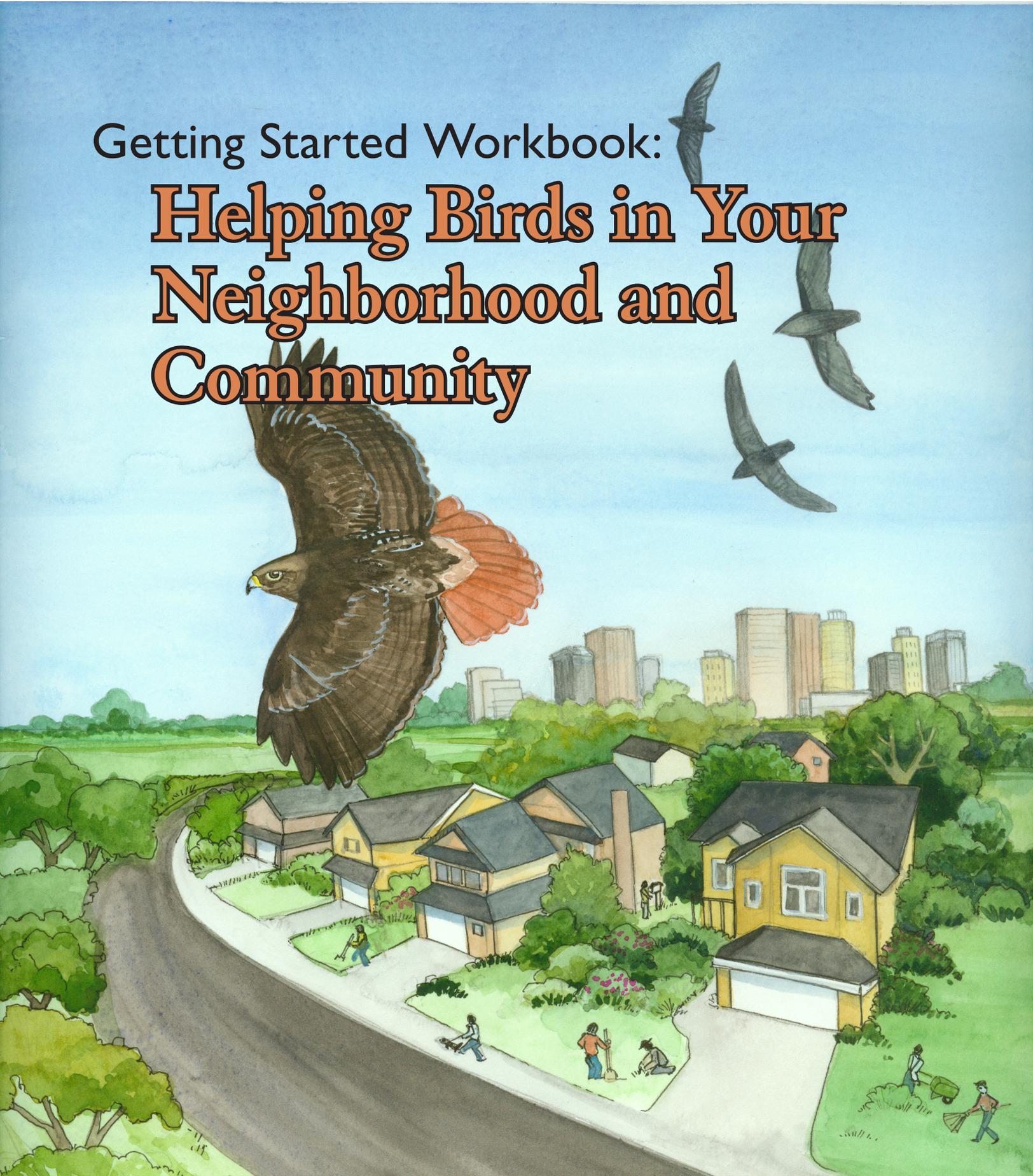


Getting Started Workbook:

# Helping Birds in Your Neighborhood and Community



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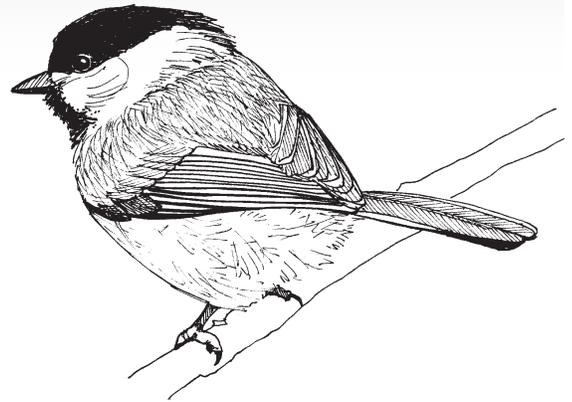


