

# Attracting Wildlife to Your Yard: A Beginners Guide

Ron Dodson



*Practicing Conservation Landscape Management at home can increase a  
home's value by up to 20%.*

[www.rgdodson.com](http://www.rgdodson.com)

# Attracting Wildlife to Your Yard: A Beginners Guide

## Attracting Wildlife to Your Yard: A Beginner's Guide

*Attracting Wildlife to Your Yard a Beginner's Guide* is about creating a home habitat that is inviting to local wildlife. This eBook provides practical tips and advice for transforming your yard into a welcoming environment for birds, butterflies, bees, and other creatures. Whether you have a small patio or a large backyard, you can make a difference in supporting local wildlife populations by following the advice and guidance provided in this eBook.

## Why Attracting Wildlife to Your Yard Matters

Attracting wildlife to your yard can be a truly rewarding experience. Not only does it create a beautiful and diverse outdoor space, but it also plays an important role in preserving the environment and promoting biodiversity. In this eBook, we will explore why attracting wildlife to your yard matters and the benefits that come with creating a home habitat.

As humans continue to encroach on natural habitats, it's becoming increasingly important to create spaces that support local wildlife. By providing food, water, shelter, and nesting areas for native species, we can help to ensure their survival and promote a healthy ecosystem. Additionally, attracting wildlife to your yard can provide opportunities for education, relaxation, and connection with nature.

In this eBook, we'll discuss the benefits of creating a home habitat and explore ways to attract and support wildlife in your yard. We'll cover topics such as selecting the right plants, creating a bird-friendly habitat, supporting beneficial insects, and managing your habitat to ensure a healthy and balanced ecosystem. Whether you're a seasoned gardener or just starting out, this eBook will provide you with the knowledge and tools needed to create a thriving home habitat that benefits both wildlife and humans. So, let's dive in and explore why attracting wildlife to your yard matters.

## Chapter 1: Understanding Your Local Wildlife

### Identifying Local Wildlife Species

Identifying local wildlife species is an essential part of creating a home habitat that supports native plants and animals. By understanding the species that call your area home, you can tailor your habitat to their specific needs and preferences. This includes providing the right food sources, nesting areas, and shelter for different types of animals. Additionally, identifying local wildlife can help you to track the success of your habitat and monitor any changes or fluctuations in the ecosystem over time.

Many resources are available for identifying local wildlife species, including field guides, online databases, and wildlife organizations. When starting out, it's helpful to observe the animals that frequent your yard and note their physical characteristics, behaviors, and habitat preferences. You can also consult with local experts, such as conservationists or wildlife biologists, for guidance on identifying species and creating a home habitat that supports their needs. By taking the time to identify and understand local wildlife species, you can create a home habitat that promotes biodiversity, supports local ecosystems, and provides a beautiful and thriving outdoor space for both wildlife and humans to enjoy.

# Attracting Wildlife to Your Yard: A Beginners Guide

Here is a list of 5 Guidebooks to Wildlife Identification:

1. *National Wildlife Federation Field Guide to Birds of North America* by Edward S. Brinkley
2. *The Sibley Guide to Birds* by David Allen Sibley
3. *The Kaufman Field Guide to Insects of North America* by Kenn Kaufman
4. *National Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Mammals* by National Audubon Society
5. *Peterson Field Guide to Birds of North America* by Roger Tory Peterson

## Understanding Wildlife Habitat Needs and Behaviors

Understanding wildlife habitat needs and behaviors are crucial when creating a home habitat that supports local species. Different animals have different needs regarding food, shelter, and nesting areas. By understanding these needs, you can create a habitat that is attractive and welcoming to various wildlife. For example, some birds prefer to nest in trees or shrubs, while others prefer nesting boxes or artificial structures. Similarly, some insects may require specific types of plants or flowers for food and shelter, while others may require access to standing water.

In addition to understanding habitat needs, it's important to understand wildlife behaviors when creating a home habitat. For example, some animals may be active during the day, while others may be nocturnal or crepuscular (active during dawn and dusk). Understanding when and how different animals use your habitat can help you to design a space that is both functional and welcoming. Additionally, understanding wildlife behaviors can help you to observe and enjoy the animals that visit your habitat and may even help you to identify and address any potential issues or challenges that arise.

