

Wild About BIRDS

Downy Woodpecker

Picoides pubescens

15–18.5 centimetres

A good snag (standing dead tree) or large mature tree is the best way to attract downy woodpeckers, which will hunt for insects up and down its trunk. You can also add some goldenrod to your garden as these small woodpeckers like to hunt for insects on the galls they form on its stems. Be sure to leave the goldenrod stems standing throughout the winter. Downy woodpeckers will also partake of some fruit, nuts and seeds. Try planting mountain ash, oak, dogwood, hop hornbeam or Virginia creeper. Downy woodpeckers are unlikely to use nest boxes, preferring instead to excavate cavities in snags or the dead limbs of living trees and line them with wood chips. They are generally found across Canada south of the treeline, from Yukon south through British Columbia, and across to the island of Newfoundland, though not in mainland Labrador.



American Robin

Turdus migratorius

23–27.5 cm

American robins are famous for eating worms. To aid them in their search for these and other invertebrates, avoid the use of chemicals on your lawn and use fall leaves as mulch in your flower beds to provide prime foraging areas. Robins love fruit, so provide them with cherry, sumac, elderberry, holly, serviceberry, dogwood, juniper and other berry-producing trees and shrubs. They often nest in apple or maple trees but will also choose coniferous trees, such as spruce or hemlock, for early nests. The American robin can be found across Canada from Yukon, south through British Columbia, and across to Newfoundland and Labrador.



Cedar Waxwing

Bombicilla cedrorum

16.5–20 cm

Fruit is the biggest draw for cedar waxwings. To entice these beautiful birds to your yard, plant an assortment of cherry, mountain ash, cedar, raspberry, crabapple, dogwood, serviceberry or other berry-producing trees and shrubs. They may even be convinced to nest in your yard if you provide them with apple, hawthorn, bur oak or other deciduous trees, and evergreens such as cedar or pine. The finishing touch to lure cedar waxwings should be a good source of clean water. Cedar waxwings are found across all provinces, covering most regions except the northern half of Quebec and the Labrador mainland.



American Goldfinch

Carduelis tristis

11.4–14 cm

These vibrant little birds love the seeds of thistles, dandelions, goldenrods, sunflowers and coneflowers. If you are planting trees, choose birches or alders for the seeds they provide. American goldfinches prefer to nest in young trees or shrubs, such as maple, elm, dogwood or elderberry. They will gather the down of thistles or milkweeds to line their nests. American goldfinches are found across Canada, in southern British Columbia, south-central regions of Alberta to Quebec, and most of the Atlantic provinces, including the southwestern portion of the island of Newfoundland.



White-Throated Sparrow

Zonotrichia albicollis

16–18 cm

White-throated sparrows forage on the ground for insects, seeds and fruit. Provide them with a corner of dense shrubs and coniferous trees left a bit wild where they can safely hunt for insects and the seeds of grasses, goldenrod, aster and any weeds that come up. The fruit of dogwood, cherry, wild strawberry, elderberry and blueberry may also entice these perky sparrows to forage in your yard. In early spring they will feed on the buds or catkins of apple, maple, birch, hazel and beech trees. If you live in a less urbanized area, you may be able to entice white-throated sparrows to nest in your yard if you provide them with areas of tall grass, low and dense shrubs, or brush piles. This sparrow is found from southeastern Yukon and southern Northwest Territories, to the southwestern tip of Nunavut, and in the provinces from northeastern British Columbia across to Newfoundland and Labrador, though it only migrates through the southern parts of Alberta and Saskatchewan.



Northern Cardinal

Cardinalis cardinalis

19–23.5 cm

Northern cardinals eat insects, fruit and seeds. Attract these handsome birds with fruit trees, shrubs and vines, such as cherry, blackberry, dogwood, wild grape and serviceberry. These plants, as well as wildflowers, will also attract insects for them to eat. Dense shrubs, such as native roses or hawthorn, and vines, such as wild grape, may encourage cardinals to nest on your property. They are found in southern Ontario and Quebec and a small portion of southwestern New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.