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# Helping Birds in Your Community

*Before roads and buildings dominated your neighborhood or community, hundreds of bird species nested, migrated through, and wintered in the area. Some of those birds may have disappeared, but many are still present. Of those that remain, many have become less common and may need more help if they are to thrive. You can make your community more beautiful, inspiring, and sustainable by making it more hospitable to these native birds.*



## How to Use This Guide

The tools found in this guide will assist you in making your neighborhood or community better for birds and people. This guide will help you bring people together and show you how to get started by offering questions to consider in developing a plan for your area. It provides worksheets, ideas, and additional resources to help you begin the journey towards a sustainable future.

The first step is to recruit a team of people you can work with and create a plan for the birds in your area. Use the questions and worksheets provided here to figure out who needs to be a part of your team, what birds you should be trying to help, what habitats you should protect, restore or recreate, and how you can keep birds safe from the hazards they face in human communities.



### Helpful Hint

Have fun and enjoy the process. You won't solve all your community's problems in a day, but your efforts will make a meaningful impact for years to come.

# Coming Together to Help Birds

*Before you set out to take on the world, recruit like-minded folks to join you so you can work together. Don't worry too much about logistics at first. Just set a date for a first meeting, send out invitations to as many possible partners as you can come up with, and get started! You will continue to invite others after you get things started.*

## Your Group

Whether you want to help birds in your neighborhood or larger community, you need input and help from others. In your neighborhood, perhaps you can start as a subcommittee of your local neighborhood or homeowner's association. At the community level, perhaps as a committee of your local Audubon chapter, watershed association, or other group. Your goal is to see your neighborhood or community grow and flourish in harmony with birds and other wildlife, so bring as many partners to the table as possible. Meet regularly, build partnerships, and enjoy the fruits of your labors.

## Considerations:

- What local groups are already working on habitat issues in your community?
- Who is usually missing from conservation discussions in your community? Whom else can you invite to make your group as inclusive as possible?
- What other community issues can you help resolve by working together to help birds?
- Can you find a meeting time to bring city employees and other professionals together with interested volunteers?

## To Learn More

- Audubon At Home: More ideas on forming your group are online at <http://www.audubonathome.org/workingtogether>
- Flyway Cities: Examples of community groups around the country: [www.flywaycities.org](http://www.flywaycities.org).
- Wildlife Co-Ops: A helpful online guide at [www.tpwd.state.tx.us/publications/pwdpubs/media/pwd\\_bk\\_w7000\\_0336.pdf](http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/publications/pwdpubs/media/pwd_bk_w7000_0336.pdf)



## Helpful Hint

There is nothing like refreshments to make your meetings successful! Think of meetings more as productive get-togethers and have fun!

# Setting Priorities

There are hundreds of bird species in your area, and to be effective you should focus on the birds that need the most help and that you can realistically assist with your efforts. Before deciding which species to focus on, start by finding out which species are most threatened in your area, as well as which species may be high priorities for action in regional bird conservation plans.



## State Plan Priority Species

List the local species that are identified as priorities in your State Wildlife Action Plan. Find your state plan online at [www.wildlifeactionplans.org](http://www.wildlifeactionplans.org).

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### Helpful Hint

Try to learn which birds were in your area 500 years ago, and what species should be there 100 years from now.

## Partners in Flight and other Priority Species

List additional local species that are identified as priorities in your state or regional Partners in Flight or Waterbird plans. Check out your state or regional plans online at [www.partnersinflight.org/bcps/pifplans.htm](http://www.partnersinflight.org/bcps/pifplans.htm) and [www.waterbirdconservation.org/region.html](http://www.waterbirdconservation.org/region.html).

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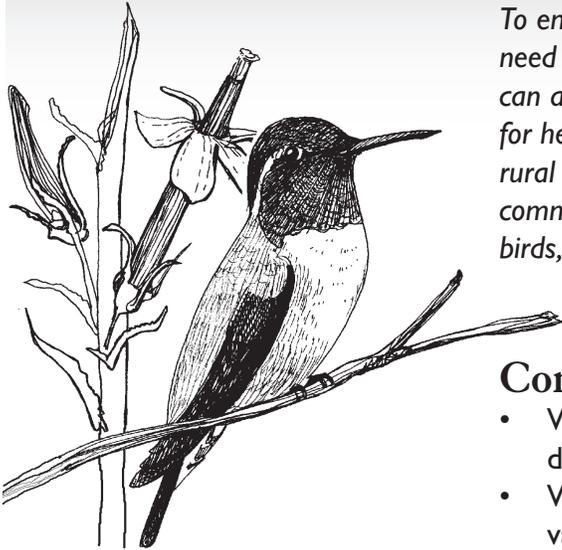
## Considerations:

- Are there additional species that have disappeared from your neighborhood or community that you might be able to help bring back?
- Are there additional Audubon WatchList species that need attention in your area? Find WatchList species at [www.web1.audubon.org/science/species/watchlist/](http://www.web1.audubon.org/science/species/watchlist/).

