



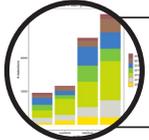
Bird-friendly Communities Program

About Us

The **Missouri River Bird Observatory (MRBO)** is the lead organization for Missouri's Bird-friendly Communities Program. MRBO is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization with the following mission:



To contribute to the conservation of birds and all wildlife through scientific research, education and outreach, and conservation policy advocacy.



Science

To gather information about avian communities and habitat use that will assist state, federal, and private natural resource managers in their efforts to implement conservation programs.



Education

To provide opportunities for people of all ages to learn about species and their habitats.



Advocacy

To advocate for sound, science-based conservation policies that benefit birds, other wildlife and environmental quality.



Cover photo by Ronald Gaddis

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MISSOURI RIVER
BIRD OBSERVATORY



Bird-friendly Communities Program

The Missouri Bird-friendly Communities (BFC) Program is a collaborative initiative launched in 2024, led by the Missouri River Bird Observatory (MRBO) in partnership with the Missouri Department of Conservation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, St. Louis Audubon Society, and the University of Missouri. This program focuses on urban areas and communities across Missouri, aiming to reduce threats to bird populations, enhance ecological integrity, and promote human health and well-being. The BFC Program works with residents, local governments, and community organizations to implement practical, evidenced-based solutions, such as preventing window collisions, reducing light pollution, planting native plants, and encouraging everyday conservation actions to create a safer, healthier place for birds to thrive. Through accessible education and outreach, the program inspires communities to adopt bird-friendly practices at home, in neighborhoods, and throughout their cities to create safer, healthier environments for birds. This document is intended to serve as both a report on 2025 activities as well as an informational resource for communities and individuals interested in contributing to bird conservation.

You can contact the BFC Program at birdfriendlycommunities@mrbo.org



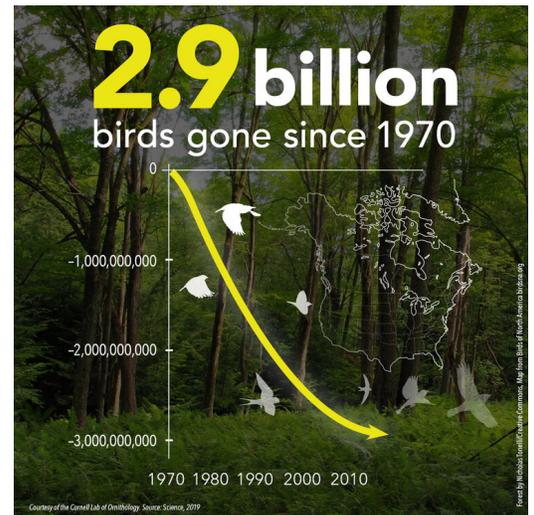
Background

North American bird populations have experienced significant declines in recent decades that are driven by a variety of anthropogenic factors. In 2019, a large-scale study quantified long-term population trends and revealed a 30% decline in bird populations since 1970. While habitat loss remains the primary driver of these declines, window collisions, artificial light at night (ALAN), outdoor cats, and a variety of other threats contribute substantially to direct avian mortality numbers. Urban areas present some of the greatest threats to bird populations because of dense human infrastructure and activities that disrupt their natural habitats, which compromise overall avian health. However, urban environments also present a unique and valuable opportunity to change and provide a safer space for both birds and people.

Birds play a crucial role in maintaining healthy ecosystems as seed dispersers, pollinators, and pest controllers. Each year, birds consume around 400 to 500 million tons of insects, which significantly benefits agriculture and public health by reducing pest populations and controlling disease vectors. They are also reliable indicators of environmental health. Their population trends reflect broader ecological stability, and as populations diminish, the delicate balance of our ecological systems becomes destabilized. These cascading effects highlight the urgent need for conservation initiatives to mitigate anthropogenic drivers and protect birds and their habitats.



Barn Swallow by Rebecca Roseman



Beyond their ecological roles, birds also benefit humans socially, culturally, and scientifically. Birdwatching is one of the fastest-growing outdoor activities, specifically in urban settings, and emerging evidence suggests that spending time outdoors improves both physical and mental well-being. Raising awareness and involving the community in bird conservation efforts can lead to sustainable practices that can help mitigate the adverse effects of urbanization on bird populations. We can transform cities and communities into environments that not only support us but provide safe spaces for birds and wildlife to thrive.

