How to Help

Cedar Waxwings

An attractive black-masked brown songbird that breeds from across Canada and southeast Alaska through the central United States, and winters across southern Canada and the central US, and south through Mexico and Central America. Waxwings need shade trees for nesting, and berry-producing trees and shrubs for food. They can be attracted and helped by planting fruiting trees for food and by providing large shade trees for nesting sites.

What Cedar Waxwings Need

Food: Waxwings eat a wide variety of fruits and also feed on insects, which they catch in mid-air or pick from the bark and foliage of trees. They also eat flower petals. These birds often pass berries from bird-to-bird down a line. This may both reinforce social bonds within a flock and soften and break down the thick, waxy skin of some berries. Nestlings are fed mostly insects for their first 1-3 days, and then increasing amounts of fruits.

Nesting: Avoiding the forest interior, waxwings nest in open woodland and old field habitats with numerous shrubs and small trees—including urban and suburban parks and backyards, and at the edge of wooded areas or in isolated trees or shrubs in old fields. They usually build nests in the forks of horizontal branches 5-30 feet up in trees such as maple, eastern red cedar, apple, pear, hawthorn, bur oak, eastern white cedar, and various species of pines.

Shelter: Waxwing sleeping and roosting behavior is almost unknown, but they probably roost on sheltered branches of trees.

Other: These birds will use bird baths and small ponds for bathing and drinking. Window collisions and roaming cats are threats.

How You Can Help

- Plant fruit and berry trees that can provide fruit when waxwings are in your area. Favorites include native cherries, hawthorns, mountain ashes, elderberries, red elder, serviceberries, and junipers.

- Plant berry trees at least 30 feet from windows or roadways to protect waxwing flocks from colliding with cars or glass.

- Avoid spraying trees with pesticides that may kill insects or contaminate fruit that waxwings eat.

- Plant a variety of native trees and shrubs, including oaks, pines, maple, cedar, and hawthorn.

- Hang 5 inch pieces of white cotton twine or yarn on tree limbs for waxwings to use as nesting material

- Plant shade trees that can provide sheltered evening roosts.

- Keep bird baths clean and fresh, changing water at least every two days.

- Make windows safe for birds, visit www. audubonathome.org/SafeWindows.html

- Keep cats indoors where they are safe from outdoor dangers and won't threaten birds.