hang the cake in a tree. Kitchen scraps, such as bits of fruit or vegetables, may be used in the fat cake, but avoid salty items such as salted nuts or bacon. Unsalted peanut butter may be added to the mixture along with equal parts dry mix. You can also collect large pine cones, tie a string to one end, press fat mixture onto the cone, and suspend from a tree.

Water

Installing a water source in your yard is a simple way to benefit wildlife and birds. Clean water is essential but often not available in the arid West. Provide water in a bird bath or other water feature. Anything

that will hold water will work, like a hubcap or a similar shallow basin. Remember to clean the water source weekly and change the water two to three times a week.

Cover

Birds and other wildlife require cover to be safe from predators, weather, and people. Increasing plant structure between the ground and tree canopies with shrubs and non-woody plants is called vertical layering. By creating a multi-layered vegetation structure in your yard, you can provide cover for a variety or birds, other wildlife, and insects. Choose native plant species when possible (see list at the end of this fact sheet). When pruning vegetation and mowing your lawn, let some areas or branches go uncut. They will provide seeds and cover for small species such as insects, frogs, and other amphibians.

Vertical vegetation layering

Safe Place to Rear Young

It takes a lot of energy for wildlife to successfully rear young in the wild. This effort increases when safe nesting spots are scarce. You can ease some of this pressure for nesting species by placing birdhouses, bat boxes or nest boxes in your yard.

Backyard wood pile. Old animal skulls at the base of the pile encourage beneficial insects

The Benefits of Dead Wood and Brush Piles

Dead wood, snags, and brush piles feed and house many creatures. Brush piles are favored by sparrows, rabbits, squirrels, and chipmunks. Dead snags (standing dead trees) create refuges for small mammals, reptiles, amphibians, birds, butterflies, fungi, and insects. For example, beetle larvae, bacteria, and fungi feast on the wood of dead or decaying trees. These attract woodpeckers to the soft wood. Woodpeckers peck through the bark and expose large holes that serve as excellent nesting cavities for them and other birds. If a tree dies in your yard and doesn't pose a risk to you or surrounding structures, consider leaving it to encourage more unusual creatures to visit.

Woodpeckers, nuthatches, creepers and wrens require cavities for nesting. Leaving dead snags on the landscape will benefit these species, although large snags can be dangerous. To determine the best birdhouse design to incorporate into your yard, see recommendations from the National Wildlife Federation at http://www.nwf.org. Type “birdhouse” in the search feature.

You can contribute to a long-standing database on birds currently being collected by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Visit nestwatch.org and record the species you observe every day.

Young northern flicker in a nest cavity

Wildlife-friendly Fences

Ranch Fences

Fences are an important part of any yard or landscape. They are necessary for determining property boundaries, controlling trespass, and in the case of farmers and ranchers, enclosing pastures. Information on building a wildlife-friendly fence that is suited to meet the needs of ranchers and wildlife may be found at fwp.mt.gov. Type “fencing” in the search feature.

Residential Fences

The most important factor to consider when constructing or retrofitting the fence in your yard is ensuring that it is visible to birds and other wildlife. When fences are difficult to see, wildlife can collide or become caught in them. If you have a wire fence in your yard, consider placing a wood rail or PVC pipe on top to increase visibility and safety for jumping deer. Many decorative fence designs can be hazards to deer or other ungulates. Fences with sharp tips should be avoided if possible. Wildlife- and bird-friendly options include chain-link, post and rail, post and pole, or board fences. You can even create a vegetative barrier with shrubs and/or small trees. Good yard barrier shrub species include thimbleberry, raspberry, blackberry, snowberry, wild rose, Oregon-grape, barberry, and firethorn.

Sharp-tipped fences, like the one pictured at left, can pose danger to jumping deer and other wildlife. A wildlife-friendly fence example is at the right.