## Creating a Habitat Map of Your Yard

Creating a habitat map of your yard is an essential step in designing and managing a home habitat that supports local wildlife. A habitat map is a visual representation of your yard, including the location and types of plants, structures, and features that support wildlife. By creating a habitat map, you can identify areas of your yard that may need additional support or enhancement and ensure that you're providing a variety of habitats for different types of animals. Additionally, a habitat map can help you to track changes and improvements in your habitat over time and identify any issues or challenges that may arise.

When creating a habitat map, it's important to consider the needs of different types of wildlife and to include a variety of habitats and features in your yard.

This might include areas of dense vegetation for cover and nesting, open spaces for foraging and grazing, and water sources for drinking and bathing. Additionally, you may want to include features such as bird feeders, nesting boxes, or insect hotels to attract specific types of animals. By mapping out these features and habitats, you can create a comprehensive plan for designing and managing a home habitat that supports local wildlife, promotes biodiversity, and provides a beautiful and thriving outdoor space for both animals and humans to enjoy.

## Chapter 2: Designing Your Wildlife-Friendly Landscape

# Attracting Wildlife to Your Yard: A Beginners Guide

## Choosing the Right Plants for Your Yard

Choosing the right plants for your yard is an important step in creating a home habitat that supports local wildlife. Native plants are a great choice, as they are adapted to the local climate and soil conditions and provide important food and shelter for native species. When selecting plants for your yard, consider the needs of different types of wildlife, and choose plants that provide a variety of habitats and resources. For example, flowering plants can attract bees, butterflies, and other pollinators, while berry-producing shrubs can provide food for birds and small mammals. Additionally, trees and shrubs can provide important cover and nesting sites for various wildlife.

When choosing plants for your yard, it's important to consider factors such as sun exposure, soil type, and water availability. Different plants have different requirements, and by choosing plants that are well-suited to your yard's conditions, you can ensure that they thrive and provide the maximum benefit for local wildlife. Additionally, it's important to consider the potential impact of non-native plants on the local ecosystem. Invasive species can outcompete native plants and disrupt local ecosystems, so it's important to avoid planting invasive species and instead choose plants that are well-adapted to the local environment.

By choosing the right plants for your yard, you can create a home habitat that supports local wildlife, promotes biodiversity, and provides a beautiful and thriving outdoor space for both animals and humans to enjoy.

## Five Examples of Plants Beneficial to Butterflies

1. Milkweed (*Asclepias* spp.)
2. Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*)
3. Butterfly weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*)
4. Coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*)
5. Joe-pye weed (*Eutrochium* spp.)

## Creating a Layered Landscape for Different Species

Creating a layered landscape is a key strategy for providing a variety of habitats and resources for different types of wildlife. By incorporating plants of varying heights and densities, you can create a diverse and multi-dimensional landscape that provides important food, shelter, and nesting sites for various species. A layered landscape might include a mix of trees, shrubs, grasses, and groundcover plants, arranged in a way that mimics natural ecosystems.

For example, taller trees can provide canopy cover and nesting sites for birds, while shrubs and understory plants can provide cover and food for small mammals and insects. Additionally, groundcover plants can provide important habitats for ground-dwelling species, such as amphibians and reptiles.

# Attracting Wildlife to Your Yard: A Beginners Guide

In addition to providing a variety of habitats, a layered landscape can also help to promote biodiversity by creating microclimates and niches that support a wide range of species. By incorporating plants of different textures, colors, and shapes, you can create a visually interesting and dynamic landscape that attracts a variety of wildlife. Additionally, a layered landscape can help to improve soil health, reduce erosion, and promote water conservation by capturing and filtering rainwater. By creating a layered landscape that supports local wildlife, you can promote biodiversity, support local ecosystems, and create a beautiful and thriving outdoor space for both animals and humans to enjoy.

