



May 2025

# NEWSLETTER

A Publication of the Simsbury Sustainability Committee

## Birds In Your Backyard

### UPCOMING EVENTS

**Simsbury Sustainability  
Committee Fair**  
May 3, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.  
Simsbury Public Library

**Simsbury Land Trust  
Teen Earth Day Planting**  
May 4, 10 a.m.  
Wagner Woods

**Gardeners of Simsbury  
Plant Sale Fundraiser**  
May 8, 9 a.m. - 6 p.m.  
Gresczyk Farms

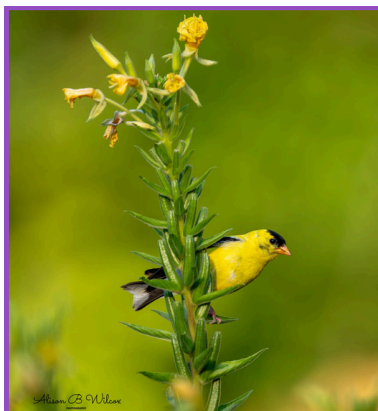
**Simsbury Garden Club  
Plant Sale Fundraiser**  
May 17, 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.  
Simsbury Farms Ice Rink



SPP is appreciative of the continuing opportunity provided by the Simsbury Sustainability Committee to publish information about the importance of home habitats. Creating biodiverse residential yards is key to combating climate issues and supporting critical pollinating insects, birds, and wildlife. These Earth-friendly home habitats, filled with native plants and using a natural approach to yard care, can make all the difference for these waning populations, as well as provide a beautiful, safe, healthy environment for humans and pets.

This month we are focusing on birds, and the newsletter is authored by SPP Board Member Alison Boyko Wilcox. Alison is an environmental analyst for the State of Connecticut and program coordinator for the Hartford Audubon Society. The majority of photographs in this issue were taken by Alison and her husband, Chris.

There is much to learn about birds, and Alison took the request to author an article extremely seriously, so much so that we have enough information for three issues! In addition to this issue, we will send out two more this month. One will be all about fan-favorite hummingbirds, and following that, a resource guide of books, apps, and websites for learning, birdwatching, and bird identification.



For ongoing information on creating a home habitat and pollinator-related subjects, please follow SPP on Facebook; our website is <https://www.simsburypollinatorpath.org/>. We offer free seminars on a variety of topics (note on the calendar it's all about trees on May 12). To be added to our email list, become a SPP member, or if you have questions about native plants, pollinators, birds, and earth-friendly practices, contact us at [simsburypollpath@gmail.com](mailto:simsburypollpath@gmail.com).



Volume 2, Issue 5



# How to Attract Birds to Your Yard

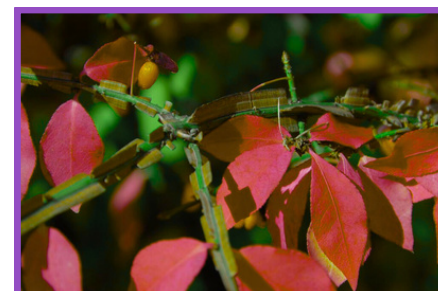
*Connecticut is home to a wide variety of birds throughout the seasons — from year-round residents like chickadees and cardinals to seasonal visitors like hummingbirds and warblers. With a few simple steps, you can turn your yard into a vibrant sanctuary for local and migrating birds.*

## 1. Remove Invasive Plants

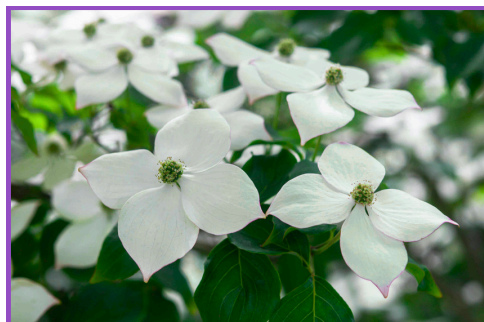
*Invasive plants provide little to no food for pollinators, push out native plants, and over-run yards and woodlands. A sample of invasives commonly planted in Connecticut residential yards:*

