



How to Help

Wood Thrushes

Warm brown above and white below with large black spots, the Wood Thrush is one of the most melodious songbirds in eastern North America. It nests in forests and woodlands with large trees; rural landowners can help these birds by maintaining healthy mature woodlots and forests.

What Wood Thrushes Need

Food: Wood Thrushes forage on the ground in moist soil and leaf litter for soil-dwelling invertebrates, including snails, earthworms, and insects. Some arboreal insects and small salamanders are also eaten. In late summer and fall they also eat fruits.

Nesting: Wood Thrushes nest in deciduous and mixed upland forests. They require trees taller than 55 feet, a high variety of deciduous tree species, moderate sub-canopy and shrub density, and a shaded, fairly open forest floor with foraging opportunities in moist soil and decaying leaf litter. They usually build nests below 12 feet in shaded forks on outer branches of trees or shrubs, especially American beech, oaks, and eastern hemlock.

Shelter: Sleeping or roosting behavior is not well known. They most likely use sheltered tree branches or shrubs.

Other: Wood thrushes are susceptible to predation by cats, and collisions with picture windows. Acid rain caused by air pollution may negatively impact thrush nesting by leaching calcium from soils. This leads to lower calcium levels in the ground-dwelling insects thrushes eat and, consequently, difficulty in producing egg shells.

How You Can Help

- Avoid over-thinning of woodlots, maintain large areas with tall trees, dense canopy, and a moderate density of shrubs.
- Consider deer removal options if woodland shrubs are heavily browsed by deer.
- Plant or maintain native fruit bearing trees or shrubs such as spicebush, hollies, blueberries, and grapes in woodlands or forest patches.
- Maintain a high diversity of native trees and shrubs in woodland and forest patches, including beech, sweet gum, red maple, black gum, eastern hemlock, and flowering dogwood.
- Additional information on woodland management for Wood Thrushes online at conserveonline.org/docs/2001/06/woth.doc.
- Maintain thick and diverse patches of shrubs in woodland as potential roosting sites.
- Keep cats indoors to keep them safe from outdoor hazards and to protect birds.
- Screen windows or make them visible so thrushes can avoid colliding with them (www.audubonathome.org/SafeWindows.html).
- Support air pollution controls that reduce sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides, especially from coal-burning electric power generation plants, and reduce personal and family energy use.