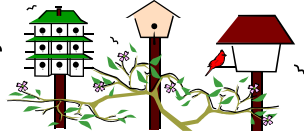


Florida ranks third in the nation for wildlife variety. However, continuing real estate development is rapidly reducing the native wildlife habitats. A well-planned Florida yard can help replace this natural habitat for desirable animals by providing food, water, shelter and space to meet their needs.



Birds

Birds are attracted to layered areas that include taller trees growing over smaller trees and bushes. Plantings that produce berries, such as holly, red cedar, black berry and beauty berry, are especially attractive. Oaks and maples also produce seeds and nuts that are eaten by a variety of birds. Trees provide a source of insects that will provide food for birds. Grassy areas that are allowed to go to seed are attractive to birds as well.



Some bird species will use nesting boxes if they are designed and placed correctly. You will need to research the needs of the particular birds you are trying to attract.

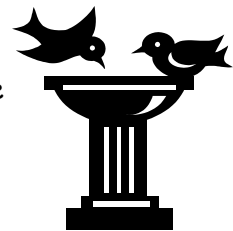


Many birds will eat from feeders. Each species usually has its favorite foods. Use

separate feeders for different kinds of seeds to avoid competition among the birds. Avoid commercial mixes. Birds will pick out their favorites and the rest ends up wasted on the ground. Fill the feeder with enough seed for two to three days use. If the seed gets wet, discard it and do not allow it to mold in the feeder. The mold can make the birds sick. Place feeders where birds have access to shrub or tree cover within 10-20 feet of the feeder to reduce hawk attacks. Keep feeders away from windows to prevent injuries from collisions. Although many birds enjoy suet, it quickly becomes rancid in our warm climate.

Not all Florida birds will eat from feeders. Leave dead trees, called "snags," in place in your yard to encourage insect feeders as well as cavity nesters.

Water sources such as bird baths and fountains must be kept clean. Scrub them weekly to remove algae and discourage breeding mosquitoes.



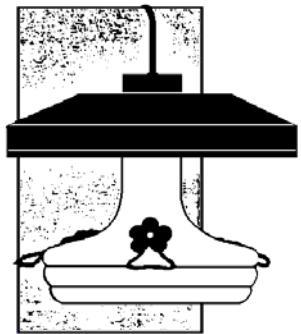
Hummingbirds are attracted to nectar-rich flowering plants, especially those with bright red or orange blooms and tubular shapes. Some good choices are trumpet creeper, coral honeysuckle, coral bean, fire bush and red buckeye.

Hummers will also feed from sugar water feeders. Use a feeding solution of 4 parts water to 1 part white granulated sugar. In

a small pan, boil one cup of water. Slowly add one quarter cup of sugar and stir to dissolve. Be



careful when adding the sugar as the water will boil up if it is added too fast. Cool the mixture in the refrigerator. Hummingbird feeders should be scrubbed with hot water and vinegar every 4-5 days and any remaining solution should be discarded and replaced. This will remove mold, fungus and bacteria that can make the birds sick. Do not use soap to clean the feeder. Do not use honey as it may contain toxins and fungi that may be fatal to hummingbirds. Most hummingbird feeders have bright



red feeding parts that will attract the birds and it is not necessary to tint the feeding solution red. If you have trouble with bees, wasps or ants on your hummingbird feeder, rub vegetable oil around the openings and on the suspending wire.

Butterflies

Most adult butterflies feed on flower nectar. Brightly colored, single flowers are usually preferred. A partial list of plants includes: lantana, fire spike, penta, shrimp plant, firecracker plant, zinnia, impatiens, petunia, pansy, porterweed, blazing star, milkweed, marigold, plumbago, passion flower and coral honeysuckle.

To attract even more butterflies to your garden, include host plants. Butterflies usually congregate near the specific plants where they will lay their eggs. Hatching caterpillars will eat these host plants and then rest in chrysalis for 2 weeks to several months as they change into adult butterflies. If you want to attract a particular species of butterfly to your garden, plant the specific host plant that it prefers.

Some examples are:

- Monarch butterfly / milkweed
- Zebra Long Wing / passion vine
- Black Swallowtail / dill, fennel, parsley
- Sulfurs / cassia



Other caterpillar varieties feed on trees such as pine, oak, ash, bay, cedar, willow and citrus.

If you want to attract butterflies, do not use pesticides in your garden and be forgiving of "munching" by hungry caterpillars.

A damp area, or shallow puddle will provide a source of water and minerals for butterflies. A saucer will work as a puddle container using dirt or sand in the bottom. If you use a regular bird bath, add a "landing pad," a small rock or upside down pot, in the center.

A butterfly needs to warm its body temperature to an ideal of 85-100 degrees F. Place a flat stone in a sunny area of the garden for butterfly basking. Heat from the stone is absorbed by the butterfly's body or reflected to the body by the wings.