## **Incorporating Water Features and Other Wildlife Attractants**

Incorporating water features and other wildlife attractants is an important strategy for creating a home habitat that supports a wide range of species. Water is essential for many types of wildlife, and adding a water feature to your yard can help to attract and support a variety of species, from birds and amphibians to mammals and insects. A water feature might include a bird bath, a small pond, or a flowing stream or fountain. It's important to choose a water feature that is appropriate for your yard's size and location and to ensure that it is safe for wildlife, with shallow edges and a gradual slope for easy access.

In addition to water features, there are many other types of wildlife attractants that you can incorporate into your home habitat. These might include bird feeders, nesting boxes, insect hotels, and bat houses, among others. By providing these types of resources, you can help to support local wildlife and create a thriving and diverse ecosystem in your own backyard. It's important to choose attractants that are appropriate for the local wildlife in your area and to ensure that they are installed and maintained safely and appropriately.

By incorporating water features and other wildlife attractants into your home habitat, you can create a beautiful and thriving outdoor space that supports local wildlife, promotes biodiversity, and provides a source of enjoyment and connection to the natural world.

## **Chapter 3: Maintaining Your Home Habitat**

### **Natural Pest Control Methods**

Natural pest control methods are an important aspect of creating a home habitat that supports local wildlife. Chemical pesticides can harm both wildlife and humans and can disrupt local ecosystems by killing off beneficial insects and other organisms. By using natural pest control methods, you can help to maintain a healthy balance of species in your yard while also reducing the risk of harm to and disrupt the natural ecosystem. By adopting wildlife-friendly lawn care practices, you can help to create a healthy and diverse ecosystem that supports local wildlife and promotes biodiversity.

Some tips for wildlife-friendly lawn care include mowing less frequently, leaving grass clippings on the lawn to provide natural fertilizer, avoiding the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, and planting native plants to support local wildlife.

# Attracting Wildlife to Your Yard: A Beginners Guide

In addition to promoting a healthy and sustainable approach to pest control, natural pest control methods can also help to support local wildlife by providing a diverse and healthy ecosystem. Beneficial insects, such as ladybugs and lacewings, can provide important food for birds and other predators while controlling pest populations. Additionally, by avoiding the use of chemical pesticides, you can help to promote the health and well-being of soil organisms and other beneficial organisms that play a critical role in maintaining a healthy and diverse ecosystem. By using natural pest control methods, you can help to create a home habitat that supports local wildlife, promotes biodiversity, and provides a healthy and sustainable outdoor space for both animals and humans to enjoy.

## Five Examples of Natural Pest Control

1. **Ladybugs:** Ladybugs are natural predators of aphids, mealybugs, and other soft-bodied insects that can damage plants. Ladybugs can be attracted to your garden by planting dill, fennel, or other plants that produce a lot of pollen and nectar.
2. **Diatomaceous earth:** Diatomaceous earth is a powder made from the fossilized remains of tiny aquatic organisms called diatoms. It works by dehydrating and drying out insects and other pests, causing them to die.
3. **Companion planting:** Companion planting is the practice of planting certain plants together to deter pests. For example, planting marigolds among vegetable crops can help to deter pests like nematodes and whiteflies.
4. **Beneficial nematodes:** Beneficial nematodes are microscopic worms that can be added to soil to control pests like grubs, cutworms, and weevils. They work by entering the bodies of these pests and releasing bacteria that cause them to die.
5. **Neem oil:** Neem oil is an oil pressed from the seeds of the neem tree. It works by disrupting the hormonal systems of insects, making it difficult for them to feed and reproduce. It can be sprayed on plants to control various pests, including aphids, spider mites, and whiteflies.

## Sustainable Gardening Practices

Sustainable gardening practices are a key component of creating a home habitat that supports local wildlife and promotes a healthy and thriving ecosystem. Sustainable gardening involves using practices that promote soil health, conserve water, and reduce waste while supporting local wildlife and promoting biodiversity. Some sustainable gardening practices include using organic fertilizers and compost to promote soil health, reducing water usage through techniques such as drip irrigation and rainwater harvesting, and using native plants to support local wildlife and promote biodiversity.

In addition to promoting a healthy and sustainable ecosystem, sustainable gardening practices can also help to reduce the environmental impact of gardening and promote a more eco-friendly approach to landscaping. By using organic fertilizers and compost, you can reduce the use of chemical fertilizers and promote soil health, which in turn can help to reduce runoff and soil erosion.

