AUSABLE VALLEY AUDUBON MEETING, OCTOBER 8, 2024
East Tawas Senior Center, 312 Newman St., East Tawas
Meeting Minutes

At approximately 3:00 pm, the Au Sable Valley gathered for a monthly meeting. The Business meeting opened at 3:05 pm. President Bill Roth welcomed members and guests. We had a large group, enough to establish a quorum.

BIRD SIGHTINGS: Winter wrens, Greater Yellowlegs, American Golden Plover, White Crowned sparrows, white throated, Blue phased snow geese, Sandhill cranes (high flying), red headed woodpecker, and ruffed grouse.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Dawn Hooper reported a balance of $7,452.82 with nothing outstanding. Motion carried to approve report. Reminder that dues are owed, send checks to Dawn Hooper at 2414 N. US Hwy 23, Oscoda 48750.

SECRETARY'S REPORT: The minutes of the September 10, 2024, meeting were read by Amy Kohlhepp. Motion carried to approve report.

EM'S BIRD LESSON OF THE DAY: Emily taught us to leave snags in your yard. These are great for woodpeckers and other birds because they attract insects.

PRESENTATION
SAFE BIRD FEEDING PRACTICES by Pam Carter
Document from Michigan Audubon:
https://www.michiganaudubon.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/MI-Native-Plants-for-Bird-Friendly-Landscapes_Website.pdf

Presentation is attached, including the homemade suet recipe.

10 MINUTE BREAK

OLD BUSINESS

FALL HIGHWAY PICKUP
Twelve members participated, they picked up 13 bags of trash and huge plastic pieces and two semi tires. Thank you to volunteers.

TAWAS POINT
Bill Roth mentioned that the viewing platform has been replaced and it is time to get measurements and start building the benches. The group, led by Larry VanWagoner is going to meet again after this meeting.

SPECIAL SPEAKING SERIES
Peggy Ridgeway summarized the milestones for 2024 special series. There were 20 to 25 participants at each of the sessions. For 2025, the theme can be Wonder Wings (any species with wings such as butterflies, bats, chimney swifts etc).

MOTION
A motion was brought forth by Martha Withers to approve the title for the series “Wonder Wings” and to approve Peggy to go forth with plans representing AVA at the Library in Harrisville.

Discussion included whether it should be expanded to other libraries in Iosco. Peggy explained that one of the reasons for this series is to expand our coverage into Alcona so doesn’t feel we need to go forth in Iosco. Other topics for future could be native yard habitat (possibly in 2026). Note: Some of the native yard habitat is part of the Safe Bird Feeding Practices Marketing.

Motion was seconded by Sarah Humphries and passed.

NEW BUSINESS

OWLING FIELD TRIP
Bill mentioned that a possible field trip could be a gathering campfire where we call owls. The end of October is the best time for this activity.

Alan and Madonna Bernard mentioned that they are hearing owls around their home, and they could host a campfire/owl calling. Lives just outside of Glennie (to the East). It was mentioned that members should watch their email for details because the activity is weather dependent, and plans can shift quickly.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT
Larry VanWagoner will need volunteers for 2024 Circles. There is a sign-up sheet for volunteers, asking also if you are willing to drive. There are two circles, 7.5 miles in diameter and four or five cars of volunteers count birds within assigned areas.

SANDHILL CRANE COUNT
Bill Roth mentioned that if you are interested in participating last week of October or first week of November then pay attention to emails. The count takes place in the Prescot area.

AUDIO VISUAL AND SPEAKER EQUIPMENT
Bill expressed need for new audio-visual equipment and a speaker system for AVA. Discussion included that the budget should be up to $2,000.

MOTION
Carole Cooper put forth a motion that AVA research and purchase a new speaker system and projection system. Mary Ann Wojahn seconded. Motion passed.

Pam Carter offered to donate a screen.

RECYCLING ON BALLOT
November election contains a ballot proposal for Recycling. Members should read up.

EDUCATION CAMPAIGN ON SAFE BIRD FEEDING
Pam Carter expressed need to get word out regarding safe bird feeding practices and wanted approval to go out on behalf of AVA. Discussion included that it should be more than local libraries.

Amy Kohlhepp set forth a motion to approve Pam to approach Iosco and Alcona Libraries and other organizations on behalf of AVA to promote our Bird Safety Feeding campaign pursuant to our grant requirements. Motion was seconded by Larry Mason. Motion was passed.

