



How to Help

Gray Catbirds

Melodious songbirds, Gray Catbirds nest in thickets and shrubs from British Columbia, northern Utah and New Mexico east to the Atlantic. Fairly common in some suburban areas, catbirds can be attracted to more urbanized areas by planting native shrubs and bushes for nesting, foraging, and roosting sites.

What Gray Catbirds Need

Food: Catbirds forage on the ground and in shrubs, bushes, and low trees for fruit and small insects including grasshoppers, beetles, and caterpillars. Favorite fruits include blackberries, wild cherries, wild grapes, sumac, blueberries, elderberries, serviceberries, and hollies.

Nesting: Catbirds usually build nests half way up in a patch of shrubs, bushes, or tangled vines less than 9 feet tall. They will also nest in foundation plantings and along fence rows.

Shelter: The Catbird's roosting and sleeping behavior is almost unknown, but they are believed to use the sheltered branches of trees and shrubs.

Other: Catbirds will drink and bathe at a birdbath or small pond. They are susceptible to predation by cats and collisions with picture windows. Low flying catbirds also frequently collide with automobiles.

How You Can Help

- Plant fruiting native shrubs and bushes, including sumacs, wild grapes, and other catbird favorites.
- Provide raisins, chopped fruits, or fresh grape jelly on a platform feeder with a red surface.
- May also come to mealworm feeders.
- Avoid using pesticides that may kill insects used as food, or herbicides that destroy shrubby patches used as foraging habitat.
- Plant thick patches or rows of diverse native bushes, shrubs, and low ornamental trees. Favorites include dogwoods, hawthorns, native honeysuckle, native cherries, sumacs, elderberries, spirea, and wild grapes.
- Encourage neighbors to plant bushes and shrubs to provide additional habitat.
- Maintain bushes and shrubs with minimal pruning to provide ample roosting, sleeping, and resting cover.
- Provide a birdbath or small pond for bathing and drinking. Make sure to keep birdbaths clean and free of mosquito larvae.
- Keep cats indoors to keep them safe from outdoor hazards and to protect birds. Remove feral cats from neighborhood.
- Screen windows or make them visible so catbirds can avoid colliding with them (www.audubonathome.org/SafeWindows.html).
- Whenever possible, plant patches of shrubs for catbirds away from busy roadways.