



WESTERN CUYAHOGA AUDUBON SOCIETY

CONNECT › EDUCATE › CONSERVE

2018 Year of the Bird

By Nancy Howell, Board Member, Western Cuyahoga Audubon

"Here are some simple ways to help protect birds in our area, perhaps your yard and neighborhood and beyond, even the most remote and exotic places on the planet."

The **Year of the Bird** is being celebrated by four heavy hitting organizations - The Cornell Lab of Ornithology, National Audubon Society, National Geographic and BirdLife International - all organizations that support research on, conservation of and advocacy for birds, bird habitats and studying environmental concerns affecting birds.

So why celebrate birds? Well ... birds live in or use nearly every habitat on the planet. Birds can be seen in the most urbanized areas to the most remote. They inspire us with their song, color, flight and more. They are celebrated in art, music, dance and literature. They ARE the barometers for the health of habitats, ecosystems and environments.

We know many of the problems birds are facing throughout the world. We can dwell on these problems but it would make an unappetizing read. So instead, let's look at how all of us can help birds. In this **Year of the Bird** - here are some simple ways to help protect birds in our area, perhaps your yard and neighborhood and beyond, even the most remote and exotic places on the planet.

- Become educated on Ohio's birds. Join a field trip or attend a presentation. Western Cuyahoga Audubon has trips each month as well as programs from September through May. [Read the WCAS News Blog](#). The more one learns about native species, if they are migrants, the habitat(s) they utilize and if populations are changing, then good personal choices can be made.

- Learn about some of the local as well as global problems facing birds. Whether it is poor agricultural practices affecting land and water resources and habitats, to buildings, windows and structures that impede birds on migration, to non-native plant and animal species which change the biodiversity of an area.
- Advocate for birds and bird habitats. Western Cuyahoga Audubon's website often has petitions to lawmakers that one can simply add your name. WCAS also has links to organizations that share similar environmental concerns. [Read the WCAS Policy Blog](#). More of an impact can be made by writing letters or sending messages electronically in your own words. Make sure anything presented is accurate, research-based information and cite the organization from which the information was taken. Fake facts should not taint a great letter.
- Create habitat in your yard and neighborhood. Planting native plants, allowing parts of the yard to become natural with wildflowers and grasses and "weeds". Talk with neighbors about turning their yards native. There are plenty of websites, including Western Cuyahoga Audubon's that have information on native plant species and where to get them. Just as important, talk with plant nurseries and persuade them to carry native plants. [LEAP-Native Plants of the Year 2018 PDF](#)
- Become a better consumer. If your family eats meat, consider having a couple of meatless meals during the week. Palm oil and most coffees are grown on plantations that strip native vegetation and heavily use pesticides and petroleum based fertilizers. Read labels and try not to use products containing palm oil or unsustainably grown coffee. Western Cuyahoga Audubon has a coffee club that sells, bird-friendly, shade-grown and sustainable coffee. [Join the WCAS Bird Friendly Coffee Club](#). Purchase local fruits and vegetables in season - asparagus in spring, beans and, melons in the summer, apples and winter squash during the fall.
- Keep pets, dogs and cats, controlled in your yard. Roaming cats, even pet cats hunt birds and other small animals. Dogs often chase animals and may disturb nests. Thickets, evergreen shelters and brush piles in a yard can help native species hide from perceived and real predators.

Six simple things were listed that can help make 2018 a better year for birds. Already doing many of the things noted above? Then take it a step or two further and become an active volunteer or participant in environmental events. Celebrate the **Year of the Bird** in your yard or neighborhood or community or with us at Western Cuyahoga Audubon.