By reducing water usage, you can conserve one of our most valuable resources and help to reduce the strain on local water supplies. And by using native plants, you can help to promote biodiversity and support local wildlife while also reducing the need for fertilizers, pesticides, and other chemicals that can harm both wildlife and the environment. By incorporating sustainable gardening practices into your home habitat, you can create a beautiful and thriving outdoor space that supports local wildlife, promotes biodiversity, and helps to protect our planet.



# Attracting Wildlife to Your Yard: A Beginners Guide

## Wildlife-friendly Lawn Care Tips

Wildlife-friendly lawn care is an important component of creating a home habitat that supports local wildlife and promotes a healthy and thriving ecosystem. Traditional lawn care practices, such as mowing, fertilizing, and applying pesticides, can harm local wildlife and disrupt the natural ecosystem. By adopting wildlife-friendly lawn care practices, you can help to create a healthy and diverse ecosystem that supports local wildlife and promotes biodiversity.

Some tips for wildlife-friendly lawn care include mowing less frequently, leaving grass clippings on the lawn to provide natural fertilizer, avoiding the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, and planting native plants to support local wildlife.

In addition to promoting a healthy and thriving ecosystem, wildlife-friendly lawn care practices can also help to reduce the environmental impact of lawn care and promote a more eco-friendly approach to landscaping. By mowing less frequently and leaving grass clippings on the lawn, you can reduce the amount of waste generated by lawn care and promote natural fertilization. By avoiding the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, you can reduce the risk of harm to both wildlife and humans and promote a healthier and more sustainable approach to gardening. And by planting native plants, you can help to support local wildlife and promote biodiversity while also reducing the need for fertilizers, pesticides, and other chemicals that can harm both wildlife and the environment. By adopting wildlife-friendly lawn care practices, you can create a beautiful and thriving outdoor space that supports local wildlife, promotes biodiversity, and helps to protect our planet.

## Five Examples of Wildlife-Friendly Lawncare Tips

1. Mow high: When mowing your lawn, leave the grass at least three inches tall. This will help to shade the soil, prevent water evaporation, and promote deeper root growth. It will also provide habitat for small wildlife like insects and spiders.
2. Leave the clippings: Instead of bagging your grass clippings, leave them on the lawn. The clippings will decompose over time and provide nutrients to the soil. They can also serve as a food source for wildlife like birds and small mammals.
3. Avoid chemical fertilizers and pesticides: Chemical fertilizers and pesticides can harm wildlife and disrupt the natural balance of your lawn. Instead, consider using organic fertilizers and natural pest control methods like companion planting or beneficial insects.
4. Create diversity: Plant a variety of grasses and other plants in your lawn to provide habitat for a variety of wildlife. Native plants are especially beneficial because they are adapted to your local ecosystem and support local wildlife.
5. Provide water: Wildlife needs access to water, so consider adding a birdbath or small pond to your lawn. Be sure to keep the water clean and change it regularly to prevent the spread of disease.

## Chapter 4: Attracting Specific Wildlife Species

### Attracting Birds to Your Yard

# Attracting Wildlife to Your Yard: A Beginners Guide

Attracting birds to your yard is a great way to create a home habitat that supports local wildlife and promotes a healthy and thriving ecosystem. Birds are an important part of any ecosystem, critical in pollination, pest control, and seed dispersal. By attracting birds to your yard, you can help to support these important ecosystem services while also enjoying the beauty and wonder of these amazing creatures. Some tips for attracting birds to your yard include providing food and water sources, planting native plants, creating shelter, and avoiding the use of chemical pesticides.

One of the most important ways to attract birds to your yard is by providing a reliable source of food and water. You can do this by setting up bird feeders and baths, providing birds with a convenient source of nourishment and hydration. Additionally, planting native plants can help to attract birds by providing them with a natural source of food, such as berries or nectar. Creating shelter is also important for attracting birds, as it provides them with a safe place to roost and nest. This can be done by planting trees and shrubs or by installing birdhouses and nesting boxes. By following these tips for attracting birds to your yard, you can create a beautiful and thriving outdoor space that supports local wildlife, promotes biodiversity, and provides endless enjoyment and wonder.