Meeting Adjourned.

SAFELY FEEDING BIRDS AT HOME

ABOUT US

AuSable Valley Audubon, Inc. is a 501c3 organization. We are dedicated to preserving the nature of Michigan for birds and people.

Connecting birds and people for the benefit of both through conservation, education, and research efforts in the state of Michigan.

AN ESTIMATED 59 MILLION AMERICANS FEED BIRDS

Feeding Birds introduces people to nature. It can be the first step into getting outside and experiencing nature.

There is evidence that what we love, we protect.

We might feel that feeding the birds offsets the harm humans have done to their habitat

And yes, feeders can aid in the survival during migration and harsh winters.

But birds don't need the feeders, we do.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF FEEDING BIRDS

- Diseases
- Predation
- Collision
- Change in bird behaviors

"The most serious issue is the spread of disease. If a bird is infectious, [visiting a feeder is] the ideal way to spread it. But people are not going to stop feeding, nor should they. We need to take the responsibility of having a feeder much more seriously and minimize the risk of spreading disease."

Birds at My Table by Darryl Jones

Common Bird Diseases Related to Feeders

Finch Eye Disease: It is a bacterial infection. **It spreads when many birds spend a lot of time in close proximity to each other at feeders.** If you see a bird at your feeders with signs/symptoms then, throw away that seed. Clean and disinfect your feeders and give the birds time to disperse (a few days to two weeks) before you begin feeding again.

Aspergillosis: It is a fungal bird disease that affects the respiratory system of birds. **They are infected by ingestion or inhalation of mold spores from contaminated food**

Salmonella: **It is primarily passed through fecal contamination of food and water** and can be transmitted to humans.

Trichomoniasis: Most often affects raptors, but also **pigeons and doves. It causes lesions in the mouth; birds can contaminate birdbaths with oral secretions.**

https://www.birdsandblooms.com/birding/birding-basics/wild-bird-diseases/

Common Bird Diseases Related to Feeders,

Photo by Chris Bumbar, Thousand Oaks, CA

Avian Pox

Over 200 species of wild birds, especially songbirds (finches) and upland game birds (mourning doves, bobwhite quail, wild turkeys), have been reported with avian pox. There are two forms of avian pox with varied clinical signs. The dry or cutaneous form results in slowly developing wart-like growths on the featherless parts of the bird—on the feet and legs, at the base of the beak, and around the eyes. The wet or diphtheritic form of avian pox affects the mucous membranes of the upper gastrointestinal (mouth, pharynx) and respiratory (trachea) tracts.
Mosquitoes, acting as mechanical vectors, are the primary transmitters of avian poxvirus. **After feeding on an infected bird, a mosquito carries the virus on its mouthparts and passes it to another bird at its next feeding. Close contact between infected and uninfected birds can lead to virus transmission through skin abrasions. Birds can also become infected indirectly through contact, ingestion, or inhalation from contaminated feeders, feed or water, and dust.**

https://cwhl.vet.cornell.edu/disease/avian-pox

CLEANING FEEDERS

CLEAN FEEDERS REGULARLY

The National Wildlife Health Center recommends cleaning bird baths and feeders with a solution of nine parts water to one part bleach. (If there is visible debris, such as feces, scrub it off before soaking in the bleach solution.) Dry out the feeder before hanging it back up. Project FeederWatch, a joint effort between Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Birds Canada, recommends cleaning seed feeders every two weeks or so. Double the frequency of cleaning if you suspect the presence of disease at all. It's always better to be safe than sorry.

Protect yourself and wear gloves, use a bucket / tub outside and wash your hands when finished.

TIDY BELOW THE FEEDER

This can mean raking or shoveling up feces and hulls (seed casings)—particularly those that are moldy, wet, or spoiled—and throwing them out, Project Feederwatch recommends. That'll also help prevent scattered food from attracting rodents. On snow-covered lawns, scraping off a few layers of white stuff should do the trick.

Photo source: Ava Roy https://thebirdisearly.com/

SHARE THE WEALTH

Disease spreads more easily in confined spaces and when groups are concentrated, so having multiple feeders can help prevent disease. Spreading out food among a few feeders provides less opportunities for sick birds to touch and contaminate others, says the National Wildlife Health Center.