Are bats good for your yard? Bats are the only true flying mammal in the world. Eighteen bat species exist in Utah. Of these only three exist in urban landscapes: the little brown bat, the big brown bat, and the Brazilian free-tailed bat. Their diet consists primarily of beetles, mosquitoes, moths, wasps, and midges. A single little brown bat can consume up to 1,000 mosquito-sized insects in just one hour. Maintaining healthy bat populations benefits ecosystems because bats pollinate flowers and crops, eat some of the most damaging agricultural insects, and disperse a wide variety of seeds. Bat populations are declining almost everywhere due to pesticides, insecticides, habitat degradation, and cave disturbances. You can easily build a bat house (see http://www.batcon.org) and give these important mammals a place to live. Incorporating a bat house into your yard can help reduce pests and ensure that these important mammals have a safe place to rear their young.

Plant List for Wildlife-friendly Landscaping

This list does not include all appropriate plants and may include plants that are not suitable for your particular situation. Learn about what the plant needs and where it can be grown well by looking through the references at the end of this fact sheet.

Herbaceous Perennials		Species Benefitted				
Common Name	**Scientific Name**	**Hummingbirds**	**Bees**	**Butterflies**	**Birds**	**Small Mammals**
abelia	*Abelia* spp.			X		
ageratum, purple	*Ageratum* spp.			X		
alyssum, sweet	*Lobularia maritima*	X				
aster, Frikart's	*Aster* x *frikartii*			X		
bee balm, scarlet	*Monarda didyma*	X	X	X		
beeplant, Rocky Mountain	*Cleome serrulata*		X			
black-eyed Susan	*Rudbeckia hirta*			X		
bluebeard	*Caryopteris divaricata*			X		
buckwheat, sulphur-flower	*Eriogonum umbellatum*		X	X		X
butterfly weed	*Asclepias tuberosa*			X		
cardinal flower	*Lobelia cardinalis*			X		
catnip	*Nepeta cataria*			X		
columbine	*Aquilegia* spp.	X	X			
coneflower, purple	*Echinacea purpurea*		X	X	X	
coralbells	*Heuchera sanguinea*	X				
coreopsis, giant	*Coreopsis gigantea*	X		X		
coreopsis, threadleaf	*Coreopsis verticillata*			X		
daisy, Shasta	*Leucanthemum* x *superbum*			X		
dandelion	*Taraxacum officinale*	X		X		
desert lavender	*Hyptis emoryi*	X	X	X		
dill	*Anethum graveolens*			X		
evening primrose, white-tufted	*Oenothera caespitosa*			X		
four o'clock	*Mirabilis multiflora*	X				
foxglove	*Digitalis* spp.	X				

Herbaceous Perennials		Species Benefitted				
Common Name	**Scientific Name**	**Hummingbirds**	**Bees**	**Butterflies**	**Birds**	**Small Mammals**
gilia, scarlet	*Ipomposis aggregata*	X				
goldenrod	*Solidago* spp.		X	X		X
hyssop, anise or blue giant	*Agastache foeniculum*	X	X	X		
Indian paintbrush, narrowleaf	*Castilleja linariifolia*	X				
larkspur	*Delphinium* spp.	X		X		
lemon balm	*Melissa officinalis*			X		
lily, tiger	*Lilium lancifolium*	X				
lupine	*Lupinus perennis*			X		
marigold, French	*Tagetes patula*			X		
milkweed	*Asclepias* spp.			X		
mint	*Mentha* spp.		X	X		
parsley	*Petroselinum crispum*			X		
penstemon, firecracker	*Penstemon eatonii*	X	X	X	X	X
phlox, garden	*Phlox paniculata*	X		X		
prairie clover, western	*Dalea ornata*		X	X		
rosemary	*Rosmarinus officinalis*			X	X	
sage	*Salvia officinalis*	X		X		
speedwell	*Veronica* spp.	X				
sunflower	*Helianthus annuus*				X	
sweet William	*Dianthus barbatus*	X		X		
thistle, New Mexico	*Cirsium neomexicanum*		X	X		
thyme	*Thymus praecox*			X		
trumpet, hummingbird	*Epilobium canum*	X	X			
valerian, red	*Centranthus ruber*		X	X		
yarrow, common	*Achillea millefolium*		X	X		X
yucca, red	*Hesperaloe parviflora*	X		X		
zinnia, narrowleaf	*Zinnia angustifolia*			X		
Shrubs		**Species Benefitted**				
Common Name	**Scientific Name**	**Hummingbirds**	**Bees**	**Butterflies**	**Birds**	**Small Mammals**
acacia, catclaw	*Acacia greggii*		X	X	X	X
Apache plume	*Fallugia paradoxa*				X	X
bitterbrush	*Purshia tridentata*		X		X	X
buffaloberry, roundleaf	*Sheperdia rotundifolia*				X	X
buffaloberry, silver	*Sheperdia argentea*		X			
butterflybush, woolly	*Buddleia marrubiifolia*	X	X	X		