For more information, see <https://www.3billionbirds.org/>



Framework: The Seven Simple Actions to Help Birds



The Cornell Lab of Ornithology developed the “7 Simple Actions for Birds” to help people reduce everyday threats to birds and create safer habitats in their communities. These practical actions, such as preventing window collisions, keeping cats indoors, and avoiding pesticides, empower individuals to make simple but meaningful differences for birds. The Bird-friendly Communities (BFC) program utilizes this framework to guide conservation efforts across Missouri.

1) Windows

Each year in the United States up to one billion birds are killed by window collisions, making this one of the leading sources of human-caused bird mortality. Collisions occur everywhere, from single-family homes to downtown office buildings, and while some birds may initially appear unharmed, most strikes are fatal. Birds that survive the initial impact often suffer internal injuries, head trauma, or neurological damage, and may later die from their injuries out of sight.

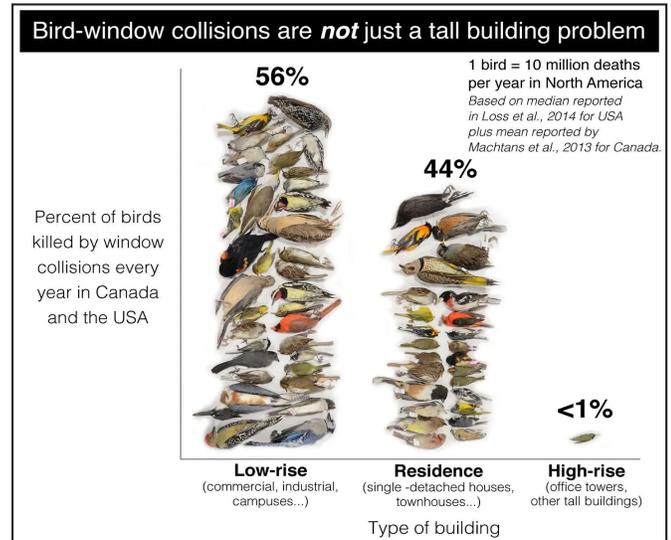
Birds do not recognize glass as a solid barrier. Instead, they see reflections of trees, sky, or vegetation and attempt to fly through what appears to be open habitat. Transparent or reflective windows located near green spaces, trees, or water are especially dangerous, as they mimic natural stopover habitat used by migratory birds. Although tall buildings receive the most attention, research shows that more than 98% of collisions occur at low-rise and residential structures, simply because they are so widespread across the landscape.

Addressing Window Collisions

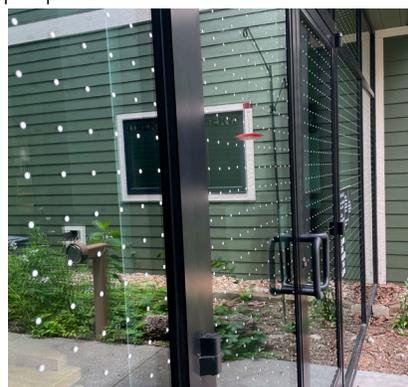
While window collisions are a major cause of bird mortality, they are also one of the most preventable. Making glass visible to birds is the most effective solution. Studies show that properly installed patterned or dotted window treatments can reduce collisions by up to 95%.

Effective window treatments range from low-cost, do-it-yourself options to professionally installed products. What matters most is spacing: following the 2 x 2 rule - placing visual markers no more than 2 inches apart horizontally and 2 inches apart vertically - ensures birds do not attempt to fly through the glass. Missouri lies within a major migratory flyway, making bird-safe windows especially important during spring and fall migration, when millions of birds pass through urban and suburban communities.

By incorporating bird-safe design into homes, schools, businesses, and public buildings, communities can dramatically reduce preventable bird deaths while creating safer shared spaces for people and wildlife.



Bird safe glass installed at Runge Nature Center in Jefferson City



Window treatments installed at Springfield Nature Center



Window treatments installed on the Anheuser-Busch Natural Resources Building at the University of Missouri.

Light Pollution

Artificial light at night (ALAN) is a significant and growing threat to birds throughout the year, particularly during migration. Excessive nighttime lighting disrupts birds' natural navigation systems, which rely on stars, Earth's magnetic field, and internal circadian rhythms. Bright lights can disorient migrating birds, pulling them off course and trapping them in illuminated urban areas where they circle repeatedly, wasting critical energy needed to complete migration.

Nearly 80% of North American bird species migrate at night, making them especially vulnerable to light pollution. Birds can see artificial lights from miles away and are drawn to them, much like insects to a flame. Illuminated buildings, billboards, streetlights, and even residential porch lights increase the risk of exhaustion, predation, and fatal window collisions—especially when disoriented birds fly at low altitudes through developed areas.