## To Learn More

- State Wildlife Action Plans: Find your state plan online at [www.wildlifeactionplans.org](http://www.wildlifeactionplans.org).
- Partners in Flight Plans: Check out your state or regional plans online at [www.partnersinflight.org/bcps/pifplans.htm](http://www.partnersinflight.org/bcps/pifplans.htm)
- Regional Waterbird Plans: Online at [www.waterbirdconservation.org/region.html](http://www.waterbirdconservation.org/region.html).
- Audubon WatchList: Additional species that may need help in your area online at <http://web1.audubon.org/science/species/watchlist/>

# Birds to Help



To engage the public, you need to do more than just figure out which birds need the most help. You need to also find charismatic species that people can actually help on their own property. Identify a few potential Birds to Help for heavily developed commercial areas, residential neighborhoods, and more rural properties. By promoting a few locally important Birds to Help in your community, you can improve local habitats, engage new audiences in helping birds, and make a significant impact in your community.

## Considerations:

- Which relatively common and popular species could be attracted to downtown or commercial areas with your help?
- Which species can homeowners most help by improving the habitat value of their yards?

## Potential Birds to Help

Which of the following potential Birds to Help occur in your area? Find out by looking at the maps on the Birds to Help website at [www.audubonathome.org/birdstohelp/](http://www.audubonathome.org/birdstohelp/)

Downtown or Commercial	Suburban Residential	Rural
<input type="checkbox"/> Anna's Hummingbird	<input type="checkbox"/> Bewick's Wren	<input type="checkbox"/> American Kestrel
<input type="checkbox"/> Black-chinned Hummingbird	<input type="checkbox"/> Brown Thrasher	<input type="checkbox"/> Barn Owl
<input type="checkbox"/> Cedar Waxwing	<input type="checkbox"/> Bullock's Oriole	<input type="checkbox"/> Barred Owl
<input type="checkbox"/> Chimney Swift	<input type="checkbox"/> Bushtit	<input type="checkbox"/> Eastern Bluebird
<input type="checkbox"/> Common Nighthawk	<input type="checkbox"/> Carolina Chickadee	<input type="checkbox"/> Eastern Meadowlark
<input type="checkbox"/> Gray Catbird	<input type="checkbox"/> Eastern Screech-Owl	<input type="checkbox"/> Eastern Towhee
<input type="checkbox"/> Northern Cardinal	<input type="checkbox"/> Great Crested Flycatcher	<input type="checkbox"/> Northern Bobwhite
<input type="checkbox"/> Northern Mockingbird	<input type="checkbox"/> Northern Flicker	<input type="checkbox"/> Western Bluebird
<input type="checkbox"/> Ruby-throated Hummingbird	<input type="checkbox"/> Purple Martin	<input type="checkbox"/> Wood Duck
<input type="checkbox"/> Song Sparrow	<input type="checkbox"/> Spotted Towhee	<input type="checkbox"/> Wood Thrush

### To Learn More

Birds to Help: Online at  
[www.audubonathome.org/birdstohelp/](http://www.audubonathome.org/birdstohelp/)

### Helpful Hint



Look for species that can become local celebrities that you can promote in your community.



# Your Species Plan

After determining which species need help in your area, as well as which species people might be able to help on their own properties, decide on which species your group will start to help. Try to figure Work with local scientists and natural resource agencies to figure out how many pairs or individuals of each species would represent a sustainable population and a long-term goal for your efforts, as well as the habitats needs of those birds. This list of species and habitats will help you determine where to start your local efforts.