Photo credit backyardbirdshop.com/bird-backyard-info/birdfeeding-see-feeders/

HUMMINGBIRD FEEDERS

In hot weather, the feeder should be emptied and cleaned twice per week. In cooler weather, once per week is enough. If your hummingbirds empty the feeder with greater frequency, clean it every time it's empty. Cleaning with hot tap water works fine, or use a weak vinegar solution.

Source: National Audubon Society

SIDE NOTE: CLEANING NEST BOXES

Nest boxes should be cleaned out each year

Once you are sure the box is unoccupied, sweep out inside of box with hand or a hammer (a car ice scraper comes in handy) to remove remaining insects or nest material. Wear gloves for protection, depending on time of year it is cleaned, it may contain overwintering yellow jackets or spiders. You can take the box down and pour boiling water over it and/or you can spray the box out with a very mild bleach/water (1:10) solution to kill any bacteria, after cleaning. Make sure box is securely closed; replace fastener.

Please remove or repair, any boxes that are in peril of falling, or falling apart. We don't want to encourage nesting in boxes that may fall down with fragile eggs or nestlings in them.

WHAT TO FEED

When it comes to feeding birds, what we feed is often personal preference. Shelled sunflower seeds make for easier clean up, but it is more expensive. There are few must or must nots, but much to consider.

https://feederwatch.org/learn/common-feeder-birds/

WHAT TO CONSIDER BEFORE FEEDING BIRDS

The Big Three are: Disease. Predation. Collision.

Cleaning feeders makes it less likely for diseases to be spread amongst the birds. But a regular lunch spot, lures them to the same place on a predictable schedule makes them more vulnerable to predators, like cats and hawks. Some birds may accidentally smash into glass windows near feeders (though windows in tall buildings are greater collision hazards).

Feeding can change bird behavior. Cardinals and Carolina wrens have extended their range north, partly as a result of feeders, research suggests. Some normally migratory hawks opt to stay put because birds at feeders provide enough prey. A few studies have linked bird feeding to lower egg production and hatching success — exactly why is not clear.

source: //www.fws.gov/story/feed-or-not-feed-wild-birds

Never Feed Birds:

Bread	Seeds and Nuts for Human Consumption	Bacon Fat	Red Food Dye	Honey	Old Bird Seed	Pet food

You may consider feeding:

Mealworms	Suet	Peanut Butter	Crushed Egg Shells	Roasted Pumpkin and Squash Seeds	Oranges	Jelly (research the risks)

LOCATE BIRD FEEDERS AT DIFFERENT LEVELS

Sparrows, juncos, and towhees usually feed on the ground, while finches and cardinals feed in shrubs, and chickadees, titmice, and woodpeckers feed in trees. To avoid crowding and to attract the greatest variety of species, provide table-like feeders for ground-feeding birds, hopper or tube feeders for shrub and treetop feeders, and suet feeders well off the ground for woodpeckers, nuthatches, and chickadees.

OFFER A VARIETY OF SEEDS IN SEPARATE FEEDERS

A diverse mix of seeds will attract the greatest variety of birds.

To avoid waste, offer different seeds in different feeders.

Black oil sunflower seed

Safflower

Nyjer (thistle) seeds

Peanuts

White Millet

Birds that are sunflower specialists will readily eat the sunflower seed and toss the millet and corn to the ground, to be eaten by ground-feeding birds such as sparrows and juncos.

A relatively few species prefer milo, wheat, and oats, which are featured in less expensive blends.

CONSIDER PLANTING NATIVE PLANTS TO HELP FEED THE BIRDS

HOMEMADE SUET

Expert-Approved Suet Cakes Recipe

1 cup peanut butter

1 cup lard

2 cups quick cooking oats

2 cups birdseed mix

1 cup yellow cornmeal

1 cup flour

Bird experts Kenn and Kimberly Kaufman suggest this DIY suet recipe. Melt 1 cup peanut butter and 1 cup lard over low heat. In a large bowl, mix 2 cups quick oats, 2 cups birdseed mix, 1 cup yellow cornmeal and 1 cup flour. Stir melted ingredients into the dry mix. Once cool, press into molds and refrigerate.

https://www.birdsandblooms.com/birding/attracting-birds/feeding-birds/make-homemade-suet/

BIRD FRIENDLY LANDSCAPES

Red-headed Woodpecker feeding young © Brent Barnes/Shutterstock

SO MUCH MORE THAN SEED

Photograph by Doris Dumrauf

Why go native?

