



## How to Help

# Spotted Towhees

Spotted Towhee is found across the western United States in a wide variety of habitats with dense, broadleaf shrubby growth (brush, thickets, or tangles), with or without trees, that provide a low screen of branches and leaves over a ground layer of deep leaf litter where the birds can search for food. Help towhees by planting patches of native shrubs to provide nesting, foraging, and roosting habitat.

## What Spotted Towhees Need

**Food:** Towhees are omnivorous, eating a wide range of seeds, fruits, and especially insects, spiders, and sowbugs found in leaf litter under bushes and shrubs. They usually remain in the middle of shrubby patches, only rarely venturing out from beneath low overhanging shade or cover.

**Nesting:** Spotted Towhees nest in the shrub thickets that they like to frequent. Nests may be located on the ground or elevated in shrubs near ground level. Many nests have been reported in relatively exposed situations, although usually well concealed by adjacent plants. They may nest along edges of thickets or near isolated, woody plants, beside a log, or at the base of a grass clump.

**Shelter:** Sleeping and roosting behavior is almost unknown, but these birds probably roost and sleep on protected low branches in their shrubby habitat.

**Other:** Towhees will drink and bathe in birdbaths or water drips in their brushy habitat. Since they nest and feed close to the ground, towhees are especially susceptible to attack by roaming house cats.

## How You Can Help

- Plant or maintain 20 x 20 foot patches of native shrubs and bushes including scrub oaks, piñon pine, juniper, yucca, baccharis, willow, madrone, rose, blackberry, saltbush, mountain mahogany, elderberry, buckthorn, sagebrush, snowberry, serviceberry, chamise, manzanita, sumac, ceanothus, or grape.
- Will come to commercial bird seed including millet and sunflower seeds spread on the ground below bushes or shrubs.
- Avoid use of pesticides that kill insects that towhees eat, and herbicides that destroy their brushy habitat as well as plant foods.
- Provide thick patches of native shrubs for nesting habitat.
- A log or clumps of native grasses in the shrub patch may provide additional cover for a nest site.
- Provide thick patches of native shrubs for roosting and sleeping opportunities.
- Provide a birdbath or water drip under a bush where towhees forage. Keep water clean, fresh, and free of mosquito larvae.
- Keep pet cats indoors to keep them safe from outside hazards and to protect native birds.