## Regional Priority Species

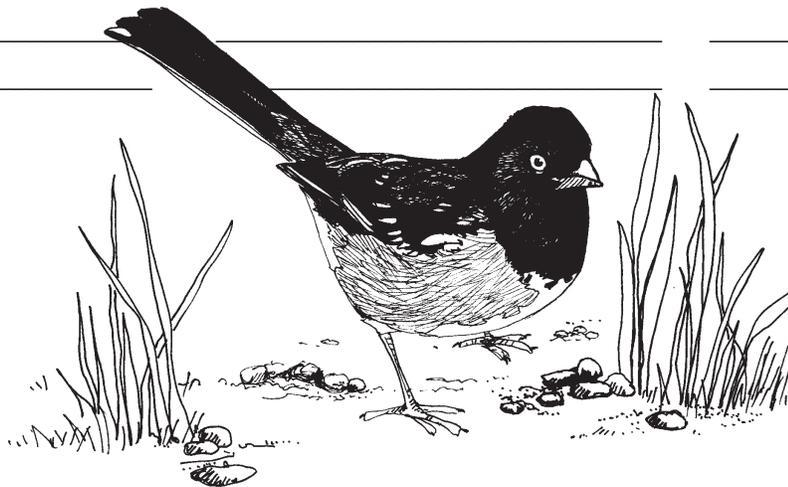
## Desired #s

## Habitat Needs

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

## Birds to Help

Urban: _____	_____	_____
Urban: _____	_____	_____
Urban: _____	_____	_____
Suburban: _____	_____	_____
Suburban: _____	_____	_____
Suburban: _____	_____	_____
Rural: _____	_____	_____
Rural: _____	_____	_____
Rural: _____	_____	_____



# Protecting Local Habitats

In addition to identifying priority species in your area, and the habitats they depend on, your group should also identify additional unique habitats that need protection or that you can help restore. Identify important local plant communities, as well as manmade habitats such as schoolyards, industrial properties, landfills, gravel pits, and sewage ponds.

## Considerations:

- What local habitats are most threatened by urban development or other activities?
- How can local parks or greenspace be better managed for birds and other wildlife?
- How can yards and other properties be better landscaped to link them together into wildlife patches and to connect with neighboring parks or preserves?
- How can downtown or commercial areas be landscaped to attract more birds and connect with surrounding habitats?



## Local Habitats:

List important habitats that may need protection, restoration, or management:

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## To Learn More

- Wildlife Habitat Council: Creating habitat on industrial properties, online at [www.wildlifehc.org](http://www.wildlifehc.org).
- Society for Ecological Restoration: Professionals and volunteers creating new habitat, online at [www.ser.org](http://www.ser.org)
- Land Trust Alliance: Protecting habitat through land easements, online at [www.landtrustalliance.org](http://www.landtrustalliance.org).



## Helpful Hint

Every place is habitat for birds—either birds we want, or nuisance bird species. Try and figure out how to make all areas in your community support the birds you want.

# Important Bird Areas

Audubon and its partners are identifying areas that provide habitat for rare, threatened, or large congregations of species, and designating them as Important Bird Areas (IBAs). These may be public or private lands, and may be of state, national, or global significance. If there are IBAs in your area, they should be included in your local bird helping efforts. IBAs need volunteers to officially adopt them and help land managers protect them from the threats that impact birds.

## Considerations:

- Are there IBAs in or near your community? Find out at [www.audubon.org/bird/iba/index.html](http://www.audubon.org/bird/iba/index.html).
- What species are these IBAs established to help protect?
- What are the biggest threats to the IBAs?
- How can your group help manage the IBAs as bird habitat?
- How can your efforts elsewhere in your community help the species protected within the IBAs?

## Important Bird Areas:

List designated Important Areas in or near your community:

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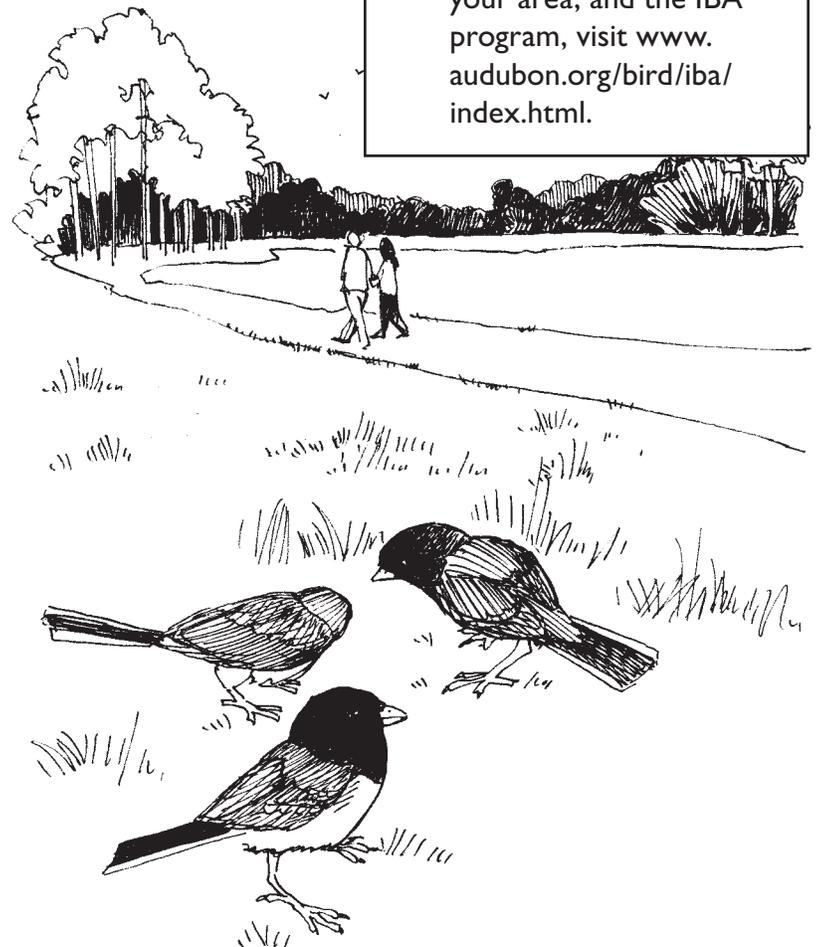
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### To Learn More

