

Native and Non-Native Wisconsin Birds

Did you know that there are over 400 different kinds of birds living here in Wisconsin? Many of them are *native*, or indigenous to Wisconsin (meaning that they were present before European settlers arrived in North America). Some of them are non-native, or *introduced* (meaning they arrived here and stayed, whether by accident or deliberately) and therefore many think their presence shouldn't be encouraged, since some introduced species are considered a threat to native bird population.



For a complete list of the birds of Wisconsin, please visit the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology at <http://wsobirds.org> where you will find information on both native and introduced species.

Hosting Birds in your Backyard



Before you decide to become a host to birds in your yard, there are a few items worth considering:

- a. Knowing that by far **most Wisconsin birds do not eat from feeders**, make sure your yard has plenty of native trees, shrubs and plants. This simple, yet powerful understanding will make the biggest difference in the amount and variety of birds you will attract. As most birds rely upon insects as their main source of protein, it is important to offer a variety of the native trees, shrubs, and plants that host those insects. Birds also love to eat the berries, seeds and nuts they provide. For a great site about native Wisconsin trees and shrubs, especially the ones that attract birds, go to: <http://wildones.org/land/wibirdpl.html> Or peruse the book, Birdscaping in the Midwest, by Mariette Nowak. It's also available at the Irvin L. Young Memorial Library in Whitewater.
- b. Offer water in a birdbath – year round if possible. There are heated birdbaths readily available at garden centers and home improvement stores. Regularly cleaning your birdbath at least weekly and keeping it filled with fresh water will help keep birds healthy and returning to your yard.
- c. Please feed responsibly. Clean your feeders regularly, and make sure to feed a quality product. Black oil sunflower seeds and thistle will attract most feeder birds, and keep away those “bully birds” (like the English sparrow, an introduced and very territorial species) that drive away and even kill native species. Some birders urge you to stay away from feed containing millet and cracked corn, because they attract the English sparrow. Switching to safflower seeds in the spring will help deter grackles and starlings (introduced species), who intimidate and drive away the native (and more desirable) songbirds.
- d. Some birds nest on the ground, some within the branches of trees, and some in tree cavities. We can offer those cavity dwellers a good home with a nest box. If you choose to erect a nest box, please keep in mind that dark colored, or dark painted birdhouses will heat to unbearable temperatures in the summer sun, and can damage or kill birds and their eggs. Unpainted wood is best for most nest boxes, as it can “breathe” more easily, and will resist thermal damage far better than painted or dark colored stains. They may not be as decorative and colorful, but birds will love them. Save the decorative ones for your home's interior, or if undrilled, they may stay outdoors.