Shrubs		Species Benefitted				
Common Name	**Scientific Name**	**Hummingbirds**	**Bees**	**Butterflies**	**Birds**	**Small Mammals**
chokecherry	*Prunus virginiana*		X	X	X	
cinquefoil, shrubby	*Potentilla fruticosa*		X	X		
cliffrose	*Purshia mexicana*					X
creosotebush	*Larrea tridentata*		X		X	X
currant, golden	*Ribes aureum*	X	X	X	X	X
dalea, Gregg	*Dalea greggii*		X	X		
dogwood, redosier	*Cornus sericea*			X	X	
elderberry, blue	*Sambucus caerulea*		X		X	X
fernbush	*Chamaebatiaria millefolium*		X	X		
greasewood	*Sarcobatus vermiculatus*					X
honeysuckle, Utah	*Lonicera utahensis*				X	X
indigo bush	*Amorpha fruticosa*		X	X		
lilac	*Syringa vulgaris*			X		
mesquite, western honey	*Prosopis glandulosa*		X			
mockorange	*Philadelphus lewisii*	X		X	X	
Mormon tea	*Ephedra viridis*				X	X
mountain-mahogany, alderleaf	*Cercocarpus montanus*			X	X	X
oak, shrub live	*Quercus turbinella*				X	X
rabbitbrush, yellow	*Chrysothamnus viscidiflorus*			X	X	X
rose, Woods'	*Rosa woodsii*		X		X	X
sage, fringed	*Artemisia frigida*			X	X	X
sage, purple	*Poliomintha incana*		X	X		
sage, sand	*Artemisia filifolia*		X		X	X
sagebrush, big	*Artemisia tridentata*				X	X
sagebrush, silver	*Artemisia cana*				X	X
saltbush, four-wing	*Atriplex canescens*				X	X
sand cherry, western	*Prunus besseyi*		X	X		
serviceberry, Utah	*Amelanchier utahensis*				X	X

Too many deer in your yard already? Every year, especially in the winter, wildlife agencies receive complaints from people that deer are eating the vegetation in their yard. There are many aspects to the complex problem, but one thing that most parties agree on is the need to improve native deer habitat. Focusing on boosting the quality of native deer habitat will likely deter deer from seeking forage in the yards and gardens of urban and suburban residents living along the Wasatch Front and elsewhere. See our factsheet here for more information about deer in landscapes: http://extension.usu.edu/files/publications/publication/NR_FF_022.pdf

Natives are best: Why go native? Native plants are hardy to local growing and soil conditions. Native species are more likely to be healthy and to require fewer chemical treatments and less maintenance and water than non-native species. Choosing native plants will benefit birds, other wildlife and insects, and in the long run will ultimately save time and resources. It's important to know what is native to your particular site. Quaking aspen, for example, is native to Utah's mountains, but not to low elevations where most people live. It does not do well in hot, dry, low-elevation sites.

