

# Wings Over Georgia

A Newsletter about Birds and Butterflies for the Members of  
The Garden Club of Georgia, Inc.

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*With all of the cold weather that we've had, I'm anxious for spring. What about you? I was excited to see the daffodils starting to show some yellow when I was out yesterday. I even saw a small butterfly fluttering around. The goldfinch are back and are eating tons of niger seed. A bluebird couple has checked out the bluebird box. By the time we all get back from the GCG 8<sup>th</sup> Standard State Flower Show in Thomasville on February 20 and 21, February will almost be over. Then spring can't be far behind!*

*Suzanne*

*Suzanne Wheeler*

*GCG Birds and Butterflies Chairman, 2007 – 2009*

*311 Smith Street*

*Hartwell, GA 30643*

*(706) 376- 5120*

*[wheeler@hartcom.net](mailto:wheeler@hartcom.net)*

In order to attract birds to your yard, you must provide four things – food, water, nesting sites, and shelter. Birds will visit backyard with trees, hedges, mixed shrubs, seed bearing flowers and grasses. They will crowd birdbaths fountains and ponds. They'll nest in birdhouses, and they'll eat at feeders. Create a garden with these plants and features and you'll have birds in your yard.



*northern cardinals*



## FOOD

Most of our feeder birds can most readily eat black-oil sunflower seed. If you are going to have one bird feeder, get a tube or hopper feeder and buy black-oil sunflower seed. Think of it as the hamburger of the bird world. Other excellent foods for birds include: mixed seed, sunflower bits, peanuts (best unsalted and without the shell), suet or suet cakes, cracked corn, thistle seed (also known as Niger or nyjer seed), safflower seed, nectar(for hummingbirds), mealworms, fruits, and berries. Birds also find food at places other than bird feeders. A backyard or garden that includes natural food sources for birds – such as flowering plants that produce seeds and fruit-bearing trees and shrubs will also attract birds.

## WATER

Birds need water all year round. They drink it, obviously, and they bathe in it. If birds did not keep their feathers clean, they could not fly. Providing water to birds can be as simple as filling a saucer with water and setting it on the ground or as elaborate as a re-circulating fountain. If you change the water in a saucer every other day, you will not provide a breeding ground for mosquitoes. They require three days at least from egg to mosquito. ( I have purchased little dome-like things with three legs that have a sort of stirring mechanism that moves the water in my saucer-type water containers. They run on a “C” battery and they work really well. They are called “water wigglers”. I hate to plug a company, but I order them from Duncraft – [www.duncraft.com](http://www.duncraft.com) . The one with the plastic cover - which is what I have – runs \$26.95. They also have a ceramic cover one that is \$44.95.) Moving water seems to attract birds better than still water does. Water closer to the ground works better than water up high, too. I took the pedestal off of my birdbath and put it on the ground. Just be sure that there is a tree nearby that the birds can fly to in case of emergency and place it in the open so that cats and other predators are not lurking unseen.



## NESTING PLACES

It's time to clean bird houses and nesting boxes. Be sure that they are in a good state of repair. Have you ever wondered what type of box and what size hole for which bird? Maybe this chart will help.

SPECIES	FLOOR SIZE	DEPTH	ENTRANCE HOLE SIZE	ENTRANCE HEIGHT FROM FLOOR	HEIGHT ABOVE GROUND
Barn Owl	10" x 8"	15" – 18"	6"	4"	12'-18'
Eastern Bluebird	5" x 5"	8"	1 ½"	6"	5'
Chickadee	4" x 4"	8" – 10"	1 1/8"	6" – 8"	4' – 15'
Carolina Wren	4" x 4"	6" – 8"	1 ½"	1" – 6"	6' – 10'
House Wren	4" x 4"	6" – 8"	1 ¼"	1" – 6"	6' – 10'
Screech Owl	8" x 8"	12" – 15"	3"	9" – 12"	10 plus feet
Northern Flicker	7" x 7"	16" – 18"	2 ½"	14 – 16"	6' – 20'

The majority of North American birds do not use nest boxes. There are many things that you can do for non-cavity nesters – those birds that build open cup nests and will never use nesting boxes. The most important thing is to offer variety in your landscape. A yard that is primarily grass with a tree or two in the middle will not be nearly as attractive to birds as a yard that is filled with a variety of plant materials including grasses, perennial plants, shrubs, bushes, trees and other natural elements. Landscapes that look more like nature are more attractive to birds.



## TIPS FOR HELPING NESTING BIRDS

- Consider letting as portion of your yard grow up into weedy patch for sparrows, finches and towhees to enjoy
- Offer a basket of nesting material, such as 2 to 3 inch pieces of natural fibers (yarn, pet or human hair, stiff dry grasses, and the like)
- Keep pets, especially cats from roaming freely in the yard during mating season
- Try to limit or eliminate the use of lawn chemicals in and around the parts of your property being used by nesting birds
- Trim hedges, shrubs, and trees in early spring before nesting season or in the fall , after nesting season. This way you'll avoid disturbing nesting birds which are often so secretive that you are unaware of the nest until you stumble on to it.

From Georgia Bird Watching Guide by Bill Thompson



## SHELTER

When they need to hide from danger, rest, or get out of the weather, birds seek shelter. You may provide shelter in your yard by having dense vegetation in the form of vine tangles, dense evergreens, and brushy places. Not what you want in your yard? You'll attract more birds if you give them this vital haven.

## BIRD FRIENDLY PLANTS FOR YOUR YARD

### TREES

apple, ash, aspen, birch, cedar, cherry, chokeberry, cottonwood, crabapple, dogwood, fig, hackberry, hawthorn, hemlock, holly, juniper, larch, maple, mulberry, oak, pine, poplar, sassafras, serviceberry, spruce, sycamore, willow

### SHRUBS

viburnum, bayberry, blackberry, blueberry, cranberry, elderberry, huckleberry, mahonia, pokeweed, roses, spicebush, sumac, winterberry, yew

## **VINES**

heartleaf ampelopsis, bittersweet, wild grapes, trumpet honeysuckle, trumpet vine, Virginia creeper

## **FLOWERS**

asters, bachelor's buttons, black-eyed Susan, blazing star, California poppy, purple coneflower, coreopsis, cornflower, cosmos, daisy, goldenrod, Joe-Pye weed, marigolds, penstemons, poppies, primroses, sedums, sunflowers, thistles, zinnias



cedar wax-wing



blue jay

*Happy bird watching.*