Reducing unnecessary nighttime lighting is one of the simplest and most cost-effective actions communities can take to protect birds. Smart lighting practices—such as turning off lights when not needed, shielding fixtures to direct light downward, using warmer-colored bulbs, and limiting decorative or all-night lighting—create safer conditions for wildlife while also benefiting people.

These actions don't just help birds; they also reduce energy use, lower utility costs, and improve human health by preserving natural nighttime conditions. Studies show that installing well-designed outdoor lighting can reduce energy use by 60–70%, delivering immediate financial savings alongside ecological benefits.

Organizations like DarkSky Missouri (darkskymissouri.org) work to reduce light pollution across the state by promoting responsible lighting that supports wildlife, public safety, and the night sky. Similarly, Lights Out Heartland (lightsoutheartland.org) encourages residents, businesses, and communities to turn off or reduce lights at night during migration, helping protect millions of birds as they travel through the region.

Light Pollution....

Destroys critical wildlife habitat



Plants and animals depend on Earth's daily light and dark cycle to govern life-sustaining behaviors. Research shows that artificial light at night has adverse and even deadly effects on many species.

Decreases safety and security



There is no clear scientific evidence that increased outdoor lighting deters crime. In fact, glare from unshielded streetlights can decrease personal safety, contributing to both crime and accidents.

Wastes energy and money



Most outdoor lighting is wasted. This energy waste increases greenhouse gas emissions contributing to climate change and wastes billions of dollars each year.

Robs us of our night sky heritage



Our ancestors experienced a night sky that inspired science, religion, philosophy, art, and literature. Now, millions of children across the globe will never know the wonder of seeing the Milky Way.

Harms human health



Studies indicate that artificial light at night negatively affects human health by increasing our risks for obesity, sleep disorders, depression, diabetes, breast cancer, and more.

Inhibits scientific research



Satellites in low Earth orbit create visible trails in the night sky, inhibiting astronomical research and jeopardizing NASA's early warning system for asteroid collisions.

Join the Effort

By adopting bird-friendly lighting practices at homes, workplaces, and community facilities, cities and towns can create darker, safer skies—saving energy, reducing costs, and ensuring migratory birds can safely navigate the landscapes we share.

Local policies are among the most effective tools for reducing bird mortality from window collisions and light pollution. Communities can make immediate progress by:

- Adopting bird-safe building standards for new construction and major renovations
- Retrofitting public buildings with bird-safe window treatments and lighting
- Implementing outdoor lighting ordinances that limit brightness, require shielding, and reduce unnecessary nighttime lighting
- Participating in Lights Out programs during spring and fall migration
- Leading by example through bird-friendly practices in parks, schools, and municipal facilities

These practical actions save energy, reduce costs, and protect birds—demonstrating how community leadership can deliver measurable conservation benefits.

What can I do?

DarkSky's Five Principles for Responsible Outdoor Lighting can help you make smart choices to reduce light pollution. Do your lights protect the night?



Is it useful?

All light should have a clear purpose. Use lighting only when and where it is needed.



Is it targeted?

Shield and aim your light so it only falls downward and where it is useful.



Is it low-level?

Light should be no brighter than necessary to save money and reduce glare.



Is it controlled?

Lighting should only be on when needed. Use timers and motion sensors.



Is it warm-colored?

Warm-colored light causes less skyglow. Use amber-toned lighting whenever possible.

Learn more



Visit darksky.org to learn more about the importance of the night and what you can do to reduce light pollution around your home and community.



2) Native Plants

Habitat loss is the leading driver of bird population declines across North America. As urban and suburban development continues to expand, birds face increasing challenges in finding food, shelter, and safe places to breed. Missouri's landscape was once shaped by a rich mosaic of native habitats, including tallgrass prairies, wetlands, and forests that together supported extraordinary bird diversity. More than one-third of the state was historically covered by native prairie, yet less than 1% remains today due to cropland conversion and development. Missouri has also lost the vast majority of its original wetlands—over 85% statewide—primarily through drainage and land alteration, while native forests have been heavily fragmented by logging, agriculture, and urban growth. The loss and fragmentation of these interconnected habitats has removed essential native plant communities that birds depend on throughout their life cycles. As a result, many bird groups, including grassland, wetland, and forest-dependent species, are experiencing significant and ongoing population declines.

Why Native Plants Matter

Native plants are the foundation of healthy ecosystems and form long-standing relationships with birds, insects, and other wildlife. Over thousands of years, native plants and native insects evolved together, creating food webs that birds rely on - especially during the breeding season. Most songbirds depend on insects to feed their chicks, and native plants support significantly more insect biomass than non-native ornamental plants. In fact, research shows that native plants can support several times more caterpillars and other insects than non-native species, making them essential for successful bird reproduction.

