

Promoting Urban Wildlife

Humans have physical, mental, and spiritual needs to connect to the environment. Seventy percent of Americans live in urban or suburban settings. Seeing birds, butterflies, squirrels, deer and other wildlife tends to give people a sense of connection to the natural world. Improving habitats in our local communities will help to promote the welfare of wildlife.

All creatures need food, water, shelter, and space. Many species have very specific requirements, while others are more adaptable. Some animals and insects visit for a short time and others are year-round. We can create the living requirements to benefit a wide variety of species.

Native species of plants provide the greatest benefit to wildlife. Most of the landscape plants available at nurseries are non-native while many others become invasive. Crown vetch, garlic mustard, shrub honeysuckle, glossy buckthorn, tree of heaven, autumn olive and callery pear are a few of the non-native introduced landscape plants that are now invasive in our area. They provide limited value to wildlife and crowd out native plants.

Plants and insects are toward the bottom of the food chain. Native plants are host to the highest numbers of insects. These insects are vital as food for birds and as pollinators. It is estimated that a Black Crowned Chickadee requires over 7,000 insects to feed its nestlings!

The trees, shrubs, and flowers we cultivate determine the habitat we provide to wildlife. Consider planting native trees and shrubs or creating a wildflower garden. Keeping pets indoors and reducing insecticide usage will help keep the environment in a more natural setting. We can all work together to make a few smarter changes for wildlife and people alike.

[INVASIVE PLANTS BANNED ON OHIO - Ohio Invasive Plants Council \(oipc.info\)](https://www.oipc.info/)

[27 Beautiful Native Plants for Ohio Gardens \(allaboutgardening.com\)](https://www.allaboutgardening.com/27-beautiful-native-plants-for-ohio-gardens/)

Submitted by: Jeff Saltzman, Stow Urban Forestry Commission
June 6, 2023