- Important Bird Areas Program: To find out more about IBAs in your area, and the IBA program, visit [www.audubon.org/bird/iba/index.html](http://www.audubon.org/bird/iba/index.html).



### Helpful Hint

Just because a park or other area isn't designated an IBA, doesn't mean it isn't important or even crucial habitat for local birds. Don't think of IBAs as islands of habitat to be protected while everywhere else gets developed—but as important parts of a larger landscape that birds depend on.

# Your Habitat Plan

After considering all of the habitats in your area, make an initial plan for each of them—including how they can be protected or restored, partners to work with in each area, and which species you can focus on helping in those areas.

Downtown and commercial areas:

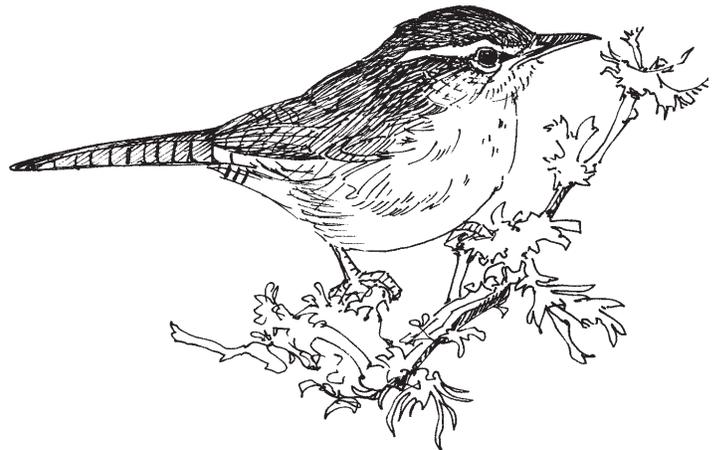
Urban and suburban residential neighborhoods:

Parks and greenspaces:

Industrial properties:

Large-lot residential areas outside of suburbs:

Agricultural areas:

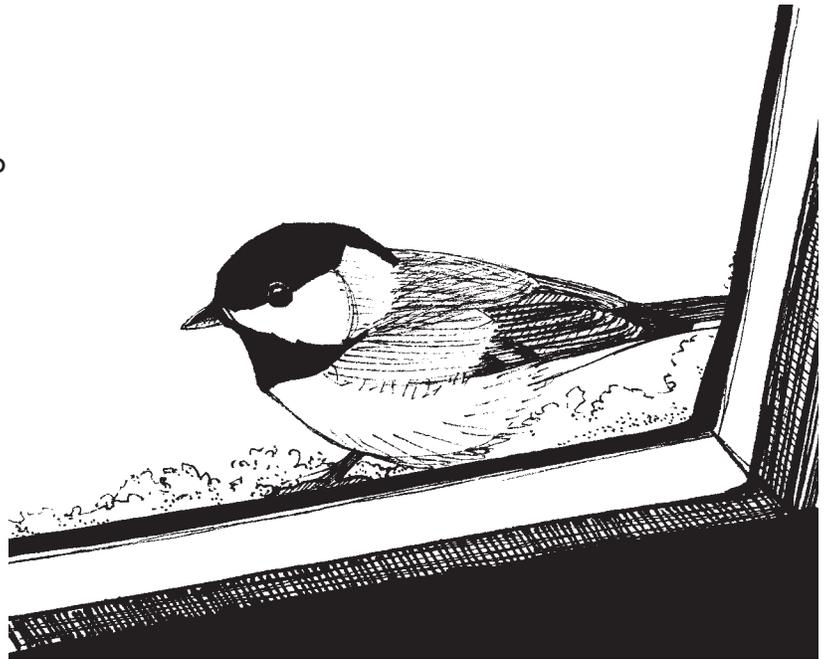


# Bird Hazards: Glass and Windows

In addition to protecting species and habitats, your group should make plans to protect birds from the hazards they face in and around human communities. Collisions with lighted buildings at night and with windowpanes are one of the biggest dangers, killing an estimated one billion birds annually in the United States. That's one out of every twenty birds each year! A growing number of communities are making sure their downtown areas are managed to protect birds from night collisions, and all windows can be modified to make them safer for birds.