Native plants also play a critical role during migration. As natural habitats have been fragmented or lost, birds increasingly rely on urban and suburban green spaces to rest and refuel. Native vegetation provides safer stopover habitat, offering shelter from predators and access to energy-rich food sources such as insects, seeds, and berries. These same plantings support pollinators—including bees, butterflies, and other beneficial insects—strengthening biodiversity across the entire community.



Benefits of Native Plants

- Low-maintenance and cost-effective once established
- Well adapted to local soils and climate, requiring less water and no pesticides or fertilizers
- Help control erosion and improve soil health
- Improve air quality and water infiltration
- Support birds, pollinators, and other wildlife throughout the year

Choosing native plants for yards, gardens, school grounds, parks, and other community spaces helps replace some of what has been lost. By reintroducing native vegetation, communities can restore essential ecological functions that once sustained Missouri's prairies and woodlands. Even small plantings can create "stepping-stone" habitat across developed landscapes, helping birds move safely through urban environments. When communities prioritize native plants, they create healthier spaces for people and wildlife alike, and take a meaningful step toward reversing habitat loss.

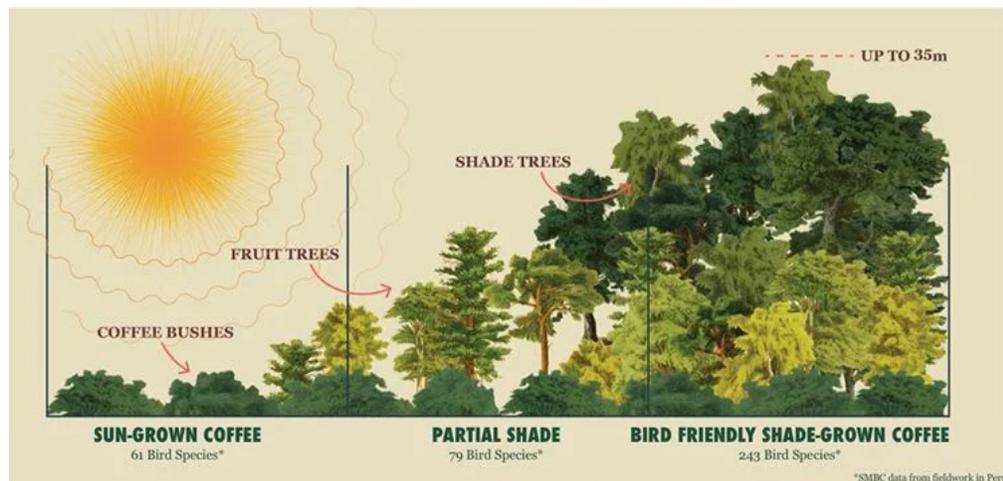
3) Shade-grown Coffee

Many of us can't start the day without our usual cup of joe, but have we ever stopped to think about where it comes from? While we may enjoy the aroma and taste, the story behind our coffee is intertwined with a serious environmental issue: 75% of coffee is grown using practices that destroy habitats and rely on harmful chemicals, which threaten our migratory songbirds.

Sun-Grown vs. Shade-Grown Coffee

Coffee is traditionally an understory shrub, thriving best when grown beneath the canopy of trees. However, to meet growing global demand over the past few decades, many producers have turned to a more intensive farming method: sun-grown coffee. This process involves clearing forests to make way for crops, which leads to the destruction of vital bird habitats. Although sun-grown coffee matures faster and offers higher yields, which appeals to producers seeking faster profits, this practice comes at a steep ecological cost.

In response to these environmental concerns, the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center developed the shade-grown coffee certification in 1996. Shade-grown coffee is cultivated under a natural, multi-layered canopy of trees that preserves biodiversity, protects wintering and resident bird species, and fosters a healthy ecosystem without clear-cutting or heavy chemical use. Birds act as one of nature's best pest controls, consuming an estimated 400 to 500 million tons of insects each year! This natural predator-prey balance reduces the need for synthetic chemicals on coffee farms. Though shade-grown beans ripen more slowly, this results in a richer, more complex flavor with lower acidity which is gentler on your body. Making the switch to shade-grown coffee is a simple way to enjoy your daily cup while supporting bird-friendly habitats and sustainable farming practices.



