



Wildlife Management

Tips for planning your wildlife habitat
in your own backyard.



CONSERVATION
in your
BACKYARD
WE CAN ALL HAVE A HAND IN IT

Traditionally America's backyards were perfectly mowed lawns with a jungle gym for the kids to play on with a couple rose bushes.

Today's families are wanting to do more with their yards to help all wildlife species from birds, butterflies, insects, lizards, and even earthworms.

As you begin to build a backyard habitat with life buzzing around, you need to first think about your goals.



Planning your Wildlife Habitat

Designing an appealing backyard habitat requires knowledge and planning. A few concepts will help you meet your goals.

1. Identify existing plants and note their condition and location.
2. How much shade are existing trees and shrubs providing?
3. Does the existing vegetation provide diversity of heights and various configurations?
4. Are the plants providing the right types of food (nectar, fruit, etc.) at the right time of year for the wildlife you're trying to attract?

Your answers to the questions above will greatly influence how your plan will look, but the goal should be to design landscaping to meet the needs of the animals you would like to welcome into your backyard.

Selecting native species of trees, shrubs, grasses, and forbs is strongly recommended because they are adapted to the local soil, climate, and wildlife. If you are starting from scratch, you will want to plant trees and shrubs first as they require the most time to mature.

Getting started



Select some species that are evergreen so you have year-round shelter and cover. Deciduous trees (those that drop their leaves every year) that will bloom and fruit/nut can provide food sources throughout the year.

Consider the eventual size and placements of trees you select to avoid overcrowding. Dead woody plants (trees and shrubs) also serve a large role in wildlife habitat crafting. Consider leaving a dead tree or shrub in your yard – if it is not a threat to safety – or incorporating logs and stumps into your plan.

More than 400 species of birds, mammals, and amphibians use dead trees as their

homes and different fish, plants and fungi can benefit greatly from dead or dying trees and shrubs.

Next, turn your attention to annual (plants that live one growing season) and perennial (plants that live for more than one year) grasses and other flowering plants called forbs. These types of plants can be added at any stage to provide color, ground cover/habitat, and to attract butterflies and birds to your yard.

Part of your yard could be used for tall native grasses and/or native wildflowers to add food, shelter, and beauty to your yard. Avoid perfect symmetry as natural habitat has curves and clumps of vegetation.

Plants provide food and shelter, but wildlife also need reliable sources of fresh, clean water. Water in a shallow saucer, bird bath, or backyard pond are all good sources for wildlife.

Consider placing rocks or logs in the water so butterflies and birds have places to rest while they drink. Clean and replenish as needed to make sure the water you are offering is fresh and reliable.

Developing a backyard wildlife habitat is a work in progress so implementing a plan doesn't have to happen all at once! Maximizing the diversity of plants and asymmetry are all keys to building a home for wildlife in your backyard.



Selecting trees, shrubs, bushes and grasses add to your backyard habitat.



Pick species of flowers that are perennial and will bloom throughout the year providing food, shelter, and cover.



Your space can continue to change each year with older goals and newer goals being achieved.

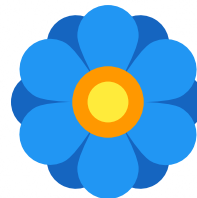


Habitat for bees

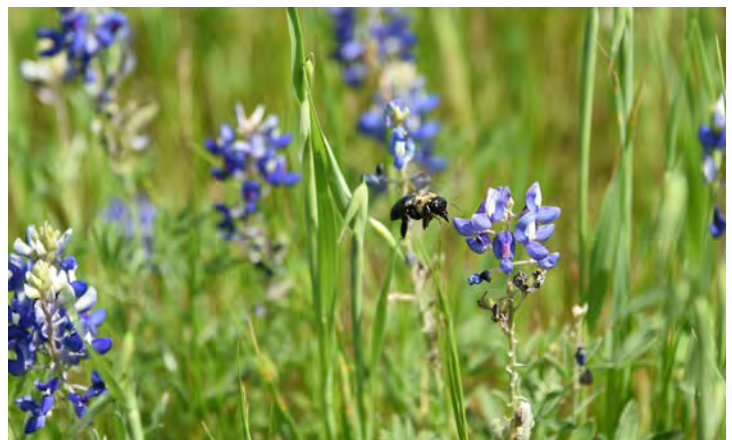
There are nearly 5,000 different species of bees native to North America. Of those, more than 800 call Texas home. Most native bees are solitary bees that make their homes in holes in the ground or burrows in dead trees or twigs. These bees do not have hives to protect so they are not as aggressive as social bees (like the European honeybee) which means they rarely sting.