## **Creating a Butterfly Garden**

Creating a butterfly garden is a wonderful way to create a home habitat that supports local wildlife and promotes a healthy and thriving ecosystem. Butterflies are not only beautiful to watch, but they are also important pollinators, playing a critical role in the reproduction of many plants. By creating a butterfly garden, you can help to support these important pollinators while also enjoying the beauty and wonder of these amazing creatures. Some tips for creating a butterfly garden include planting native plants, providing a water source, creating a sunny and sheltered location, and avoiding the use of chemical pesticides.

One of the most important ways to create a successful butterfly garden is by planting native plants that are attractive to butterflies. Butterflies have specific plant preferences for both nectar sources and host plants for their eggs and caterpillars, so it is important to choose plants that will attract the species of butterflies that are common in your area. Providing a water source is also important for creating a butterfly garden, as butterflies need a source of water for drinking and puddling. Creating a sunny and sheltered location for your butterfly garden will also help to attract butterflies, as they need a warm and protected area for feeding and basking.

Finally, avoiding the use of chemical pesticides is essential for creating a successful butterfly garden, as pesticides can harm not only butterflies but also other important pollinators and wildlife.

By following these tips for creating a butterfly garden, you can create a beautiful and thriving outdoor space that supports local wildlife, promotes biodiversity, and provides endless enjoyment and wonder.

## **Supporting Pollinators like Bees and Hummingbirds**



# Attracting Wildlife to Your Yard: A Beginners Guide

Supporting pollinators like bees and hummingbirds is crucial for maintaining a healthy and diverse ecosystem. Pollinators play a critical role in the reproduction of many plants, including many of the fruits, vegetables, and nuts we rely on for food. However, many species of pollinators are facing threats such as habitat loss, pesticide use, and climate change. By taking steps to support pollinators in your yard and garden, you can help to ensure the continued health and vitality of our natural world.

Some tips for supporting pollinators like bees and hummingbirds include planting a variety of native plants that provide nectar and pollen, providing a water source, avoiding the use of chemical pesticides, and creating sheltered areas for nesting and roosting. It is also important to provide a range of flowering plants that bloom throughout the growing season, ensuring that pollinators have a steady food source throughout the year. By planting a mix of flowers, shrubs, and trees, you can provide a diverse range of habitats for different species of pollinators. Additionally, providing a water source such as a bird bath or small pond can help to attract pollinators and provide them with a source of hydration. By taking these steps to support pollinators like bees and hummingbirds, you can create a thriving outdoor space that supports local wildlife, promotes biodiversity, and provides endless enjoyment and wonder.

## **Chapter 5: Sharing Your Home Habitat with Others**

### **Involving Your Family in Wildlife Conservation**

Involving your family in wildlife conservation is a wonderful way to instill a love and respect for nature in your children while also making a positive impact on your local ecosystem.

There are many ways to get your family involved in wildlife conservation, such as creating a family wildlife habitat project, participating in citizen science programs, or volunteering at a local nature center or wildlife sanctuary. By involving your family in these types of activities, you can help to build a sense of connection and responsibility to the natural world while also learning more about the plants and animals that call your community home.

One way to involve your family in wildlife conservation is by creating a family wildlife habitat project. This can involve choosing a portion of your yard or a nearby park to plant native plants, installing a bird feeder, or creating a small pond for wildlife. Working together on this project can be a fun and rewarding way to spend time together as a family while also making a positive impact on your local ecosystem. Another way to involve your family in wildlife conservation is by participating in citizen science programs, such as butterfly or bird counts, which help to provide important data for scientists studying these species. Additionally, volunteering at a local nature center or wildlife sanctuary can be a great way to learn more about local wildlife and conservation efforts while also giving back to your community. By involving your family in wildlife conservation, you can help to promote a love and appreciation for the natural world that will last a lifetime.