4) Be the Solution to Plastic Pollution

Plastic pollution is one of the most pressing environmental challenges of our time, with far-reaching consequences for ecosystems worldwide. Birds are particularly vulnerable to plastic pollution because it intersects with nearly every aspect of their lives—from foraging and nesting to migration and reproduction. Plastics can be ingested, cause entanglement, or degrade habitat quality. As plastic materials break down into microplastics and spread throughout air, water, and soil, they increasingly accumulate in food webs. These particles can build up in birds' bodies, affecting their health, reproductive success, and long-term survival.

How Plastic Affects Birds

Ingestion

Birds frequently mistake plastic fragments—such as food wrappers, bottle caps, and foam—for food. Ingested plastics can block digestive tracts, cause internal injuries, and create a false sense of fullness that leads to malnutrition or starvation. Plastics also contain and transport toxic chemicals, including PFAS, phthalates, and bisphenols, which can impair immune function, disrupt hormones, and negatively affect reproduction.

Entanglement

Plastic debris such as fishing line, six-pack rings, plastic bags, and other flexible materials poses a serious entanglement risk. Birds can become trapped around wings, legs, necks, or beaks, leading to restricted movement, severe injury, drowning, or death.

What you can do

Individuals and communities play a meaningful role in addressing plastic pollution. While no single person can solve the plastic crisis alone, collective action—paired with strong public policy—can reduce plastic overproduction, protect human health, and safeguard birds and wildlife. We can reduce our personal plastic consumption in support of our own health, and we can advocate for policies that address the upstream drivers of plastic pollution.

Reduce personal plastic use

Making thoughtful choices in daily life helps limit the amount of plastic entering the environment and reduces exposure to harmful chemicals. These actions also demonstrate public demand for safer, more sustainable alternatives.

- Avoid single-use plastics such as straws, disposable cutlery, excessive packaging, and take-out containers
- Use reusable shopping, produce, and tote bags
- Replace plastic cooking utensils with wood, stainless steel, or metal alternatives
- Store food in reusable glass or stainless-steel containers
- Choose personal care and household products with minimal plastic packaging

Support policies that reduce plastic pollution at the source

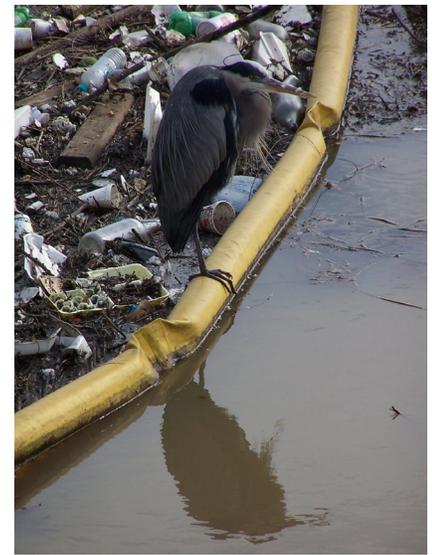
Plastic pollution is fundamentally a systems problem driven by overproduction. Individuals can influence policy by supporting local, state, and national efforts that reduce single-use plastics, improve waste reduction, and hold manufacturers accountable for

Nesting and Reproduction

Plastic often accumulates in nests, where it can entangle adults or chicks, be ingested, or expose birds to harmful chemicals. Brightly colored plastics may also attract predators. Emerging research suggests microplastics may reduce egg quality, hatching success, and chick development, threatening reproductive success.

Population-Level Impacts

Together, ingestion, entanglement, and chemical exposure reduce survival and reproductive success. These cumulative effects can alter behavior and migration and contribute to long-term population declines across many bird species.



the lifecycle of their products. Policy solutions—such as limits on unnecessary plastic products, extended producer responsibility, and improved recycling and reuse systems—are among the most effective tools for protecting birds and ecosystems.

Participate in plastic brand audits and community data collection

Plastic brand audits allow individuals and communities to document the most common sources of plastic waste and connect pollution to specific companies. This data is increasingly used to inform local ordinances, corporate commitments, and statewide policy proposals, strengthening the case for systemic change.

Engage in education, advocacy, and community leadership

Talking with neighbors, schools, local leaders, and decision-makers helps build the public support needed for meaningful policy action. Participating in local initiatives, supporting science-based advocacy, and amplifying bird-friendly solutions all contribute to lasting change.

Within the Bird-friendly Communities program, these individual and collective actions help build the local momentum needed for bird-friendly policies - such as plastic reduction in parks, waterways, schools, and public spaces - that directly reduce hazards to birds and improve habitat quality where people and wildlife coexist. By combining personal action with civic engagement, individuals help drive the policies and cultural shifts necessary to reduce plastic pollution at its source. These efforts protect birds, improve habitat quality, reduce chemical exposure, and create healthier communities.