Bumblebees, carpenter bees, sweat bees, leafcutter bees, digger bees, and others pollinate many kinds of plants. They play a critical role in healthy plant communities.



Bees are attracted to most flowering plants, but they especially like blue and yellow flowers. Plant a wide variety of plants so there are blooms in your garden during the spring, summer and fall. Because many Texas bees live in the ground, consider having areas of your garden that have access to more bare open soil.



Habitat for Reptiles and Amphibians

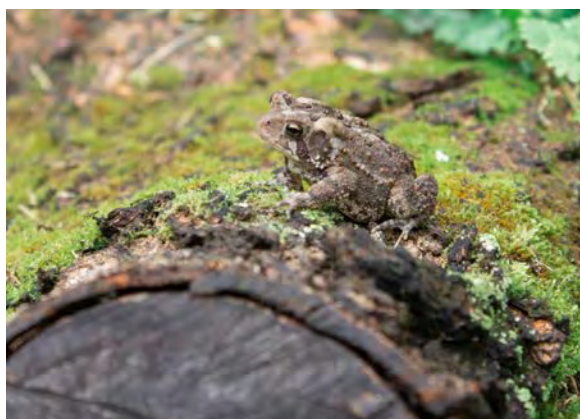
Toads, frogs, lizards, turtles and snakes are also potential residents of your backyard. Reptiles and amphibians are cold-blooded animals which means they use their environment to regulate their body temperature.



Because of this, these animals need sunny basking areas to warm up in the morning and shady cool areas to spend time in during the heat of the day and protect themselves from predators. It's easy to provide shelter for reptiles and amphibians.



Rocks placed in sunny areas will provide basking sites and shade-tolerant grasses and forbs or thick layers of leaves would be excellent cool shelter. If vegetation is scarce, placing stumps, logs or stones in a shady spot could also be excellent cool habitat.



Habitat for Birds

Birds are very particular and diverse in their habitat needs. Some like deeply wooded areas while others prefer open fields and meadows. If you have a particular species of bird you would like to attract to your yard, contact local specialists to understand their preferred environment. In general, birds will nest and use different characteristics of trees so having a variety of species with varying heights planted in an irregular configuration is a great way to create a home for birds in your backyard.

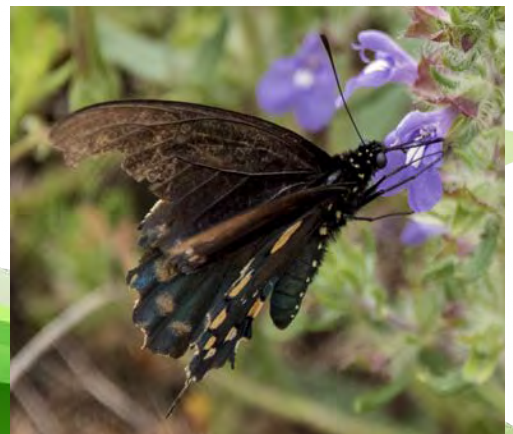


While all birds are unique, hummingbirds are extra special because they only eat nectar. If you'd like to attract these tiny migratory birds to your yard, consider selecting red and yellow tubular flowers.



Habitat for Butterflies

There are hundreds of different butterflies and moths in North America that require different forms of food at different stages of their lives. Typically, the caterpillars (larvae) stage of butterflies and moths require a large amount of plant material – sometimes it seems like they devour entire plants overnight! Like hummingbirds, adult butterflies and moths require food in liquid form like nectar. They get it from flowers and from the juice of extra ripe fruit. The species of flowers you plant will largely depend on which butterflies you would like to attract. Contact local specialists for a list of the flowers that would best fit your needs.





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June 2021