## Considerations:

- Does your community have a downtown area with large lighted buildings that may attract and kill migrating birds at night?
- Are windows in public buildings modified to protect birds from colliding with them?
- Can your group raise funds by marketing ways to protect birds from windows?
- How can you draw attention to these issues in your community?



## Helpful Hint

Nobody likes to see birds killed for no reason. Showing people the birds that are killed by windows and buildings in your area can be an effective way to engage them in helping birds.

## To Learn More

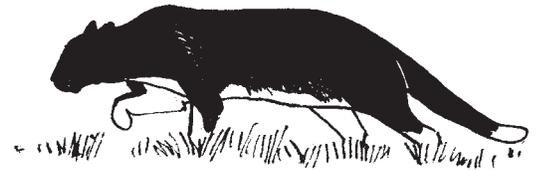
- Fatal Light Awareness Program: For information on how to work with partners in your community to protect migratory birds from lighted buildings, see [www.flap.org](http://www.flap.org).
- Lights Out Chicago: One example of how a community is trying to keep birds safe from buildings at night, online at [www.lightsout.audubon.org](http://www.lightsout.audubon.org)
- Birds and Windows: Making windows safe for birds, online at [www.audubon.org/bird/at\\_home/SafeWindows.html](http://www.audubon.org/bird/at_home/SafeWindows.html).

# Bird Hazards: Cats and Wires

*Feral and outdoor house cats kill as many birds as windows and buildings each year. It won't do any good to protect or restore wildlife habitat if the area is overrun with cats that kill birds. Cats are very popular, and many people are opposed to euthanizing feral or stray cats. Some groups propose managing feral cats through programs that Trap, Neuter, and Release (TNR) the cats, but this leaves them roaming the landscape where they will still kill birds and other wildlife. It is important to find solutions that remove cats from the environment, but also preserve the lives of abandoned animals.*

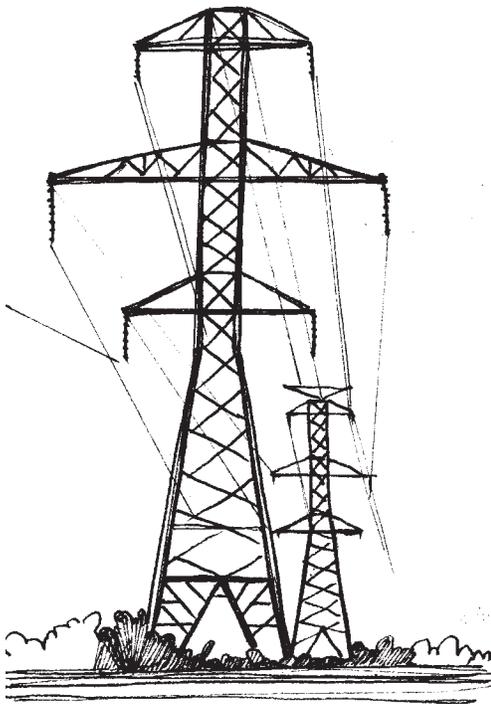
## Considerations:

- Are there groups in your area actively promoting TNR of feral cats?
- What other groups are opposed to cats roaming wild in your community?
- In what ways can you work together with everyone interested in this issue to protect both cats and wildlife?



## Towers and Wires

In addition to falling victim to windows and cats, birds may be killed by collisions with telecommunications wires and towers, as well as by electrocution on wires or utility poles. Many utilities are adopting Avian Protection Plans to monitor and address the problem of birds being killed by these structures. Make sure your local electric utility adopts a good APP, and that telecommunications towers are only constructed after appropriate environmental review.



## Helpful Hint

Be nice, but firm when talking about this issue. We know that cats kill birds and wildlife. Respect the views and priorities of others who may disagree, but make sure that the needs of birds and other wildlife are respected as well.

## To Learn More

- Reducing Threats from Cats: More information online at [www.audubon.org/bird/at\\_home/safecats.html](http://www.audubon.org/bird/at_home/safecats.html).
- TNR Reality Check: Info on dealing with feral cats, online at <http://tnrrealitycheck.com>.
- Cats Indoors! A program of the American Bird Conservancy, online at [www.abcbirds.org/abcprograms/policy/cats](http://www.abcbirds.org/abcprograms/policy/cats).
- Avian Protection Plan Guidelines: Online at [www.eei.org/industry\\_issues/environment/land/wildlife\\_and\\_endangered\\_species/AvianProtectionPlanGuidelines.pdf](http://www.eei.org/industry_issues/environment/land/wildlife_and_endangered_species/AvianProtectionPlanGuidelines.pdf)
- TowerKill.com: More on birds and towers, online at [www.towerkill.com](http://www.towerkill.com).