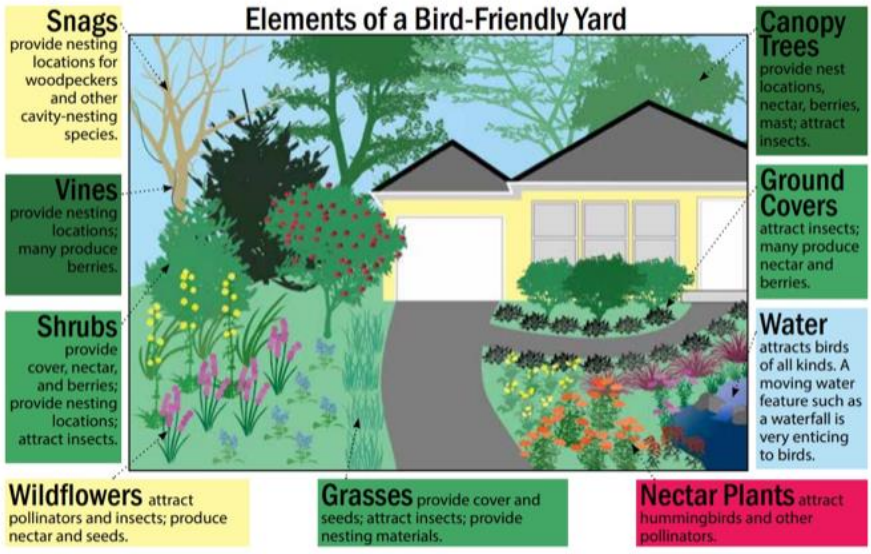
Help baby birds Nearly all landbirds feed their chicks insect larva, but insects have a hard time eating and reproducing on non-native plants. Plant native plants and stay away from the pesticides—baby birds need those little pests to survive!

Pollinators love natives, too Did you know that many pollinators don't or can't use ornamental and non-native plants? Attract hummingbirds, butterflies, and honeybees by adding native flowering plants or better yet—select "host plants" that each species of butterfly and moth requires to reproduce.

Go local Michigan's native plants are unique and beautiful, but many are rare or threatened with extirpation. Keep Michigan unique by planting a Michigan Garden! Bonus: Many natives are drought tolerant and low maintenance.

Healthy habitat for birds = Healthy yard for you Mowed lawns require a lot of environmentally-unfriendly practices to maintain: mowing, fertilizing, herbiciding, and watering. By converting patches of lawn to native gardens, you will reduce your impact on the environment and keep those chemicals and pollutants far away from you and your family.

https://www.michiganaudubon.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/MI-Native-Plants-for-Bird-Friendly-Landscapes_Website.pdf



https://www.michiganaudubon.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/MI-Native-Plants-for-Bird-Friendly-Landscapes_Website.pdf

ATTRACTING AND FEEDING HUMMINGBIRDS

The best (and least expensive) solution for your feeder is a 1:4 solution of refined white sugar to tap water. That's ¼ cup of sugar in 1 cup of water. Bring the solution to a boil, then let it cool before filling the feeder. You can make a larger batch and refrigerate the extra solution, just remember to bring it up to room temperature before you re-fill the feeder.

Only use refined white sugar. Other sweetening agents have additional ingredients that can prove detrimental to the hummingbirds. Never use artificial sweeteners to make hummingbird nectar.

Do not use brown sugar, honey, or molasses instead of white sugar. Do not add red food dye.

https://www.audubon.org/news/hummingbird-feeding-faqs

Native or Naturalized Flowers that Attract and Feed Hummingbirds.

Wild Bergamot	Pentemon	Woodland Phlox	Butterfly Weed
Anise Hyssop	Swamp Milkweed	Jewelweed	Marsh Blazing Star
	Cardinal Flower	Blue Vervain	

Additionally hanging baskets with fuchsia, lantana, petunias can attract and feed hummingbirds.

THE IMPORTANCE OF TREES AND SHRUBS

The Bird-Plant-Insect Connection

Birds are particularly dependent on plants. Vast numbers of birds build their nests in shrubs and trees and use plant materials for construction. Birds retreat to trees and bushes as protection from predators and to rest and roost. And directly or indirectly, plants provide all the foods that birds eat. Seeds, nuts, and fruit help sustain many birds all year long, and some species also nibble nutritious plant buds or sip flower nectar. But when it comes to nesting season, plants support most land birds in a slightly more indirect way: by hosting the protein-rich insects that baby birds need to develop properly. Indeed, 96 percent of land birds feed insects to their young.