Rose-Breasted Grosbeak

Pheucticus ludovicianus

17.5–21.5 cm

Rose-breasted grosbeaks enjoy a varied diet of insects, seeds, fruit and flower buds. Plant elm, ash and beech trees, or else plant perennials, such as milkweed or sunflower, to provide them with seeds and buds. Lure them with the fruit of cherry, serviceberry and elderberry. They will thank you by devouring beetles, caterpillars and other pest insects. Rose-breasted grosbeaks may even be enticed to nest in your backyard with dense plantings of shrubs, such as hawthorn, or small trees, such as maple. Rose-breasted grosbeaks are found from northwestern British Columbia, through Alberta and central Saskatchewan, east through southern parts of Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec, and throughout the Atlantic provinces, except Newfoundland and Labrador.



Black-Capped Chickadee

Poecile atricapillus

12.3–14.5 cm

To attract these cheerful birds, plant coniferous trees, such as pine or hemlock, or perennials, such as goldenrod or sunflower, to provide them with a good source of seeds. Insects, especially caterpillars, are an important part of their diet, so be sure your garden has a variety of trees to provide hunting grounds. Chickadees will also partake of soft fruit, including blackberry, blueberry and serviceberry. Although they will occasionally use nest boxes, black-capped chickadees prefer to nest in tree cavities and sometimes in old woodpecker holes. Black-capped chickadees range across Canada from the southern regions of Yukon and the Northwest Territories, south through most of British Columbia (less so on the coast), and across to most areas of the Maritimes, except Labrador.



Yellow-Rumped Warbler

Dendroica coronata

12–15.5 cm

Yellow-rumped warblers dine on insects and berries. To provide them with insects, plant insect-attracting shrubs and trees and be sure to forgo the use of pesticides. Yellow-rumped warblers particularly like to forage in conifers. Add juniper, red cedar, dogwood, Virginia creeper and bayberry to provide these colourful birds with a source of berries. Yellow-rumped warblers prefer to nest in coniferous trees, such as spruce, hemlock, pine or cedar. They are found across Canada, including the northern territories, though they only migrate through southeastern Alberta and the very southern parts of Saskatchewan and Manitoba.



Red Crossbill

Loxia curvirostra

14–20 cm

Red crossbills love the seeds of coniferous trees, especially pine, hemlock, Douglas fir and spruce. Planting these trees also provides these acrobatic birds with good nesting sites. Red crossbills are found across Canada in areas of mature coniferous forests from southern Yukon, south through British Columbia, across to southern Ontario and Quebec, and east through the Atlantic provinces, except the Labrador mainland.



Tree Swallow

Tachycineta bicolor

12.5–15.7 cm

Tree swallows are primarily insect eaters, but they can be attracted to berries at times when insects are scarce. Berries that might entice them are bayberry, dogwood, red cedar or Virginia creeper. Tree swallows require large open spaces for hunting insects on the wing. Protect any standing dead trees in open areas to provide tree swallows with nesting sites. If you live adjacent to open meadows or fields, especially if there is nearby water, try putting up nest boxes, which these birds will readily use. Tree swallows are found across Canada.



Blue Jay

Cyanocitta cristata

28–31.5 cm

The diet of blue jays consists mostly of nuts, seeds, fruits and insects, although they will sometimes partake of small vertebrates, the eggs of other birds and even carrion. To attract jays, start with an oak tree. It will provide acorns, their favourite food. Jays will also eat the nuts or seeds of beech, chestnut, pine, hazelnut or hickory. You can supplement this with some fruit sources, such as blackberry, grape, serviceberry or cherry. Blue jays will occasionally nest in urban areas if provided with the shelter of a patch of trees, usually coniferous, such as cedar, pine or spruce, but also deciduous, such as beech or oak. Blue jays are typically found in the central areas of Alberta and Saskatchewan, the southern regions of Manitoba to Quebec, and throughout the Atlantic provinces, except mainland Labrador.



