

Improving Habitat for Birds on Private Woodlands



There is a great variety of woodland birds that require a variety of habitats. These habitats and some examples of species that utilize them are listed below. Not all birds utilize all habitats. Birds dependent on uncommon or diminishing habitat types are at greatest risk. The



great majority of our bird species have general enough preferences to utilize one or more alternative habitat types. Some of our few bird species of concern are dependent on open field situations or early successional forest types. Due to changes in land ownership



patterns, public perceptions of "good" forests, harvesting practices, and other reasons, such habitat types are declining in the Upper Peninsula. Private forest owners should consider the practices of their neighbors and regional considerations when developing wildlife and forest management plans.

- a) Several acres of densely, growing shrubs and young deciduous trees - upland sites - black-billed cuckoo, brown thrasher, cardinal, blue-winged warbler, indigo bunting; - lowland sites - alder flycatcher, gray catbird, golden-winged warbler, yellow warbler, yellow-throat, rufous-sided towhee.
- b) Dense thickets or densely growing understories of young trees in mature forests - ovenbird, tufted titmouse, great crested flycatcher, wood peewee, chickadee.
- c) Large acreage (more than 10 acres of large deciduous and evergreen trees with sparse undergrowth - red-eyed vireo, warbling vireo, wood thrush, whippoorwill, barred owl, great horned owl, broad-wing hawk, goshawk, scarlet tanager
- d) Mature evergreen forests - Blackburnian warbler, yellow-romped warbler, pine warbler
- e) Mature bottomland deciduous trees that frequently flood in spring - brown creeper, red-shouldered hawk, rose-breasted grosbeak, prothonotary warbler, cerulean warbler
- f) Forests with large trees that have rotten center and limbs, and dead or dying trees - pileated woodpecker, hairy woodpecker, downy woodpecker .



The habitats listed above can be created or improved by the corresponding practices listed below (e.g. a for a, b for b, etc.). Consult with a professional forester or wildlife biologist for details.

- a) Clear-cut mature trees in acreage less than 10 acres; plant or encourage shrubs along woodland edges and in grassy openings.
- b) Cut small groups of mature trees (group selection cutting) no larger than one acre or thin out the mature trees to produce a dense understory (NOTE: intense thinning can cause many trees to be blown over in windstorms).
- c) Leave woodlands as undisturbed as possible or cut only single mature trees (single tree selection cutting).
- d) Where possible, encourage white pines and hemlock to grow up under deciduous trees by thinning the deciduous trees; plant white pine, jack pine, and white spruce.

e) Large acreage (more than 10 acres) of large deciduous and evergreen trees with sparse undergrowth - red-eyed vireo, warbling vireo, wood thrush, whipoorwill, barred owl great horned owl, broad-wing hawk, goshawk, scarlet tanager.



f) Allow dying and dead trees to remain standing, kill undesirable trees by removing all bark and inner bark in a band around the tree trunk (girdling).

Nest Box Specifications for Some Bird Species

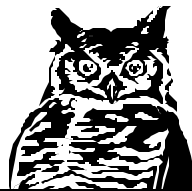
Bird Name	Box Length (inches)	Box Wth (inches)	Box Height (inches)	Hole Above Floor (inches)	Hole Diameter (inches)	Height Above Ground (feet)	Notes
Bluebird	5	5	8	6	1-1/2"	5-10	Edge of open field, along fencerows
Downy Woodpecker	4	4	9-12	6-8	1-1/4	6-20	Deciduous forest
Hairy Woodpecker	6	6	12-15	9-12	1-1/2	12-20	Mature deciduous forest
Flicker	7	7	16-18	14-16	2-1/2	6-20	Open woods
Chickadee	4	4	8-10	6-8	1-1/8	6-15	
Nuthatches	4	4	8-10	6-8	1-1/4	12-20	Deciduous forest
Prothonotary Warbler	6	6	6	4	1-1/2	2-4	Along rivers
Screech Owl	8	8	12-15	9-12	3	10-30	Forest edge or open woods
Barred Owl	10	18	18	12-15	6	15-30	Mature deciduous fores/lowland conifer
Kestrel	8	8	12-15	9-12	3	10-30	
House Wren	4	4	6-8	1-6	1 - 1-1/4	6-10	Decidous forest
Phoebe	6	6	6	n/a	n/a	8-12	One or more open sides
Tree Swallow	5	5	6	1-5	1-1/2	10-15	Near water or open area
Wood Duck	10	18	10-24	12-16	4	10-20	Along rivers



Often times, shrub or tree plantings will enhance habitat for birds. The following are some suggestions. For more information, try contacting your local Soil Conservation District, DNR office, or MSU County Extension Office.



- 1) Plant a variety of species so that fruit is available from late spring to late winter - crabapples, hawthorns, dogwoods, sumac, viburnums, buffaloberry, bush honeysuckles, autumn olive, etc. Consider selecting native species.
- 2) Shrubs will probably need mouse, rabbit, and deer protection in order to quickly grow beyond vulnerable size (more that five feet tall and three inches in diameter).
- 3) To encourage plants already growing, cut away competing woody plants, thin and prune if necessary, and fertilize.



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