- Burning bush, barberry, oriental bittersweet, forsythia, butterfly bush, Chinese silvergrass, Callery pear, and Norway maple.
- For a full list of Connecticut's invasive plants, visit the University of Connecticut's invasive plant working group:

[https://cipwg.uconn.edu/invasive\\_plant\\_list/](https://cipwg.uconn.edu/invasive_plant_list/)



Invasive Burning Bush



Non-native Kousa Dogwood

## 2. Don't Plant Non-Native Ornamentals

Non-native ornamental plants, shrubs, and trees provide little or no food for pollinators, which means the insect and caterpillar populations are reduced, thus affecting the food supply for birds. How to tell what's what? The Royal Botanic Garden Kew has a database of plants of the world:

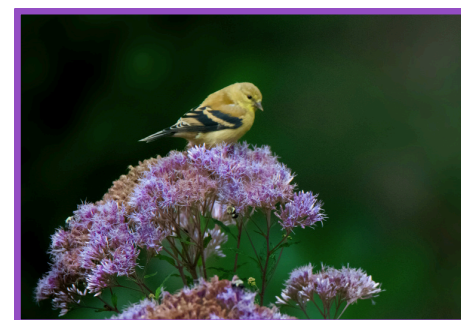
<https://powo.science.kew.org/>

## 3. Plant Native Trees, Shrubs, & Flowers

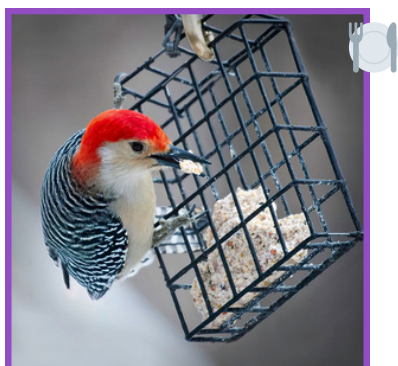
Native plants provide natural food, shelter, and nesting opportunities. Some top Connecticut natives:

- Trees/Shrubs: Eastern red cedar, serviceberry, dogwood, winterberry
- Flowers: Black-eyed Susan, purple coneflower, bee balm, cardinal flower, Joe Pye weed

Native plants also attract beneficial insects, a critical food source for birds, especially during nesting season. Birds require pesticide/herbicide-free insects; poisoned insects = poisoned birds, so keep your yard pesticide-free.



Goldfinch on Joe Pye Weed (Photo: D. D'Ermo)



Woodpecker Eating Suet (Photo: I.Steeves)

## 4. Offer a Variety of Bird Feeders

Different birds prefer different foods:

- Black-oil sunflower seeds: Cardinals, chickadees, finches
- Nyjer (thistle): Goldfinches, siskins
- Suet: Woodpeckers, wrens, nuthatches
- Peanuts: Blue jays, titmice
- Sugar water (nectar): Ruby-throated hummingbirds\*

💡 Keep feeders clean and dry. Wash every 1–2 weeks with hot water and mild soap or a vinegar solution and more often in the autumn when diseases can become more common.



## How to Attract Birds to Your Yard (continued)



### FEEDER ALERT! BE BEAR AWARE!

If you live in an area with bears, we recommend restricting feeders to the dead of winter. Bears are only trying to survive and when food brings them close to humans it's likely to end badly. Your town may also have feeding ordinances which ban most types of bird feeding during parts of the year. These ordinances exist to keep you, your property, and the bears themselves safe.

