Insects

Insect biomass is essential to healthy bird populations. Virtually all terrestrial nestlings are raised on insects. This Common Yellowthroat and Black-capped Chickadee have captured food for their young. To provide birds with this most important food source, use insect-hosting native plants in your landscape.

Birds

Birds, especially warblers, depend heavily on moth and butterfly larvae during migration. According to Douglas Tallamy (Bringing Nature Home; Timber Press, 2009) the top three larval hosts are oaks (Quercus species), native cherries (Prunus species) and willows (Salix species). Plant those native to your region in your home garden.

Butterflies

For butterflies, incorporate larval host plants in your landscape. For Gray Hairstreak – native legumes; for Luna Moths – native cherries, oaks and walnuts.


Availability of insects is crucial to migrating and nesting birds. Only native plants support insect biomass. Grow a Bird Feeder by planting native trees, shrubs, flowers and grasses.
Plants matter. They matter because only plants have the ability to turn the sun’s energy into the food that keeps us, and our fellow creatures on earth. Our birds depend on plants because plants produce the insects that birds feed their young. Nearly all terrestrial birds near your young on insects rather than seeds or berries. Even dead plant parts are vital to our birds by supplying the leaf litter that land snails consume, an essential source of calcium for bird egg shells.

Which plants make the most bird food? The ones that evolved with our local web; our native plants. The plants from Asia that we have brought to our landscapes are awful in comparison. The single most effective way to help both migrating and local birds is to restore the native plant community that once thrived on your property as much of your land as possible. Saving Birds Thru Habitat can tell you how.

--by Douglas Tallamy, Professor and Chair, Department of Entomology and Wildlife Ecology, University of Delaware. Author, Bringing Nature Home.