



A NEW YORK CHAPTER OF THE NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY

THE CHEMUNG VALLEY AUDUBON SOCIETY

SERVING THE SOUTHERN FINGER LAKES REGION

Why Do Birds Matter?

Birds fill ecological roles in the web of life.

- Birds are an indicator of environmental quality.
- Hawks, falcons, eagles, and owls, are predators. Songbirds, nestlings, and eggs are some of the prey they rely on.
- Vultures are scavengers, consuming road-killed animals and other dead wildlife. Gulls, eagles, ravens, crows, and even chickadees are sometimes scavengers.
- Birds are the original pest controllers. They eat vast quantities of insects, and they keep rodents in check.
- Hummingbirds are pollinators. Fruit- and seed-eating birds are seed dispersers. Robins, sparrows, and finches spread seeds across the landscape.
- Woodpeckers, which are considered keystone species, excavate cavities in dead trees, thus creating roosting and nesting sites for other birds and mammals. A keystone species is a plant or animal that plays a unique and crucial role in the way an ecosystem functions. Without the keystone species, the ecosystem would be dramatically different or cease to exist altogether.



American Robins can be harmed by lawn pesticides.
Photo by Gail Norwood.

Birds are a gateway to nature study.

- Most bird species are active during daylight hours, just as we are. We notice their colors and behaviors, their songs and calls, and their incredible migration journeys.
- When we learn the names and behaviors of birds, we begin to care about their habitats. What foods do they prefer? Are they at home in a forest or a meadow, a wetland or marine environment?

Nature study leads to environmental stewardship.

- As we learn about birds and their ecology, we grow to appreciate the habitats, food webs, and ecosystems that all of life depends on.
- “If you take care of birds, you take care of most of the environmental problems of the world,” says conservation biologist Thomas Lovejoy.

What do birds need?

Birds need the same things people need:

- Food
- Water
- Cover (shelter)
- Space

How can you help birds?

- Learn about birds by going outdoors with experienced birders, a pair of binoculars, and a field guide. Chemung Valley Audubon Society organizes free local field trips (about 2 hours duration) and provides binoculars if you don't have them.
- Get your family, friends, and teachers interested in birds.
- Participate in citizen science, such as Project FeederWatch.
- Keep house cats indoors.
- Don't release balloons.
- Plant native plants.
- Leave some dead plant material (tree snag, brush pile, unraked leaves) where you want to attract birds.
- Keep your lawn chemical-free.
- Properly dispose of fishing line.
- Buy a Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp ("Duck Stamp").
- Reuse your stuff, and DO NOT LITTER.
- Drink and serve bird-friendly coffee.



Yellow-throated Vireos winter in Central and South America, returning in spring to the Eastern U.S. to breed.
Photo by Gail Norwood.



This Canada Goose family will remain together for the first year of the goslings' life.

Chemung Valley Audubon Society events are free and open to all.
Visit our web site for information about field trips and programs.

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