



TEXAS A&M FOREST SERVICE

Forest Resources: Creating Song Bird Habitat

At least 100 species of songbirds nest in the Southeast, with many additional species overwintering or passing through during migration. Habitat requirements may differ by species but all birds need water, cover and food. Whatever the size of your property and budget, you can meet their needs and enliven your forestland.

Water:

Water is critical for attracting any type of wildlife. Habitat that appears good may be unused if no water is nearby. A pond or other water supply set into the ground provides the best results. It can be a small hole in hard clay, a large container set into the ground, a hole lined with plastic or a concrete pool. Place water supply in a sunny or partially shaded area, surrounded by natural vegetation and rocks. Rocks or old stumps near the water are attractive preening sites for birds.

Cover:

Cover is more important than shelter. It is a place for an animal to escape enemies, find refuge from the weather, and feel secure while it rests. It also means a safe place for raising young. About 3/4 of all birds build nests less than 15 feet above the ground with an average height of 8 feet. Some songbirds nest in tree cavities, in steep banks and cliffs, abandoned woodpecker holes and on bare ground. A variety of cover types will attract a variety of birds. A combination of trees, bushes, brush piles and rock piles gives the best results.

Food:

Songbirds enjoy most fruits, seeds and insects. Birds need a variety of foods depending on the season. Birds that feed primarily on seeds may switch to insects while raising young in the spring. Berries provide carbohydrates and fats that many birds need to survive the cold weather. To attract and retain birds on your property, intermingle different sizes, shapes and kinds of plants.

- Tall trees, such as oaks, hickories, maples and gums attract insects. Insects around plantings attract vireos, flycatchers, martins and swallows.
- Pecan, dogwood, cherries and crabapple provide excellent soft foods preferred by many birds, including the cardinal and titmouse.
- Tall and low shrubs offer cover and popular foods. Autumn-olive, sumac, nandina, American beautyberry and blackberry are good choices for planting.
- Trumpet creeper, honeysuckle, buckeye, native azaleas, buttonbush and jasmine are recommended for attracting hummingbirds from spring through fall.
- Annual grasses and flowers, or seeds and grains cast out across the grass will provide short-term food while trees and shrubs start producing.

Common Songbird Foods

Trees	Shrubs and Vines	Grasses and Forbs
Pine	Blackberry	Bristlegrass
Oak	Elderberry	Panicgrass
Mulberry	Blueberry	Crab grass
Dogwood	Virginia Creeper	Pokeweed
Blackgum	Poison ivy	Ragweed
Wild cherry	Grape	Smartweed
Holly	Wax myrtle	Grain