



North Oaks Conservation Award

Wildlife Habitat Best Practices

A diverse landscape with many plant species supports an abundance of wildlife, helps conserve energy and soil, provides natural beauty and opportunities for photography and birdwatching, encourages natural insect control, produces food for human consumption, and increases property value. When altering your landscape for wildlife, be sure to provide the four basic needs of wildlife: food, water, shelter, and space.

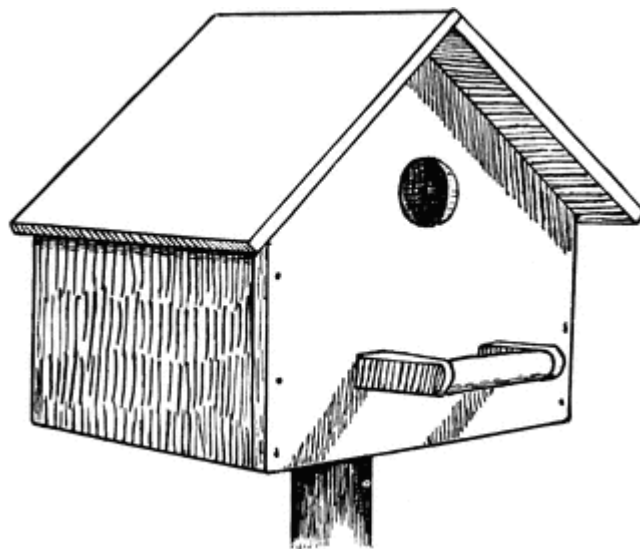
Best Practices for Wildlife Habitat - Ideas

There are sixteen components of wildlife habitat. Eight are vegetative, eight are structural:

1. Conifers: Also called evergreens. They are important as escape cover, winter cover, and summer nesting sites. The sap, needles, twigs, and buds are eaten by wildlife.
 2. Grasses and legumes: These are important for many ground nesting birds, and provide food for plant-eating animals.
 3. Butterfly, bees, and moth plants: Two types of food are necessary for butterflies - food for caterpillars and nectar sources for adult butterflies. There are nearly 50 plants that rate as “excellent” for attracting bees. Several kinds of moths are also attracted to flower gardens. DO NOT use plants treated with neonicotinoids.
 4. Hummingbird and oriole plants: For the ruby-throated hummingbird, plant flowers that bloom in early summer and some in late summer. The Baltimore oriole can be attracted to feed on the nectar or blossoms of several red or orange flowers.
 5. Summer plants: This component is comprised of trees, shrubs, aquatic plants, and vines which provide food and nesting cover from June through August, with emphasis on plants that produce fruit and berries in the summer.
 6. Fall plants: This component includes shrubs, vines, and grain crops which are primarily of value in the fall.
 7. Winter plants: These are plants that produce fruit that remain on trees or shrubs until they are needed as winter food.
 8. Nut and acorn trees: These trees provide significant foods in the fall and winter. They are a wonderful long-term investment in wildlife.
 9. Nest boxes: Nest boxes and platforms are used by at least 46 species of northern wildlife. They supplement natural nesting sites.
 10. Snags: As long as there is no danger to human safety, dead trees or “snags” provide valuable habitat component filled with food for 43 species of birds and at least 26 mammal species in the midwest.
 11. Brush and rock piles: Because of the prevalence of Lyme disease in our area, it is not recommended to provide brush piles for wildlife, as they may attract white-footed mice (an important animal to the life cycle of deer ticks). However, large rocks along
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the water's edge and into the water provide shelter for frogs and toads and basking sites for turtles, skinks, and snakes.

12. Cut banks, cliffs, and caves: These are not normal features of backyard habitats nor features that homeowners should attempt to create. But if you happen to live adjacent to water areas, you may notice swallows and kingfishers using the area as burrow sites.
13. Salt: Salt and other trace elements are other essential components of wildlife habitat. However, because of the prevalence of Lyme disease in our area, do not provide artificial salt licks, as they attract white-tailed deer (an important animal to the life cycle of deer ticks).
14. Dust beds and grit: Both dust and grit are used by many wild birds to satisfy special needs. A backyard dusting site will attract pheasants, turkeys, and small songbirds. A tray or bed of sand near your bird feeder will increase the number and variety of birds in your yard.
15. Water: Water is an essential component of wildlife habitat. Water can be provided in many forms, from a dripping source of water in a mud puddle for butterflies to bird baths, backyard ponds, marshes, and lakes.
16. Feeders: The finishing touch to a wildlife landscape plan is an assortment of wildlife feeders which supplement the foods already provided by trees, shrubs, and flowers. Remember to keep the feeders at least 5 feet off the ground, so as not to attract deer (again, Lyme disease is prevalent in our area and the white-tailed deer is important to the life cycle of deer ticks).



The majority of this information was excerpted from Minnesota DNR's "Landscaping for Wildlife" publication. Please read this publication for specific details.