Gardening in the Age of Climate Change

Bird, Birds, Birds

- We decided to do a more in-depth look at a single topic for this issue, and we chose birds. WARNING: IT'S A BIG ONE.
- Why are birds import to us?
- How do you identify them?
- How can we attract them to our backyards?
- How do we affect their migration?
- What can we do to protect them and help them thrive?
- We have several articles that will provide you with some answers plus websites to learn more.
- We humans have a great impact on our beautiful feathered friends. Our outdoor cats, our vehicles and our lighting have a lot to do with their survival.
- Let's do our best to help them, as they help us

Carolyn Braverman

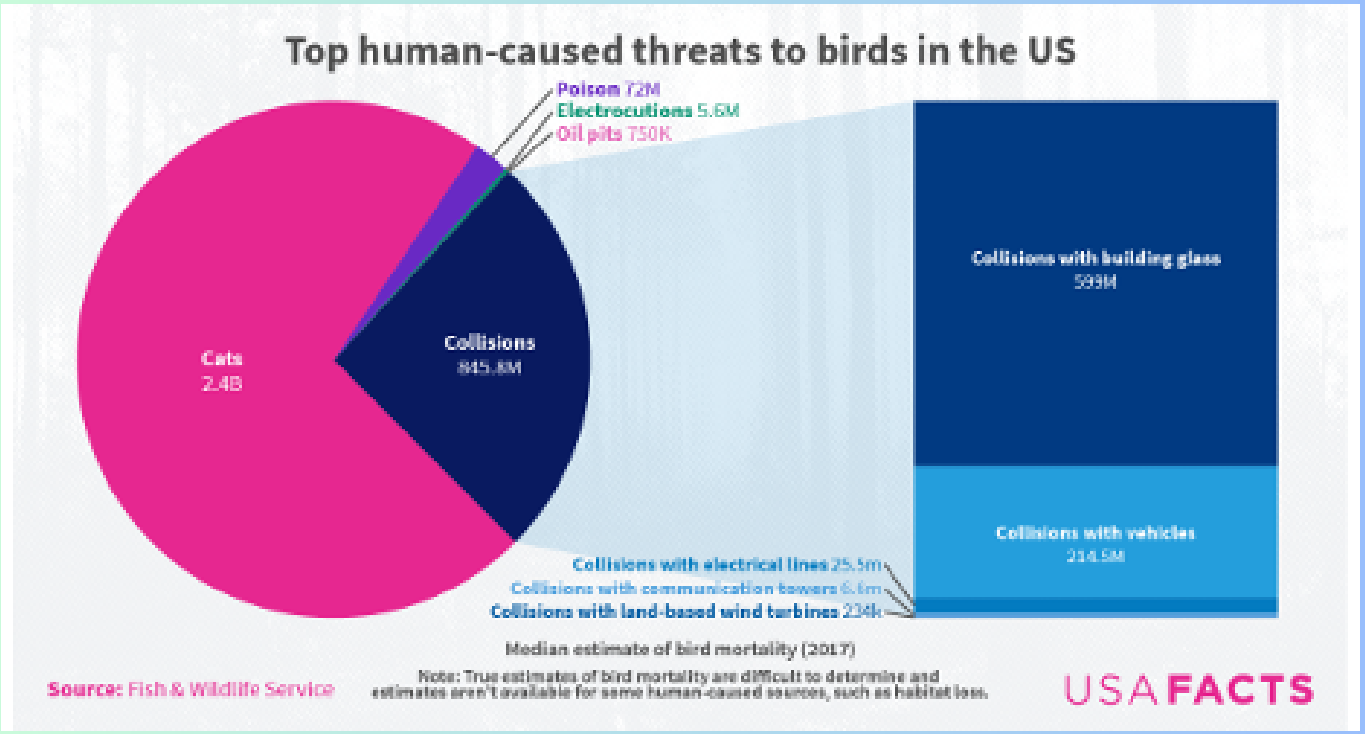
WHY BIRDS MATTER- The Importance of Birds In Our Landscape

- Over 450 bird species have been documented in our state of Maryland, with about half that number nesting here. Others migrate through our state each year to breed. It's well documented that the variety and number of bird species are in serious decline, most severely in North America.
- According to the National Audubon Society, more than one-third of U.S. bird species are of high or moderate conservation concern. This comes after the landmark study in 2019 that documented the loss of 3 billion birds in North America over the last 50 years.
- Habitat loss, climate change, and environmental degradation have been linked to this downward population trend. *
- As gardeners, we should care about the conservation of birds. Our backyard birds contribute essential services to our gardens including natural pest control, seed dispersal, fertilization, and pollination. The variety of birds in our landscape is an indicator of the overall health and biodiversity of the environment we create in our yards.
- Native trees, shrubs, and plants that are host to certain insects ensure essential food for birds to feed their young and provide safe nesting sites and cover from predation.

- Fresh water throughout the year is also essential for our feathered friends. Bird feeders provide an opportunity to observe the birds in our immediate environment and supplement their diet when there's a scarcity in winter months. It's important, though, to clean out bird feeders every few weeks to avoid germs that can harm birds. Cleaning up discarded bird shells on the ground below the feeders is also essential to avoid spreading disease.