5) Cats Indoors

The cat is out of the bag

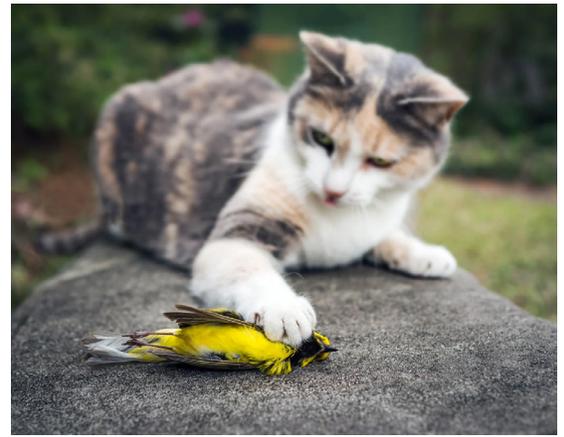
Domestic cats are beloved companions, but when allowed outdoors, they pose a serious threat to birds and other wildlife. Cats were introduced to North America by humans and did not evolve as part of local ecosystems. As a result, native birds have few defenses against them. Free-roaming domestic cats are the leading human-caused source of direct bird mortality in North America, killing an estimated 2.4 billion birds each year. This impact occurs regardless of whether cats are well-fed, as hunting behavior is instinctual rather than driven by hunger.

The Purr-fect Solution

Keeping cats indoors is the most effective way to protect birds while also improving cats' health and safety. Indoor cats live significantly longer—often 10 to 15 years—than outdoor cats, whose average lifespan is just 2 to 5 years due to vehicle collisions, fights with other animals, predators, and disease. Cats allowed outdoors are also more likely to contract or spread parasites and illnesses that can affect other animals and people. From a conservation perspective, keeping cats indoors completely eliminates their impact on birds and other wildlife. Communities can protect native wildlife while ensuring better quality of life and well-being for their pets.

- Keep cats indoors full time
- Provide safe outdoor access through enclosed patios or “catios”
- Use harnesses, backpacks, or strollers for supervised outdoor time
- Offer indoor enrichment such as toys, climbing structures, and window perches
- Avoid feeding outdoor or feral cats, which can increase wildlife pressure

Whether you are a cat owner, a bird enthusiast, or both, keeping cats indoors is the single most effective action you can take to protect wildlife while improving your cat's safety and quality of life. Small changes in how we care for pets can make a meaningful difference for birds, ecosystems, and communities.



6) Pesticides

Pesticides are widely used to control insects, weeds, fungi, and rodents in agricultural, urban, and residential settings. While they are often marketed as quick and effective solutions, pesticides can have serious and far-reaching consequences for birds, pollinators, and broader ecosystem health. These chemicals do not stay confined to their intended targets; instead, they move through soil, water, plants, and food webs, creating risks well beyond the site of application.

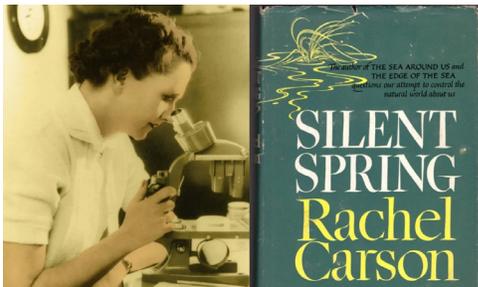
The environmental dangers of pesticides have been recognized for decades. In *Silent Spring*, published in 1962, marine biologist Rachel Carson documented the devastating effects of the insecticide DDT on birds and other wildlife. DDT was later banned in the United States in 1972 after it was shown to cause eggshell thinning, reproductive failure, and population declines in birds of prey. Carson's work remains a powerful reminder that chemical solutions can carry hidden ecological costs - and that

understanding those consequences is essential when managing land and landscapes today.

The term “pesticide” broadly refers to any substance designed to kill or control any organism

humans consider a pest. This includes herbicides used to kill weeds, insecticides used to kill insects, fungicides used to control fungi, rodenticides used to kill rodents, and many other products ending in “-cide.” Although these chemicals are often intended to target specific species, they rarely affect only those organisms. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, pesticide exposure is estimated to kill tens of millions of birds worldwide each year, either directly or indirectly.