**Note to Simsbury readers:** The Town has wildlife feeding ordinance as follows: "The adopted ordinance prohibits the intentional feeding of wildlife by giving, placing, exposing, feeding, depositing, distributing, or scattering any edible material with the intention of feeding, attracting, or enticing wildlife. *The ordinance also prohibits the use of bird feeders from April 1 through November 30 unless the source of food is recognized as not being desirable to bears.*"

### 5. Provide a Fresh Water Source

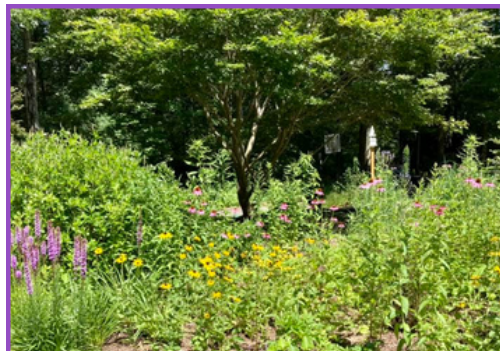
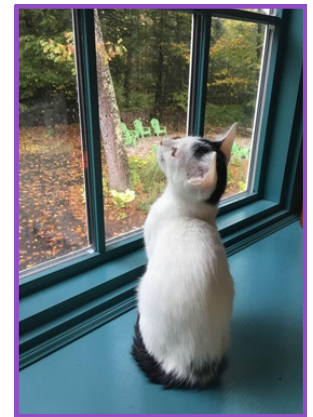
Birds need clean water to drink and bathe. Even if you don't have feeders, water a clean water source will attract bird visitors.

- Use a bird bath or shallow dish. I recommend finding something you can easily clean. Alison's personal favorite! →
- Add a dripper or solar fountain to attract more birds (They love running water). Moving water also prevents mosquitoes from laying eggs.
- Clean water sources every few days.



### ✓ 6. Be a Bird-Friendly Yard

- Avoid pesticides and herbicides.
- Keep cats indoors.
- Leave some natural mess: seed heads, logs, and leaf litter provide food and shelter.
- Plant a variety of native plants.



### Seasonal Tip:

**Keep feeders up through late fall to help migrating birds refuel on their way south. Late-blooming natives like goldenrod and asters provide important fall nectar and seeds.**



## Connecticut Native Plants That Attract Birds (Non-Hummingbirds)

### Trees

#### Eastern Red Cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*)

The tree's berries feed cedar waxwings, robins, and bluebirds; evergreen cover offers year-round shelter.

#### White Oak (*Quercus alba*)

Supports hundreds of caterpillar species (baby bird food!); acorns feed jays, woodpeckers, and turkeys.

#### Serviceberry (*Amelanchier*)

Early spring flowers; summer berries for catbirds, thrushes, waxwings; lovely ornamental size for small yards.

#### Black Cherry (*Prunus serotina*)

Berries are popular with over 40 species; host to many moths and butterflies — great for insect-eating birds.



### SHRUBS

#### Winterberry Holly (*Ilex verticillata*)

Bright red berries persist into winter, feeding robins, bluebirds, and cedar waxwings.

#### Arrowwood Viburnum (*Viburnum dentatum*)

Berries in late summer/fall; also supports caterpillars and nesting cover.

#### Highbush Blueberry (*Vaccinium corymbosum*)

Fruits loved by thrashers, towhees, robins, and orioles; fall foliage adds beauty, too.

#### Northern Bayberry (*Morella pensylvanica*)

Waxy berries sustain yellow-rumped warblers and tree sparrows through winter.



### WILDFLOWERS / HERBACEOUS PLANTS

#### Purple Coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*)

Seed heads are a magnet for finches and sparrows in fall and winter.

#### Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*)

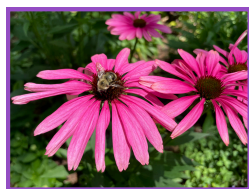
Goldfinches love the seeds; supports insects and adds vibrant summer color.

#### Goldenrod (*Solidago* spp.)

Supports many native insects; attracts birds that feed on seeds and bugs; especially useful in fall migration.

#### New England Aster (*Symphyotrichum novae-angliae*)

Late-season seeds for finches and sparrows; attracts butterflies, which support baby birds.



### VINES & GROUNDCOVERS

#### Virginia Creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*)

Fall berries feed warblers, thrushes, and woodpeckers.

