

Backyard Bird Photo Studio

Attract birds to your yard

- Birds need shelter, food, and water. One alone is enough, but the more you can provide, the more birds you will attract.
- Shelter/Habitat
 - native plants are best – acclimated to local climate & pests; provide food for birds
 - Audubon's Plants for Birds (<https://www.audubon.org/plantsforbirds>)
 - 4 Levels: tree tops, mid-story, undergrowth, open areas
 - Leave the leaves in winter (rake in spring)
- Feeders
 - tray/platform
 - tube
 - hopper
 - feeder stations
 - clean feeders every 2-3 weeks (
 - finch / nyjer / thistle
 - suet
 - hummingbird
- Food
 - black oil sunflower seed (most seed-eating birds)
 - mixed blend (WBU No-mess)
 - peanuts (Blue Jays)
 - suet/bark butter (Woodpeckers and others)
 - thistle / nyjer seed (winter finches and siskins)
 - mealworms (for non-seed-eaters)
- Water
 - stationary bath
 - water drip
 - clean permanent bird baths at least every 2-3 days

Birds you may see in your yard (North Texas)

- All Year

House Finch	American Robin	Carolina Chickadee
Cardinal	House Sparrow	Tufted Titmouse
Blue Jay	European Starling	Northern Mockingbird
Eastern Woodpecker	Downy Woodpecker	Red-bellied Woodpecker
Carolina Wren	Eastern Phoebe	Cooper's Hawk
Mourning Dove	White-winged Dove	Great-tailed Grackle
Red-winged Blackbird		
- Winter Only

Ruby-crowned Kinglet	Yellow-rump Warbler	Cedar Waxwing
American Goldfinch	Pine Siskin	Dark-eyed Junco
Song Sparrow	Chipping Sparrow	White-throated Sparrow
Spotted Towhee	Eastern Towhee	Brown Thrasher
- Spring/Fall Migration can bring unexpected birds to your yard, especially if you have a water drip

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Set the Stage

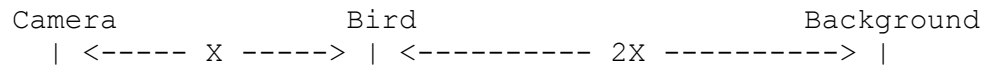
- Build a water-drip demo
 - Basin
 - Standard bird bath, saucer, hole in ground lined with plastic/pond liner
 - Drip Irrigation Supplies
 - 25 PSI pressure reducer
 - 3/4" hose thread to 1/4" vinyl tubing connector
 - 1/4" vinyl tubing
 - 1/4" on-off valve
 - Timer (Battery Powered) – OPTIONAL
 - Useful if you want drip to run each day (or maybe 4 hours in the morning), but not during the night to conserve water
 - Daily drip schedule habituates birds to look for water in your yard
- Build a perch
 - Basic support
 - cheap tripod
 - Christmas Tree base (larger logs for woodpecker setup)
 - iron garden stakes/hangers
 - Branches
 - appropriate diameter perch for the size of bird
 - appropriate length
 - no white / light bark
 - if using a live/freshly pruned branch, make sure leaf size does not overpower bird
 - Vines, flowers
 - decoration, add color
 - obscure unwanted features
 - zip ties, Velcro strapping, parachute cord, clamps, duct tape
- Considerations
 - Birds like cover nearby
 - birds like steady support
 - hide / disguise places you don't want them to perch
 - leave an open spot where you do want them to perch

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Placing your perch

- Consider the Lighting and the Time of Day
 - Setups are easiest to use with consistent light
 - Birds are most active in the morning, followed by late afternoon

- Background
 - Distance / bokeh -- at least 2x the camera-to-bird distance (more is better)



- Lens Min-focus distance
 - Canon 100-400 (II): 3.3 ft
 - Canon 600: 14.8 ft
 - Nikon 300 PF: 4.6 ft
 - Nikon 200-500: 7.3 ft
 - use extension tube to decrease min-focus distance
- avoid fences, brick walls, etc... in your background
- fake backgrounds
 - neutral color or camo-print sheet/blanket/fabric - cotton, fleece, etc
 - large (36") print backgrounds (used by a lot of hummingbird photographers)
 - additional staged braches behind primary setup
- Around water drip
 - perch should lead down to water drip
 - most birds are cautious while bathing
 - they should land on the perch, move slow to water while looking around, then jump in for bath
- Around feeding station
 - remove all but one feeder when you are photographing
 - on remaining feeder, limit to one port or a small area of the tray
 - perch should be near food access
 - ideally, one bird should be on feeding station, others should stage on nearby perches waiting for a turn
- Other Hints
 - If using dead wood, mist the perch with water – it will darken the wood/bark and tones down highlights
 - A small bit of mud can hide fresh scars on newly pruned branches and minimize photoshop cloning.

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Flash

- close range, so Better-beamer is probably not needed
- battery back can be useful for quicker recharge
- manual exposure, set for background
 - select aperture for appropriate Depth-of-Field and for Out-of-Focus Background
 - watch shutter speed -- sync speed for most camera brands is 1/200 to 1/250sec
 - raise or lower ISO to get appropriate shutter speed
- turn on flash, set flash power or flash exposure compensation to expose perch/bird

Blinds

- not always necessary for backyard birds that are habituated to people
- Open window in your house
 - hot/cold weather tip:
 - Open window
 - seal opening with clear plastic sheet (painters tarp) and duct tape
 - cut hole in plastic for lens
- Throw blind (<https://www.lenscoat.com/lenshide-photo-blind-c-55.html>)
- Ameristep Outhouse or Doghouse blind (<https://www.ameristep.com/browse/ground-blinds>)
- Camo-cloth & custom design

References

Alan Murphy

<http://www.alanmurphyphotography.com/ebook.htm>
<http://www.alanmurphyphotography.com/videos.html>

Bird Setup Photography
Through-the-Lens Videos

Glenn Bartley

<http://www.glennbartley.com/>
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCLVHIbesoynX0DeleFhx9FQ>

Trip Videos on YouTube

Marie Read

<https://www.marieread.com/>

Brian Small

<http://www.briansmallphoto.com>