Pesticides affect birds in multiple ways. Birds may be poisoned by ingesting treated seeds, contaminated insects, or sprayed berries. Many pesticides reduce or eliminate insects that birds rely on as essential food sources, particularly during the breeding season when protein-rich insects are critical for chick development. Herbicides can remove native plants that provide food, shelter, and nesting habitat. Some pesticides accumulate in the bodies of prey species such as fish or rodents and are then passed up the food chain, harming raptors and other predators. Sublethal exposure can also weaken birds' immune systems, increase vulnerability to disease, and alter behaviors such as singing, mating, and migration - effects that can reduce survival and reproductive success even when birds are not immediately killed.



Bird-friendly Alternatives to Pesticides

Creating bird-friendly communities does not mean abandoning pest management altogether, but it does require more thoughtful, ecologically grounded approaches. Encouraging natural predators is one of the most effective strategies. Native plants support diverse insect communities, which in turn attract birds and other wildlife that help keep pest populations in balance. Healthy, native-based landscapes are more resilient and often require fewer chemical interventions over time. Communities can significantly reduce harm to birds, pollinators, and people by adopting policies that limit unnecessary pesticide use and promote safer alternatives. By leading with science-based policies, communities protect wildlife, reduce chemical exposure, and create healthier, more resilient public spaces.

- Adopt Integrated Pest Management (IPM) practices for parks, schools, and public lands
- Reduce or eliminate routine pesticide applications on municipal properties
- Prioritize native plantings that require fewer chemical inputs
- Restrict the use of the most harmful pesticides, especially during the breeding and migration seasons
- Provide public education on non-chemical and least-toxic pest management options

By reducing reliance on pesticides and choosing bird-friendly alternatives, communities can protect birds, pollinators, and human health while maintaining functional and attractive landscapes. Small, informed changes, multiplied across yards, parks, schools, and public spaces, create healthier ecosystems where birds and people can thrive together.

7) Citizen and Community Science

Bird conservation is a shared effort that extends far beyond professional scientists. Protecting birds requires habitat management, education, policy action, and research working together across landscapes. One of the most powerful—and often overlooked—tools supporting all of these efforts is community science (sometimes called citizen science). By engaging people directly in data collection and observation, community science helps fill critical knowledge gaps and strengthens conservation at local, regional, and national scales.



Community science is a collaborative approach that invites people of all ages and backgrounds to participate in scientific research, regardless of formal training. By recording observations from their own neighborhoods, parks, schoolyards, and natural areas, participants help scientists gather information across vast geographic areas and over long periods of time. These contributions provide invaluable insight into bird populations, migration patterns, breeding success, and long-term trends—data that would be impossible for researchers alone to collect at the same scale.

Anyone can take part in community science. Whether logging a bird sighting on a smartphone, counting birds at a feeder, or monitoring a nest, these observations contribute to real, peer-reviewed research and conservation decision-making. All that is required is curiosity, consistency, and a willingness to observe the natural world more closely.

Several widely used tools and projects make participation accessible and impactful. Platforms like eBird, managed by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, allow participants to submit bird sightings anytime and anywhere, helping scientists track changes in distribution and abundance across seasons and years. iNaturalist enables people to record and share observations of plants and animals while learning from a global community of naturalists. Tools like Merlin Bird ID help users identify birds by sight or sound, lowering barriers to participation and improving data quality.



Community Science Project Examples

Community science projects also offer structured opportunities for engagement. The **Great Backyard Bird Count**, held each February, invites people around the world to spend at least 15 minutes observing birds and sharing their counts, providing a snapshot of global bird populations. **Project FeederWatch**, which runs from late fall through early spring, gathers data on winter bird distribution and abundance from feeders and backyards. **NestWatch** focuses on monitoring bird nests to track reproductive success and understand how factors such as urbanization and climate change affect breeding birds over time.

Being part of something bigger

In a world where bird populations face serious threats, community-powered science offers us hope and helps protect the species we all need and love. Science thrives best when we are collaborative and inclusive. Any data you submit helps conservationists, researchers, and policymakers make informed decisions to protect birds and their habitats. No matter how big or small, each and every one of these contributions are crucial to conservation efforts. In an era of unprecedented biodiversity loss, citizen science empowers communities and individuals to become active stewards of the natural world and to help shape the future of conservation.



Bird City

Missouri has a strong tradition of conservation built on collaboration among communities, organizations, and individuals who care deeply about natural resources. Building on that legacy, MRBO has launched Bird City Missouri, a statewide program designed to recognize and support communities that take meaningful, measurable actions to make their environments safer, healthier, and more sustainable for birds and people.