#### Also offers nesting cover:

#### Trumpet Honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*)

While great for hummingbirds, it also attracts insects and provides nesting habitat for songbirds.

#### Planting Tips for Maximum Bird Benefit:

Diverse layers (trees, shrubs, wildflowers) = more food + shelter options.

Let flowers go to seed in fall — don't deadhead!

Avoid pesticides, which kill the insects many birds rely on.

Choose straight native species whenever possible, or native cultivars when straight natives aren't available, for best ecological benefits.



This link is to the University of Connecticut Agricultural Extension's comprehensive list of Connecticut natives. The multi-page PDFs breaks out the state's native plants in several different ways, including by type (best for birds, animals, insects), season, bloom time, etc.

<https://ipm.cahnr.uconn.edu/connecticut-native-perennial-tree-and-shrub-availability-list/>

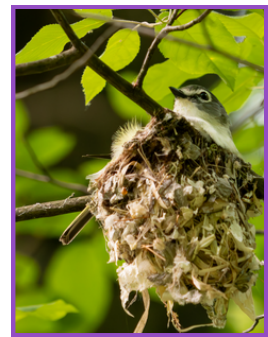


# Month-By-Month Bird Calendar for Connecticut



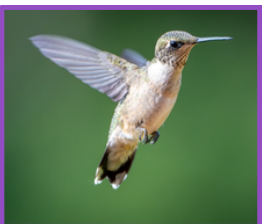
## January – February: Winter Quiet but Lively

- Resident birds include **chickadees**, **cardinals**, **nuthatches**, **woodpeckers**, and **tufted titmice**.
- Ground feeders like **dark-eyed juncos** and **white-throated sparrows** are common.
- Activity increases on **sunny, calm days** — perfect for feeder watching.
- **Tips:** Keep water sources thawed. Offer high-fat foods like suet and sunflower seeds.



## March – April: First Signs of Spring Migration

- Watch for **red-winged blackbirds**, **grackles**, **cowbirds**, and **Eastern phoebes**.
- **Woodcock** begin courtship displays in open fields at dusk.
- Early insect-eaters arrive as temperatures rise and buds swell.
- **Tips:** Clean nest boxes now before occupants arrive. Offer nesting material like pet fur or cotton fibers.



## May – June: Nesting & Full Migration

- **Warblers**, **vireos**, **orioles**, and **tanagers** arrive.
- **Ruby-throated hummingbirds** show up in early May — put nectar feeders out by May 1.
- Many backyard birds are feeding young or sitting on eggs.
- **Tips:** Avoid heavy pruning; keep feeders clean; supply live mealworms for bluebirds and robins.



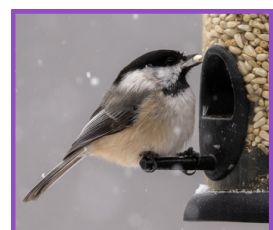
## July – August: Summer Activity & Fledglings

- Young birds begin visiting feeders — look for **short-tailed juveniles** with soft feathers.
- **High hummingbird traffic** at feeders and nectar plants.
- Late-nesting species like **goldfinches** are just getting started.
- **Tips:** Provide shade and water. Refill nectar feeders every 2–3 days to prevent spoilage.



## September – October: Peak Fall Migration

- **Thrushes**, **sparrows**, **kinglets**, and **warblers** pass through.
- **Hummingbirds migrate** — keep feeders up until two weeks after your last sighting.
- **Chimney swifts** and **nighthawks** seen overhead at dusk.
- **Tips:** Don't deadhead fall flowers like coneflowers or goldenrod — birds love the seeds.



## November – December: Settling into Winter

- Feeder visits increase as natural food declines.
- **Flocks of finches** (house, purple, sometimes pine siskins) arrive.
- **Cooper's hawks** may appear, drawn by feeder activity.
- **Tips:** Keep feeders full and clean. Offer suet, peanuts, and seed blends with millet.

By creating a welcoming and safe space, you're not only helping birds — you're also bringing the joy of nature right to your window year-round. 🌿❤️