

CONSERVE WILDLIFE FOUNDATION OF NEW JERSEY

LANDSCAPING FOR WILDLIFE: CREATING BACKYARD HABITAT

ADDRESSING THE NEED

In New Jersey, more than half of the state is developed. This development has degraded, damaged, or destroyed a large percentage of wildlife habitats. It has caused many common species to decline in numbers because of loss of habitat. By providing habitat, even in small spaces, you can have an impact and help reverse their decline. Your backyard can attract birds, butterflies, beneficial insects, small mammals, reptiles, and amphibians. Trees, shrubs, and herbaceous plants provide food and cover for wildlife. Ponds provide watering sites for birds and mammals and provide breeding sites for many reptiles and amphibians. Generally, the less grass the better! Here we will demonstrate several ways that you can attract and benefit wildlife in your backyard.

HABITAT TYPES AND TREATMENTS

To help attract wildlife to your backyard you can install or create several different features to do so. These features are designed to provide both food and cover for wildlife.

- **Brush piles** provide cover and breeding sites for ground nesting birds and small mammals including chipmunks and white-footed mice.
- **Ponds** and wetlands are critical for many species to survive. Mammals and birds are attracted to these areas to drink. Wading birds, like herons and egrets feed on frogs and tadpoles and waterfowl eat aquatic vegetation. Seasonal wetlands or vernal pools are more important for wildlife, especially frogs, toads, and salamanders since they do not contain fish, which eat their eggs and larvae.
- **Meadows** containing wildflowers and warm-season grasses provide both food and cover for wildlife. Warm-season grasses provide food (from the grasses themselves) and from the invertebrates that are attracted to them. They can also survive severe droughty periods and need little maintenance once established. There is also little to no need for pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers. Creating a meadow is as easy as choosing to not mow a portion of your yard. Eventually the site will colonize with native grasses and wildflowers like Switchgrass, goldenrods, asters, and Common milkweed. Some species that utilize grasslands are the Bobolink, Savannah sparrow, Grasshopper sparrow, Eastern Meadowlark, Field sparrow, Vesper sparrow, Northern bobwhite, Wild turkey, and other small game birds.

- **Reforestation** areas are a critical tool for reconnecting fragmented habitat. Forested areas, large or small provide habitat for many species of birds for nesting and during migration. By planting “bare-root” or “balled-root” trees you can speed up natural succession and provide both food and cover for wildlife.
- **Scrub-shrub** habitat is also known as an early succession type, and without proper management can become a forest. When forests become fragmented, a “hard-edge” is created, with little or no transition from a forest to a lawn or meadow. Planting shrubs can create an important “transitional zone” along with food and cover for migratory birds.



A small (1.5 acre) reforestation site at Villas WMA in Cape May County, New Jersey.



Eastern box turtle (*Terrapene carolina carolina*)

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BENEFICIAL TREES, SHRUBS, AND VINES FOR BIRDS:

American holly (*Ilex opaca*)
Eastern redcedar (*Juniperus virginiana*)
Black cherry (*Prunus serotina*)
Flowering dogwood (*Cornus florida*)
Northern Bayberry (*Myrica pensylvanica*)
Crab apple (*Malus spp.*)
Oaks (*Quercus spp.*)
Highbush blueberry (*Vaccinium corymbosum*)
Serviceberry (*Amelanchier canadensis*)
Winged sumac (*Rhus copallina*)
Staghorn sumac (*Rhus typhina*)
Viburnums (*Viburnums spp.*)
Trumpet vine (*Campis radicans*)
Virginia Creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*)

BENEFICIAL HERBACEOUS PLANTS FOR HUMMINGBIRDS, BUTTERFLIES, AND BEES:

Aster (*Aster spp.*)
Azalea (*Rhododendron spp.*)
Bee Balm (*Monarda spp.*)
Butterfly weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*)
Common milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*)
Cardinal flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*)
Columbine (*Aquilegia spp.*)
Coneflower (*Echinacea spp.*)
Phlox (*Phlox spp.*)
Lupine (*Lupinus spp.*)
Salvia (*Salvia spp.*)



Common buckeye ne-
ctars on Black-eyed susan.



Wildflower meadow in backyard



Ben Wurst plants trees at a refore-
station site in Cape May County.

ABOUT THE HABITAT RESTORATION PROGRAM

Since 2007 the Conserve Wildlife Foundation (CWF) has been actively restoring habitat for rare wildlife in New Jersey. Since the beginning of the program over 29 acres of wildlife habitat have been restored. CWF actively works with the Endangered and Nongame Species Program, the Division of Fish and Wildlife, Division of Parks and Forestry, NJ Forest Service, and the Land Use Regulation Program to identify and restore wildlife habitat. Completed projects include: 15 acres of Atlantic-white cedar reforestation inside Bass River State Forest, Bass River Township, Burlington County. CWF partnered with NJ Forest Service to provide funding to restore forested wetlands that formally contained Atlantic-white cedar. 1.5 acre reforestation project at Villas Wildlife Management Area in Lower Township, Cape May County. The project is meant to speed the regeneration of forested areas of an old gold course, formally known as the "Ponderlodge Golf Course."

This fact sheet is part of the Habitat Restoration program created by Conserve Wildlife Foundation of New Jersey (CWF). CWF is a non-profit organization dedicated to protecting New Jersey's endangered and threatened wildlife and the habitats they depend on for survival. We accomplish this through research and conservation projects and education and outreach programs that advance the protection of New Jersey's rarest wildlife residents.

For more information, visit www.conservewildlifenj.org