Shrubs		**Species Benefitted**				
skunkbush	*Rhus trilobata*				X	X
snowberry, common	*Symphoricarpos albus*				X	X
stretchberry	*Forestiera pubescens* var. *pubescens*		X	X	X	X
sumac	*Rhus* spp.			X	X	X
viburnum	*Viburnum* spp.			X		
willow	*Salix* spp.				X	X
willow, sandbar	*Salix interior*				X	X
winterfat	*Krascheninnikovia lanata*				X	X
yucca, soap tree	*Yucca elata*			X		X
Trees		**Species Benefitted**				
Common Name	**Scientific Name**	**Hummingbirds**	**Bees**	**Butterflies**	**Birds**	**Small Mammals**
alder	*Alnus* spp.	X				
alder, gray	*Alnus incana*				X	X
alder, thinleaf	*Alnus tenuifolia*	X			X	X
ash, singleleaf	*Fraxinus anomala*				X	X
birch, water	*Betula occidentalis*	X			X	X
catalpa, southern	*Catalpa bignoniodes*	X				
cottonwood, Fremont	*Populus fremontii*				X	X
cottonwood, narrowleaf	*Populus angustifolia*				X	X
desert-willow	*Chilopsis linearis*	X	X	X	X	
Douglas-fir	*Pseudotsuga menziesii*				X	X
fir, subalpine	*Abies lasiocarpa*				X	X
hawthorn, Douglas	*Crataegus douglasii*		X	X	X	
horsechestnut	*Aesculus hippocastanum*	X				X
juniper, Utah	*Juniperus osteosperma*				X	X
locust, black	*Robinia pseudoacacia*	X	X	X		
locust, New Mexico	*Robinia neomexicana*	X	X	X	X	X
maple, bigtooth	*Acer grandidentatum*				X	X
mountain-mahogany, curlleaf	*Cercocarpus ledifolius*				X	X

Trees		Species Benefitted				
Common Name	**Scientific Name**	**Hummingbirds**	**Bees**	**Butterflies**	**Birds**	**Small Mammals**
mountainash, Greene	*Sorbus scopulina*				X	
mesquite, velvet	*Prosopis velutina*		X		X	X
oak, gambel	*Quercus gambelii*			X	X	X
pine, pinyon	*Pinus edulis*				X	X
pinyon, singleleaf	*Pinus monophylla*		X	X	X	X
spruce	*Picea* spp.				X	X
Vines		**Species Benefitted**				
Common Name	**Scientific Name**	**Hummingbirds**	**Bees**	**Butterflies**	**Birds**	**Small Mammals**
grape, Arizona	*Vitis arizonica*				X	X
honeysuckle, twinberry	*Lonicera involucrata*	X	X	X	X	
trumpet creeper	*Campsis radicans*	X		X		

Resources

Many resources are available for people interested in designing and maintaining landscapes for wildlife. These include:

Landscaping with water conservation in mind:

- http://athome.audubon.org/conserve-water

Landscaping for a variety of species in the Rocky Mountain Region:

- www.metrofieldguide.com/resources/landscape-for-wildlife-2/landscape-for-wildlife/rocky-mountains/

General info on landscaping for wildlife:

- www.nwf.org/How-to-Help/Garden-for-Wildlife.aspx
- http://livinggreen.ifas.ufl.edu/
- www.humanesociety.org/animals/resources/tips/gardening_wildlife.html

Landscape tips specific for Utah:

- http://wildlife.utah.gov/publications/pdf/landscapingforwildlife.pdf

General info on landscaping for birds and bats:

- www.nwf.org (Search "birdhouse").
- www.thisoldhouse.com/toh/photos/0,,20212907,00.html
- www.batcon.org

Benefits of brush piles and dead wood:

- www.nwf.org (Search "deadwood").

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