

Ripple Effect #43

BRINGING BACK THE BIRDS

Spring is just a couple of weeks away and it's time to start thinking about getting your yard ready for the return of the wildlife that has been absent all winter.

With a little planning, your backyard can be home for many different types of birds. The United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service and NorthDakotabirds.com offer several tips to make your yard an attractive place for birds to call home.

Trees, shrubs, and other plants provide both food and shelter for wildlife. The types of plants you use for food and cover will help determine the wildlife species attracted to your backyard.

Consider native plant species first. Native or indigenous plants naturally occur in the region in which they evolved. They are adapted to local soil, rainfall and temperature conditions, and have developed natural defenses to many insects and diseases. Because of these traits, native plants will grow with minimal use of water, fertilizers and pesticides. Wildlife species evolve with plants; therefore, they use native plant communities as their habitat. Using native plants helps preserve the balance and beauty of natural ecosystems.

Plant a variety of species. Select plants that flower and bear fruit at different times of the year. Shrubs that produce berries can provide food for wildlife throughout the year. Trees with nuts and fruit can also provide seasonal foods. Flowers and fruits of some plants attract hummingbirds and butterflies.

These are some examples of plants that you can grow to attract birds and other species. Wildlife attracting shrubs include: Dogwood, Common juniper, Buffaloberry, American Cranberry, Highbush cranberry, Chokecherry, Hollies, Pyracantha, Red-osier dogwood, Serviceberry, Spicebush, Sumacs, Viburnums and Wax myrtle. Trees attractive for birds and other wildlife include: Apple, Balsam fir, Cottonwood, Crabapple, Silver and Sugar Maple, Hackberry, Black Walnut and Oaks. Flowers for birds include: Aster, Coneflower, Wild Ginger, Black-eyed Susan and Sunflower. Be sure to check with your local nursery for a complete list of what will grow best in your area of the Basin.

You can provide additional food and shelter for birds and other wildlife by building or purchasing feeders and houses and by setting out certain foods. Find out which birds are most common in your area and which are rare or in special need of food and shelter. Many species of birds can be attracted by a variety of feed in different style feeders. Choose a location that birds will find appealing and secure, usually away from the bustle of human activity.

For more tips on backyard conservation and making your yard more attractive and enjoyable for all kinds of wildlife, go to www.nrcs.usda.gov/feature/backyard.

Until the next Ripple Effect,

The Red River Basin Commission (RRBC)

The RRBC is a grassroots organization that is a chartered not-for-profit corporation under the provisions of Manitoba, North Dakota, Minnesota, and South Dakota law. Our offices in Moorhead, MN and Winnipeg, MB can be reached at 218-291-0422 and 204-982-7254, or you can check out our website at www.redriverbasincommission.org.