Bird City Missouri is part of the international Bird City Network, which was established in 2009 through a partnership between American Bird Conservancy and Environment for the Americas. Since its creation, the network has grown to include more than 200 communities across four countries, all working toward shared goals of habitat improvement, threat reduction, sustainability, and public engagement. Communities earn Bird City designation by taking concrete steps such as planting native vegetation, reducing window collisions and light pollution, addressing pesticide use, and engaging residents through education, outreach, and community programs. Participating communities benefit from healthier ecosystems, stronger partnerships, increased civic pride, and deeper connections between people and nature.

Since its launch in Missouri in 2025, Bird City Missouri has gained strong momentum. More than a dozen communities have already expressed interest in participating, with several expected to receive official designation in early 2026. There is no population size requirement, making the program accessible to communities of all sizes—from small towns to larger cities. By recognizing achievements and supporting continued progress, Bird City Missouri helps communities move from intention to action and fosters long-term stewardship of birds and their habitats.



More information about Bird City Missouri is available at birdcity.org/missouri, or by contacting birdfriendlycommunities@mrbo.org.



Urban Bird Treaty

Urban areas also play a critical role in bird conservation, even though they are often overlooked as wildlife habitat. To address this opportunity, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service launched the Urban Bird Treaty (UBT) program in 1999. This nationwide initiative brings together federal, state, and local agencies, nonprofit organizations, and community partners to make cities and towns more supportive of birds. Urban Bird Treaty designation recognizes a city's commitment to intentional, measurable actions that improve habitat quality, reduce urban threats, and engage residents in bird conservation. By integrating conservation into urban planning, education, and outreach, the program helps ensure that birds can coexist and thrive alongside people in urban environments.

Core goals of the Urban Bird Treaty program include protecting, restoring, and enhancing urban habitats; reducing hazards such as window collisions and light pollution; and engaging urban communities in caring for birds and the ecosystems they depend on.

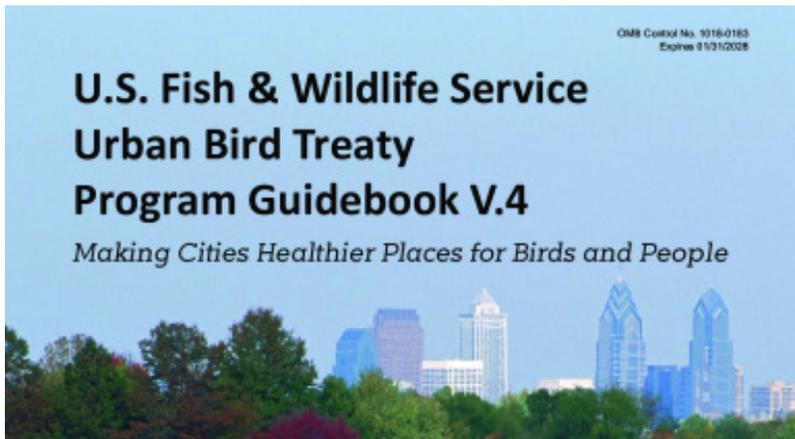


St. Louis

In Missouri, St. Louis is currently updating its Urban Bird Treaty designation, with approval expected in February. This process was led by Saint Louis Audubon Society and involved submitting a comprehensive report to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service that documented metrics, outcomes, and partner contributions across the region. The St. Louis team has since finalized and submitted its Urban Bird Treaty renewal application, reinforcing the city's ongoing leadership in urban bird conservation.

Kansas City

Kansas City has also made significant progress toward Urban Bird Treaty designation. Over the past year, the core team, supported by staff of the Kansas City Office of Environmental Quality, has developed a draft implementation plan and met with partner organizations to refine proposed actions. Preparations are underway to submit the plan to the Urban Bird Treaty Coordinator, and momentum continues to build as Kansas City works toward advancing bird conservation through coordinated, community-driven efforts.



BIRDS MEAN BUSINESS.

HEALTHY BIRDS, HEALTHY COMMUNITIES



Resourcefulness



Lights Out programs lower energy bills while protecting migrating birds.

Restoration



Healing our landscapes with native plants and bird-friendly designs reduces collisions, supports pollinators, and improves air quality.

Revenue



Bird-friendly parks and communities attract eco-tourism and boost economic benefits.

Become a Designated Bird City In Missouri!



The Bird City Program focuses on four goals:

1. Improving Habitats
2. Addressing Threats
3. Engaging People
4. Promoting Sustainability

Benefits

- Recognition of your city's leadership in conservation efforts.
- Attracts birding tourism and visitors.
- Creates healthier communities for people and wildlife.

Bird City Missouri Website:



<https://birdcity.org/missouri>

For more information, contact birdfriendlycommunities@mrbo.org

Contact Information

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