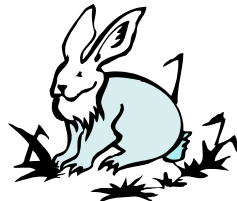
Mammals, Reptiles and Amphibians

Many of these small animals seek shelter in the Florida yard. Allowing some leaf-litter or mulch to remain on the ground in some areas of the yard provides hiding places for these critters. Encourage native grasses and ground covers to grow unmowed in some areas of your yard.

A brush pile also provides good shelter. Brush piles can be assembled using small branches, spaced a few inches apart. Criss-cross additional layers of small branches and top with smaller twigs and leaf litter or mulch. To make a brush pile more attractive, try growing a native vine over the top. Rabbits, opossum, raccoons, frogs, and toads will hide in these areas.



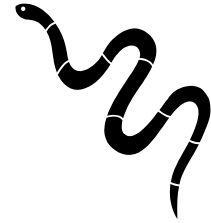
An overturned clay pot, propped up on one side with a small stone, will provide a home for toads. Green tree frogs will hide in short lengths of 1 inch PVC pipe stuck upright in the garden. These can be painted either to blend in with the surrounding plantings or with bright colors for a decorative effect.



Although many homeowners do not consider snakes an attractive form of wildlife in their yards, remember that they help reduce the number of destructive rodents. There are only 6 species of poisonous snakes in Florida. Learn to recognize them, and then the others will be valuable additions to your backyard habitat.

Problem Guests

If you are trying to attract wildlife to your yard, domesticated dogs and cats will not be an asset if they are free to roam your property. Keep dogs and cats indoors or at least away from your wildlife habitats.



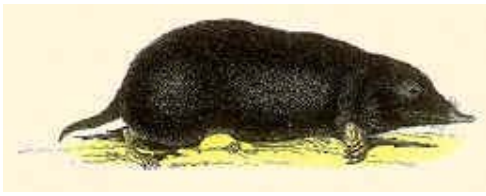
Do not provide "feeders" for squirrels. Breeding patterns are altered when food sources are too readily available to them. Over-breeding results in numbers too great for the size of the habitat. In these overpopulated situations, adult squirrels will kill and eat their own young to reduce their numbers. Overpopulation also increases diseases in squirrel populations.

To avoid these problems, use bird feeders that have methods of excluding squirrels. Baffles and automatic barriers that are weight-triggered, help reduce squirrel raiders. Do not use corn in bird feeders. It is hard for squirrels to resist and there are other less-tasty choices for the birds. Some bird seeds are coated with pepper that discourages squirrels, but do not affect birds.



Corn in bird feeders and on squirrel feeders also attracts raccoons and rats. Pet food dishes should not be left outside as they will also attract roaches and small animals, including raccoons and rats. For this same reason, do not put meat products in compost piles.

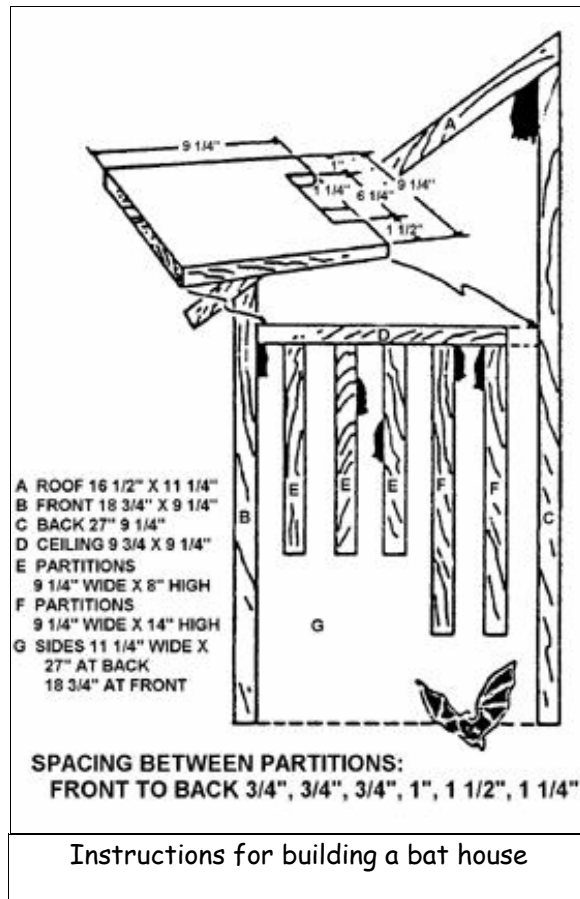
Armadillos and moles naturally come to our yards to feed on insect populations in the soil and are difficult to discourage. Remember that spraying to control insects may also



reduce the numbers of birds and butterflies in your yard. Sometimes when food is more scarce, the animals just forage harder. It is best to practice a little tolerance in these situations. If they must be controlled, traps are the most effective method.

Ten tips for success in landscaping for wildlife are as follows:

1. Limit the amount of lawn
2. Increase vertical layering
3. Provide snags and brush piles
4. Provide water
5. Plant native vegetation
6. Provide bird/bat houses and bird feeders
7. Remove invasive exotic plants
8. Manage pets
9. Reduce pesticide use
10. Expand the scale of habitat.



Acknowledgments

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