# Your Bird Hazard Plan

After considering the hazards birds face in your community, write up a brief plan of how you will address these threats. Include partners to work with and strategies to reduce the threats and measure the results of your efforts.

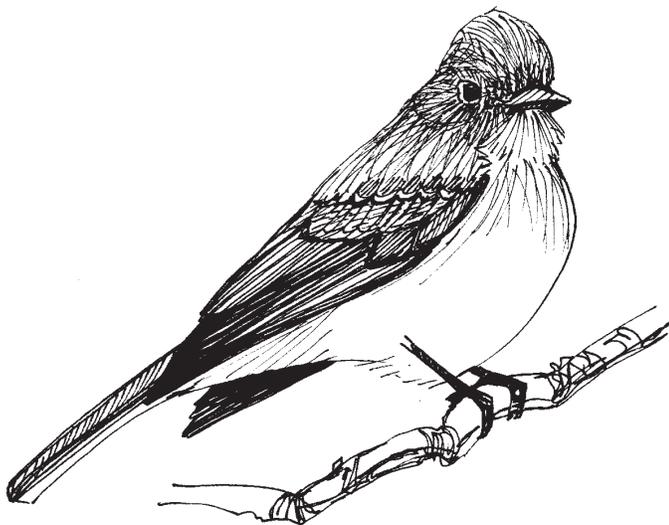
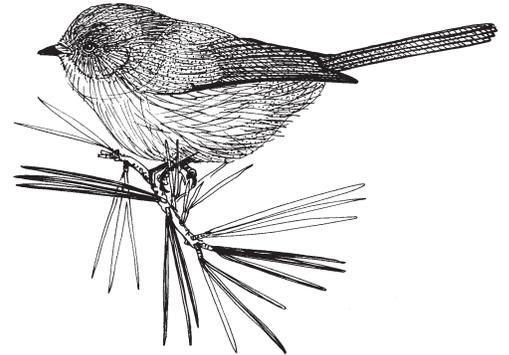
Lighted Buildings:

Windows:

Cats:

Towers and Wires:

Other Hazards:



# Keeping Track of Your Birds

Once you start helping birds in your community, you will need to know how the birds are responding. Just how many of each species are out there in your neighborhood or community, and how are your efforts helping them? While some of these questions can best be answered by working with local university or agency biologists to conduct formal studies, you can also engage birdwatchers and others to help keep track of the birds in your area through fun and engaging bird counts and other monitoring programs.

## Considerations:

- Is there a Christmas Bird Count ([www.audubon.org/Bird/cbc](http://www.audubon.org/Bird/cbc)) in your community?
- Do you promote the Great Backyard Bird Count ([www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org)) in your area each February?
- Where are the closest Breeding Bird Surveys ([www.pwrc.usgs.gov/BBS/](http://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/BBS/)) in your area?
- Do you have an official hawk watch, waterfowl count, or shorebird survey in your area?
- Who is already conducting academic studies or regular bird monitoring in your area?
- How are you using the information gathered by these counts to help protect birds and habitat in your community?

## To Learn More:

- Christmas Bird Count: Online at [www.audubon.org/Bird/cbc](http://www.audubon.org/Bird/cbc)
- Great Backyard Bird Count: Online at [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org)
- North American Breeding Bird Survey: Online at [www.pwrc.usgs.gov/BBS/](http://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/BBS/)
- Tucson Bird Count: A great model for how to conduct a detailed bird count in an urban area, online at [www.tucsonbirds.org](http://www.tucsonbirds.org)
- Phoenix Area Urban Aquatic Bird Survey: Another example of getting people to help keep track of birds, online at [www.azfo.org/namc/IndexphoenixUrban.html](http://www.azfo.org/namc/IndexphoenixUrban.html).

## Helpful Hint:

While it may take a lot of organizing, a county level bird census conducted over a five year period can be a great way to find out exactly how many birds are in your area, and where they are.



# Working Your Plans

*After your group has decided on species and habitats to work on, started addressing the threats birds face in your community, and is collecting the information you need to keep track of the birds in your area, you are well on your way! Congratulations!*

Now the trick is to make sure that your efforts are sustainable, and that you modify your plans as situations change. Sometimes new challenges or opportunities present themselves. Sometimes the plans we make don't work. Be flexible, but make sure that if you need to make changes, that they don't derail your most important goals—helping the birds and protecting the habitats that birds depend on in your area.

