

# Caterpillar Connoisseurs

The role caterpillars in  
the life cycle of birds

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Northern Mockingbird Nestlings

# 2023: Year of the Caterpillar

Caterpillars support the foundation of healthy ecosystems. By diversifying and integrating our landscapes with caterpillar host plants we can begin to create healthy urban ecosystems that will build a more ecologically sustainable community for tomorrow.



# Caterpillar Connoisseurs

Why are caterpillars so important to birds?

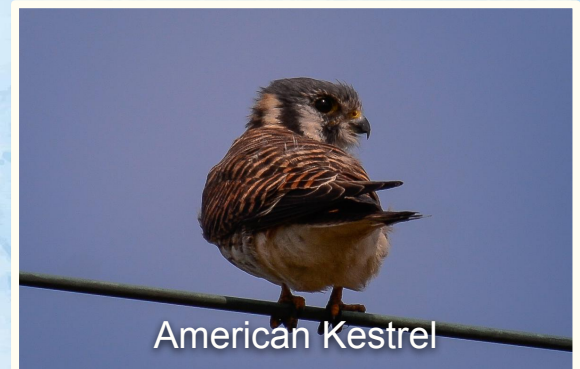
- It's all that fat, protein, and nutrients in a soft, juicy body.
- Nestlings are growing at an exponential rate so they can get out of the most vulnerable stage of their lives quickly.



Northern Mockingbird Nestlings

# The Value of Birds

- Pest control
  - Mosquito and roach control
  - Rats and mice
- Cleanup and Disease Prevention
- Spreading Plants
- Enjoyment



# 2024: Year of the Bird

Birds are vital to ecosystems and human well-being, serving as pollinators, seed dispersers, pest controllers, and cultural inspirations. They support ecological balance and biodiversity while providing an emotional connection to nature. By landscaping for birds, we can create habitats to conserve our biodiversity for the future.



Tufted Titmouse

# Native Plants increase Biodiversity

- Doug Tallamy's research
  - Native hedges support **more species** of butterflies and moths
    - Nearly double the caterpillar biomass!
  - Native yards have higher biodiversity in both caterpillars and birds

# Turn your landscape into a Bird Feeder

- Habitat
  - Diversity in planting
  - Nesting sites
- Caterpillars
  - Host Plants
  - Oak Trees
- Fruit, seeds, and nuts
  - Migration
  - Winter residents
- Water



Northern Mockingbird on a Firebush

# Habitat

- Variety is key for diversity
  - Blue Jays prefer being up high
  - Cardinals are low-medium heights
  - Mockingbirds forage on open ground
  - Sparrows and wrens skulk low in dense foliage
- Preferred nesting sites
  - Dense shrubs for Mockingbirds, Cardinals, wrens, and Brown Thrashers
  - Trees for Blue Jays, grackles, and owls



Common Yellow-throat in a Florida Privet



Summer Tanager with Virginia Creeper



# Food

- Summer
  - Birds are nesting so they need LOTS of insects
  - Host plants
  - Oak trees
- Winter
  - Fall and winter fruiting trees and shrubs
  - Leave seeds on plants
- Migration
  - High energy needs!
  - Spring and Fall fruiting trees and shrubs
  - Best time for hummingbirds so have your tubular flowers ready



Blue Jay

# Water

- Offer at least 2 sources
- Bird Baths
  - 2-3" deep
  - Textured surfaces preferred
- Safety First
  - Place near trees or shrubs so birds can quickly fly to cover
- Keep them filled
  - Your neighborhood birds will learn your landscape has a reliable source of water



Northern Cardinal splashing around

# Questions?



Top: Scarlet Tanager

Right: Painted Bunting eating grass seeds

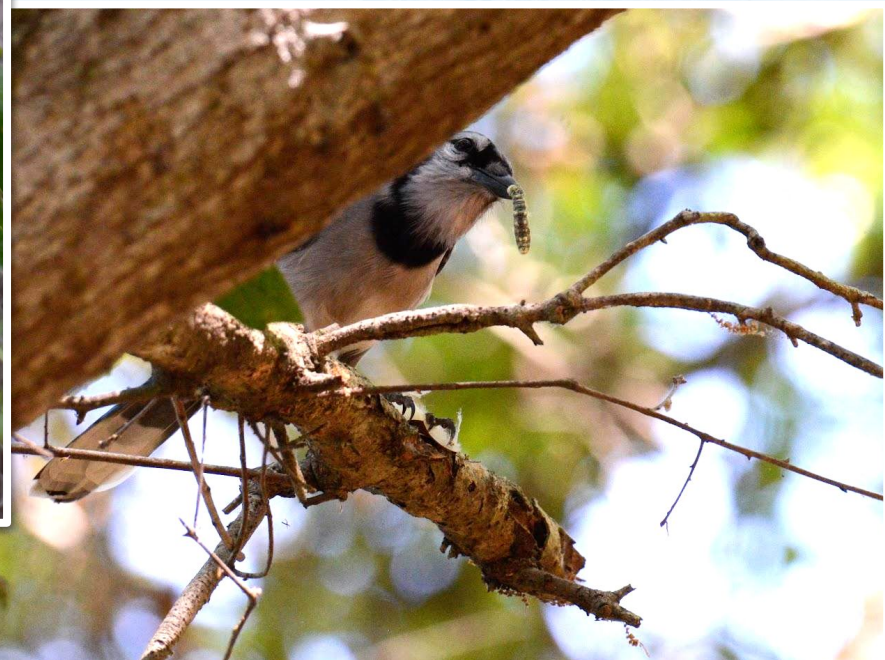


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Red-Winged Blackbird on a Buttonbush

Blue Jay





Top: Northern Parula

Right: Hairy Woodpecker bringing a caterpillar to the nest