WHY BIRDS MATTER cont'd

- **The chart below shows the primary cause of bird deaths by humans. Predation by free roaming and feral cats is a significant cause of bird deaths in the U.S.**



- **Participatory science is wonderful way to support birds in our landscape. There are numerous ways to contribute to bird conservation, including Project Feederwatch (Cornell University), Nestbox Monitoring, the Christmas Bird Count and the Great Backyard Bird Count. ****

*** https://www.audubon.org/magazine/sweeping-new-report-shows-us-birds-declining-sharply-across-range-habitats**

****https://md.audubon.org/get-involved-citizen-science**

Peggy Connner

LIGHTS OUT BALTIMORE

- Lights Out Baltimore (LOB) is a 501 c3 non-profit formed by a group of concerned birdwatchers in the Baltimore Bird Club, who had seen firsthand the toll lights and windows play on birds.
- Our goal is to make Charm City safe for migratory birds by turning outdecorative lighting in the city during peak migration seasons, between the hours of 11 p.m. and 6 a.m. and to advocate for bird-safe lighting and building design.

- Why are we called Lights Out?
- Buildings with clear glass or reflective glass cause birds to collide with the building. These collisions can kill or injure the bird. An estimated 1 billion birds die each year from collisions. Our goal at Lights Out Baltimore is to turn all decorative lighting in downtown Baltimore off during migration months, encourage task lighting, and better lighting practices in downtown buildings.
- What we do?
- A core group of volunteers walk downtown Baltimore during fall and spring migration to rescue injured birds from window collisions and collect dead birds. Injured ones are taken to Phoenix Wildlife Center and dead ones are taken to the Smithsonian's Museum of Natural History.
- Over 4000 birds have been found dead or injured since monitoring the Baltimore streets in 2008 and over 1000 have been rescued including migratory bats. An average of 450 birds are impacted annually in Baltimore from monitoring 20-25 buildings 4 months a year.
- LOB has partnered with US Fish and Wildlife under the Urban Bird Treaty for more bird habitats in Baltimore and mitigating hazards for migratory birds.

Lynn Faulkner

LIGHTS OUT BALTIMORE cont'd

In 2016, LOB collaborated with Baltimore Office of Promotion and the Arts to make Light City bird-friendly. Local partners include Chesapeake USFW, Audubon Mid-Atlantic Waterfont Partnership, American Bird Conservancy, and National Aquarium

MORE ON BIRD COLLISIONS

- **Check out American Bird Conservancy and click on Threats to learn more about bird collisions and how to avoid them at home. Copy and paste this link: https://abcbirds.org**

Donna Miller

BIRDCAST

- **Began as a collaboration among EPA, National Audubon Society, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Clemson University Radar Ornithology Department, Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia, and GeoMarine, Inc..**
- **The objectives were to maintain A Web site that posted educational information about bird migration, to predict and monitor bird migrations on a daily basis using weather radar.**
- **Today, there are live bird migration maps and local bird migration alerts. You can enter your city – try your town if you think you aren't in a city – and see the forecast for migration for your area. It changes daily. You can see the prediction of how many thousands of birds are expected to fly over during a particular night.**
- **There is much more detailed information on the website: https://www.birdcast.org**

FAVORITE TREES AND SHRUBS FOR WILDLIFE AND BIRDS

- A layered garden is best for birds: ground covers, perennials, shrubs and small trees, up to mature hardwoods are needed. Some birds nest on the ground, feed on your coneflower seeds, roost and hunt from small trees, and proclaim their territories from taller vantage points.

- The number one tree for a yard is a native OAK species.

- Doug Talamy writes:
  - "Oaks are the best tree genus in North America for supporting the food web that supports birds, the insects they eat and thousands of other species".

- Mature, tall Oak or Maple are required by Baltimore Orioles where they build hanging nests among the highest branches.

- Oak and Maple are also preferred by American Robins as they also nest higher off the ground

- Maple and Oak are also a favorite of Woodpeckers, as many caterpillars like the trees, and all insect hunters love the caterpillars. Maples have softer bark, so it is easy to find insects to eat.

Favorite trees cont'd

- White Pines are a favorite of Yellow Bellied Sapsuckers, who poke horizontal lines in the bark to promote sap flow, which in turn catches insects. Their evergreen nature gives roosting protection during the winter months.

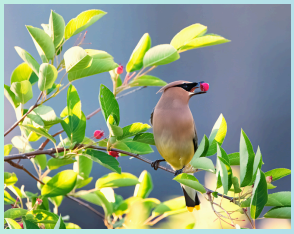
- Eastern Red Cedar is popular with Cedar Waxwings for the fruits which mature in the fall. It is also popular with BlueJays and Mockingbirds and Mourning Doves. The dense foliage provides places for insects to thrive, providing additional food, and a safe shelter for birds to roost.

- River Birch attracts birds and small mammals. The peeling nature of the bark provides a lot of shelter to many insects which Nuthatches and Chickadees enjoy

- Winterberry provide abundant berries in the winter for Cedar Waxwings, Mockingbirds, and sparrows, as well as turkeys. (Remember, you must have Male and Female winterberry plants for berry production).

- Crabapple and flowering Dogwood attract Cardinals and Bluebirds. Both produce fruit and attract insects. Cardinals prefer nesting under 15 feet, so the tree is a good size, and both like to perch among branches.

Lynn Walter



RESOURCES

Audubon

Cornell Lab of Ornithology

Merlin App - Identify birds by Sight and Sound