### **Educating Your Community About the Importance of Home Habitats**

Educating your community about the importance of home habitats can be a powerful way to promote wildlife conservation and help to create a more

# Attracting Wildlife to Your Yard: A Beginners Guide

sustainable and biodiverse world. By sharing your knowledge and enthusiasm for home habitats with others, you can inspire your community to take action to support local wildlife and create more welcoming outdoor spaces. Some ways to educate your community about the importance of home habitats include hosting workshops, giving presentations at community events, or writing articles for local publications.

One way to educate your community about home habitats is by hosting workshops or presentations on the topic. This can involve sharing information about the benefits of home habitats for wildlife and the environment, as well as providing tips and resources for creating a welcoming outdoor space. You could also consider partnering with local nature centers or wildlife sanctuaries to offer educational programs and events for the community. Additionally, writing articles for local publications, such as newspapers or newsletters, can be a great way to reach a wider audience and share your knowledge about home habitats and wildlife conservation. By educating your community about the importance of home habitats, you can help to create a more sustainable and biodiverse world for future generations.

## **Engaging in Citizen Science Projects to Support Local Wildlife Populations**

Engaging in citizen science projects is a great way to support local wildlife populations and contribute to scientific research on the environment. Citizen science refers to scientific research that volunteers conduct, often with the support of professional scientists. There are many different types of citizen science projects focused on wildlife, ranging from bird counts and butterfly surveys to monitoring water quality and tracking animal movements.

By participating in these projects, you can help to collect important data that can be used to inform conservation efforts and protect local wildlife.

One benefit of citizen science projects is that they allow people of all ages and backgrounds to get involved in scientific research and contribute to the greater good. Whether you're a seasoned naturalist or a curious beginner, there are citizen science projects that are accessible and engaging for everyone. By participating in these projects, you can learn more about the plants and animals that call your community home while also making a valuable contribution to scientific research. Additionally, citizen science projects can help to build a sense of community and connection with others who share your interest in wildlife and the environment. By engaging in citizen science projects, you can help to support local wildlife populations and make a meaningful difference in the world.

## **Five Examples of Citizen Science Projects**

# Attracting Wildlife to Your Yard: A Beginners Guide

1. eBird: eBird is a project run by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology that allows individuals to record bird observations anywhere in the world. Scientists then use this data to understand better bird populations, migration patterns, and habitat needs.
2. iNaturalist: iNaturalist is a citizen science platform where individuals can share observations of plants and animals anywhere in the world. The platform provides an opportunity to learn about local biodiversity and contribute to research and conservation efforts.
3. Project BudBurst: Project BudBurst is a project run by the Chicago Botanic Garden that encourages individuals to track the timing of plant life cycle events like leafing out and flowering. This data is used to better understand the impacts of climate change on plants and ecosystems.
4. Monarch Watch: Monarch Watch is a citizen science project that focuses on the conservation of monarch butterflies. Participants can contribute by reporting monarch sightings, tagging monarchs to track migration patterns, and planting milkweed and other nectar plants to provide habitat for monarchs.
5. Globe at Night: Globe at Night is a project that encourages individuals to observe and report on the quality of their local night sky. Participants are asked to identify the number of visible stars in the sky and report their observations to help researchers better understand light pollution and its impact on wildlife and human health.

## **Conclusion: Taking Action to Create a Wildlife-Friendly Home Habitat.**

In conclusion, creating a wildlife-friendly home habitat is an important step that we can all take to support local wildlife populations and promote biodiversity. By understanding the needs and behaviors of local wildlife species, choosing the right plants and landscaping features, and engaging in sustainable gardening practices, we can create welcoming outdoor spaces that provide food, shelter, and other resources for various animals. Additionally, by engaging in citizen science projects and educating our communities about the importance of home habitats, we can make a positive impact on the environment and help to build a more sustainable and biodiverse world.

Taking action to create a wildlife-friendly home habitat doesn't have to be difficult or expensive, and it can be a rewarding and fulfilling experience. By making small changes to our outdoor spaces, we can help to support local wildlife populations and make a difference in the world. Whether you're a seasoned gardener or a beginner, there are many resources and tools available to help you create a home habitat that is welcoming and supportive of local wildlife. By working together and taking action to create wildlife-friendly home habitats, we can help to protect and preserve the natural world for future generations.