## Considerations:

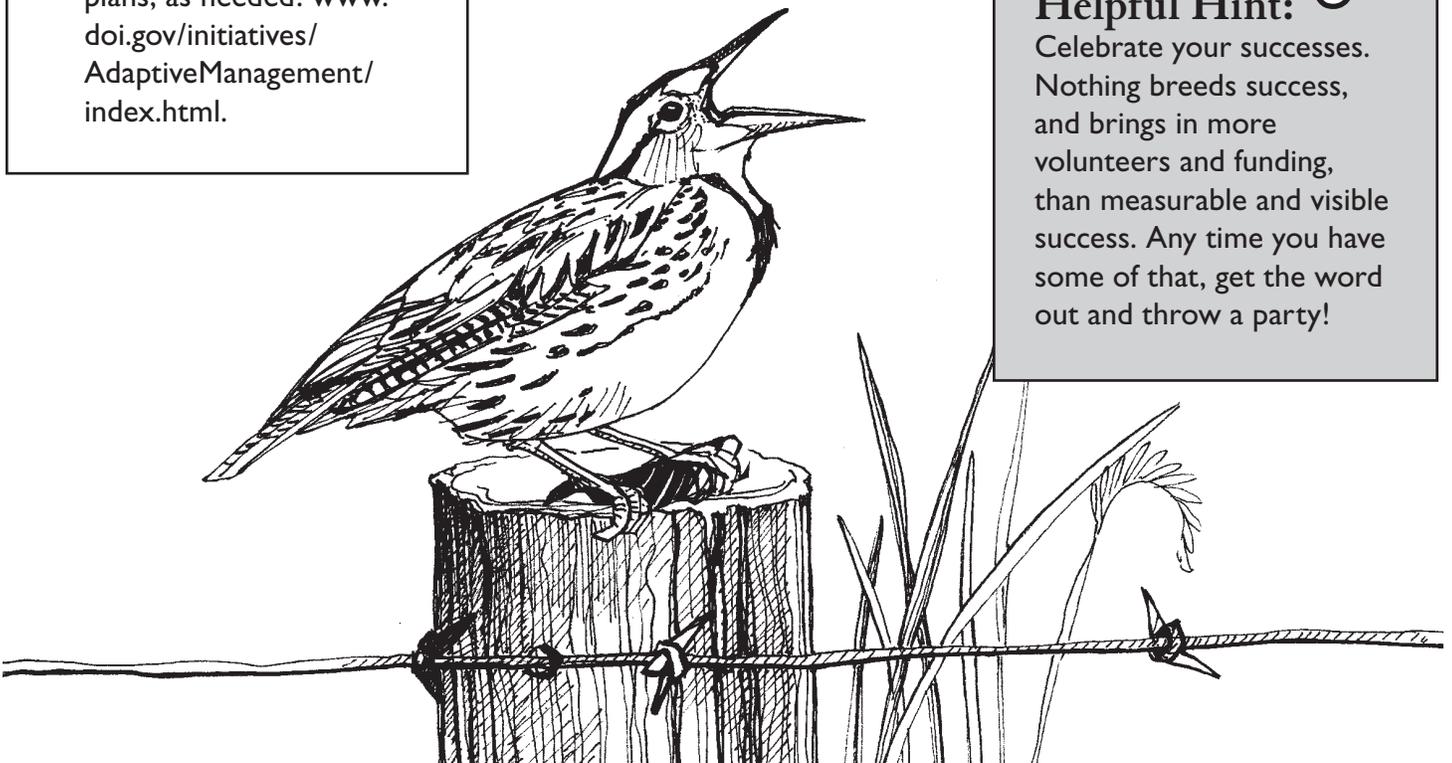
- Is your group sustainable? Does it have the people needed to maintain it should key individuals drop out or disappear?
- How much can you do with volunteers and existing nonprofit or agency staff?
- Do you need to raise funds for special projects?
- Are the birds and public responding to your efforts, or do you need to modify them somehow?
- What new species, habitats, or projects should you address after you've made headway on your initial goals?

## To Learn More:

- Adaptive Management: Resources to help you plan, and modify your plans, as needed: [www.doi.gov/initiatives/AdaptiveManagement/index.html](http://www.doi.gov/initiatives/AdaptiveManagement/index.html).

## Helpful Hint:

Celebrate your successes. Nothing breeds success, and brings in more volunteers and funding, than measurable and visible success. Any time you have some of that, get the word out and throw a party!



# Local Resources

Use this page to record important local contact information

Name	Phone	Website or Email

Other important information:



Visit Audubon at Home online:  
[www.audubonathome.org](http://www.audubonathome.org)