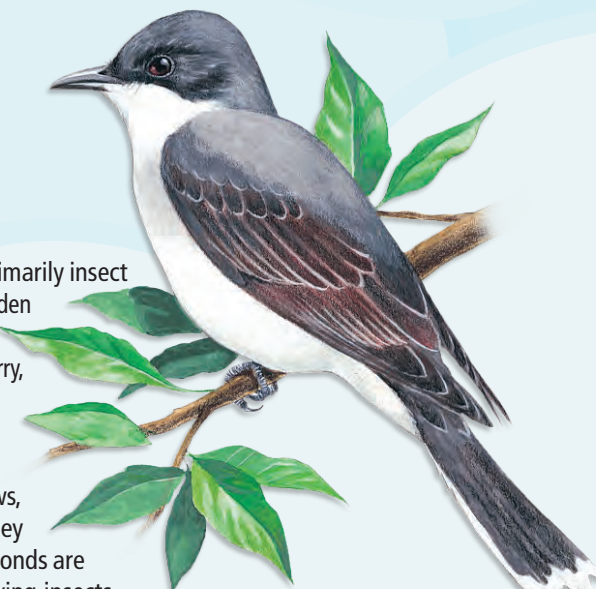
Eastern Kingbird

Tyrannus tyrannus

19.5–22 cm

Although eastern kingbirds are primarily insect eaters, they can be lured to your garden with berry-producing trees and shrubs, such as blackberry, serviceberry, dogwood, cherry and elderberry. Eastern kingbirds require large open spaces with perching spots, so if you live near fields or meadows, try adding a fence post where they can await passing insects. Large ponds are also good hunting grounds for flying insects.

Eastern kingbirds like to nest in trees, such as apple or hawthorn, found in open areas. These birds are found in eastern and southern British Columbia, most of Alberta and Saskatchewan, central and southern Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec, and all of the Atlantic provinces, except Newfoundland and Labrador. They also venture as far north as southwestern Yukon and southern Northwest Territories.



Red-Breasted Nuthatch

Sitta canadensis

10.2–12.4 cm

The best way to attract red-breasted nuthatches is with coniferous trees. They love the seeds of spruce, pine and fir, and will search the branches and trunks of these trees for insects. The nuts of beech trees may also tempt them. Dead or partially dead trees are their preferred nesting sites where they will choose dead stubs or branches to excavate their cavity nests. Red-breasted nuthatches will occasionally use nest boxes. They can be found in southern Yukon and southwestern Northwest Territories, and across the provinces from coast to coast, except in the southern parts of eastern Saskatchewan and western Manitoba.



Attracting Birds to Your Garden

Birds rely on a variety of food sources, which can change at different times of their life cycle. Many birds that eat seeds or fruits as adults require insects to feed their young. Planting is the best way to ensure you meet the needs of the greatest diversity of birds throughout the seasons.

When planting for birds, choose an assortment of native plants, mixing taller and shorter trees, shrubs, flowers and grasses. Diversify the height, leaf type (deciduous and evergreen) and food (fruit, berries and nuts) provided by the plants in your garden. Include shrubs and trees that hold their seeds and berries well into winter and into spring, such as winterberry, sumac or American highbush cranberry, to provide for overwintering birds and early returning migrants. Plant native shrubs and flowers that attract insects and go without pesticides to provide a food source for warblers and other insect-eating birds. Allow coneflowers, goldenrods and other flowers to go to seed to attract seed-eaters like finches and sparrows. Add a source of fresh water and you will have created a bird's paradise.

For more ideas on attracting birds or choosing plants, visit our website at www.wildaboutgardening.org.

Please note: The birds illustrated are males in breeding plumage. Please consult a reputable field guide for plumage or size differences in females of the species or males outside the breeding season.

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CWF-BRD02POSFD

