



NATIVE PLANTS FOR BIRDS

Theodore Payne Foundation for Wild Flowers and Native Plants
10459 Tuxford Street, Sun Valley, CA 91352 | (818) 768-1802 | theodorepayne.org

Gardens that are good habitats for birds provide five things:
food, water, shelter from predators, nesting material and nesting sites.

FOOD

Birds consume different types of food depending on species, time of year and who's actually eating. For example, nearly the entire diet of a developing baby bird is insects. Therefore, it is important to encourage insects, especially caterpillars, in your garden. You can do this by not using pesticides and by letting some leaf litter accumulate on the ground. Adult birds also consume insects, as well as fruits, nuts, berries and/or seeds. Let plants go to seed before removing or deadheading them.

Annuals

Amsinckia menziesii (fiddleneck)—Seeds are enjoyed by goldfinches

Salvia columbariae (chia)—Nutritious seeds (nutlets)

Groundcovers

Achillea millefolium (yarrow)—Seeds are eaten off the ground by doves

Berberis aquifolium var. *repens* (creeping barberry)—Blue berries ripen in summer

Fragaria spp. (strawberry)—Low growing with berries that are eaten by many different birds

Shrubs

Atriplex lentiformis ssp. *breweri* (quail bush)—Many birds eat seeds and salty leaves

Berberis nevinii (Nevin's barberry)—Red berries ripen in late spring/early summer

Frangula and *Rhamnus* spp. (redberry and coffeeberry)—Summer berries for jays and thrashers

Heteromeles arbutifolia (toyon)—Red berries are an important winter food source

Malosma laurina (laurel sumac)—Produces berries and attracts insects

Prunus spp. (cherry)—Woodpeckers and jays eat the fruits whole; smaller birds pick pulp off the large seeds

Ribes spp. (currant, gooseberry)—Berries are relished by many birds

Rosa spp. (wild rose)—Nutritious hips enjoyed by quail and goldfinches

Salvia spp. (sage)—Seeds for many small songbirds, especially goldfinches

Symphoricarpos spp. (snowberry)—White berries are eaten by thrushes

Vines and Vine-Like Plants

Lonicera spp. (honeysuckle, twinberry)—Many birds like the berries

Rubus spp. (blackberry, salmonberry and thimbleberry)—Berries eaten by various birds

Vitis spp. (wild grape)—Fruit appeals to many birds

Trees

Juglans californica (Southern California black walnut)—Nuts are favored by jays

Quercus spp. (oak)—A source of Insects and acorns (especially for jays)

Sambucus nigra ssp. *caerulea* (elderberry)—A favorite for berries, as well as insects that it attracts

WATER Most birds drink water every day and also need water for bathing. Choose or build a shallow birdbath, pool or water feature that is easy to clean. Moving water attracts birds and keeps them healthy.

More on the subject from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology,

www.birds.cornell.edu/AllAboutBirds/notes/BirdNote09_ProvideWater.pdf.

SHELTER, NESTING SITES AND NESTING MATERIAL

Shrubs and trees of differing heights and densities provide cover and safety for many different types of birds. A varied mix of plants also makes for an interesting garden!

Birds nest in all types of places. Towhees and quail build loose nests on or near the ground, within or underneath protective shrubs. Hummingbirds generally build nests in the crotches of branches, often 10-15 feet off the ground. Orioles create complex sock-like nests that hang on the outer branches of deciduous trees. Woodpeckers and wrens use cavities in tree trunks. When purchasing or building a nesting box, be sure it is the right style and size for each specific type of bird.

In California, nesting season for most birds ranges from March through August, and may begin as early as December. Therefore, try to avoid ANY unnecessary tree and shrub pruning during this time.

Different birds, depending on species, use different materials to construct their nests, including dead twigs, leaf litter, blades of grass, animal hair and bits of string. Hummingbirds use spider webs, lichen, pieces of leaves, and soft hairs from the underside of sycamore leaves. Leave fallen leaves and other debris in your garden to help out birds during nesting season.

Plants that Encourage and Support Nesting

Arctostaphylos spp. (manzanita)—Nesting sites

Atriplex lentiformis (quail bush)—Shelter

Berberis (Mahonia) spp. (barberry)—Prickly foliage provides protection

Ceanothus spp. (California lilac)—Visited by many birds for shelter

Frangula (Rhamnus) californica (coffeeberry)—Dense shelter

Heteromeles arbutifolia (toyon)—Shelter and nesting sites

Lyonothamnus floribundus ssp. aspleniifolius (Santa Cruz Island ironwood)—Bark for nesting material

Platanus racemosa (Western sycamore)—Nesting material and nesting sites for hummingbirds

Prunus ilicifolia ssp. ilicifolia, *P. ilicifolia ssp. lyonii* (holly-leaf cherry, Catalina cherry)—Excellent shelter

Rosa spp. (wild rose)—Prickly plants offer cover

Quercus spp. (oak)—Superior habitat for many birds; provides shelter and nesting material

Grasses, many species—Dry leaf blades are used for nesting material

BIRDS THAT EAT BERRIES

Band-tailed pigeon (*Patagioenas fasciata*)—Eats seed, as well as fruit; loves *Sambucus nigra ssp. caerulea* (Mexican elderberry); travels in flocks of 30 to 50 birds

California thrasher (*Toxostoma redivivum*)—Loves fruit and dense foliage; most common near wildlands

Cedar waxwing (*Bombycilla cedrorum*)—Winter visitors that travel in large flocks; especially fond of *Heteromeles arbutifolia* (toyon)

Hermit thrush (*Catharus guttatus*)—Eats insects, as well as fruit of *Symphoricarpos* spp. (snowberry)

Hooded oriole (*Icterus cucullatus*)—Eats many berries and fruit

Phainopepla (*Phainopepla nitens*)—A summer visitor from the Sonoran desert; loves berries, especially *Sambucus nigra ssp. caerulea* (blue elderberry)

Western tanager (*Piranga ludoviciana*)—An insect eater that also eats fruit, such as *Ribes aureum var. aureum* (golden currant)

BIRDS THAT EAT SEEDS

Black-headed grosbeak (*Pheucticus melanocephalus*)—Spring to mid-summer visitors; fond of sunflowers

California quail (*Callipepla californica*)—*Atriplex lentiformis ssp. breweri* (quail bush) is a major food source

House finch (*Carpodacus mexicanus*)—One of our most common seed eaters

Lesser goldfinch (*Spinus psaltria*)—Especially enjoy *Cirsium* (thistle) and *Amsinckia* (fiddleneck).

Mourning dove (*Zenaida macroura*)—Year-round seed eaters

Oak titmouse (*Baeolophus inornatus*)—Need oaks, such as *Quercus agrifolia* (coast live oak), to survive

Western scrub-jay (*Aphelocoma californica*)—They bury caches of acorns throughout the yard

White crowned sparrow (*Zonotrichia leucophrys*)—Fall-to-spring visitors; favor *Cirsium* spp. (thistle) seeds