Think native: native plants and native birds have evolved together over millions of years, these are the plants that provide nutrient-rich fruit, seeds, and nectar when native birds need them most. In North America, the fruit of native shrubs and trees has been shown to have a much higher fat content—as much as 50 percent fat—than the fruit of nonnative species.

https://www.audubonadventures.org/plants_birds_essay.htm

PHOTO CREDIT: COURTESY JUDITH MEYER

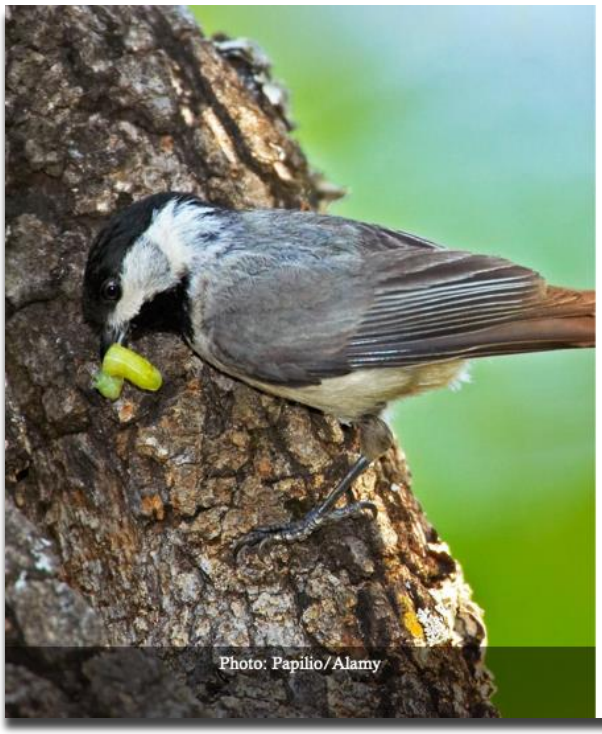


Photo: Papilio/Alamy

NATIVE TREES OFFER MORE BUGS FOR BIRDS

Oaks: In his book *Bringing Nature Home*, Douglas Tallamy writes that "oaks are the quintessential wildlife plants: no other plant genus supports more species of Lepidoptera [butterflies and moths], thus providing more types of bird food, than the mighty oak." If you have the space, by all means, plant one!

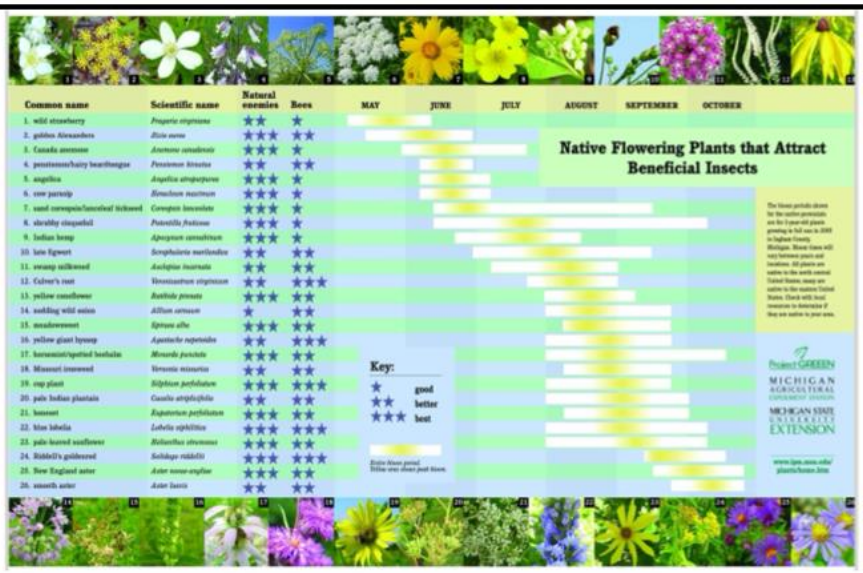
Willows: Weeping Willows are nonnative, but there are many native willow species, such as Black Willow and Pussy Willow. These shrubs or small trees may be found at native plant suppliers. Many moths and butterflies are attracted to these moisture-loving plants, which can be used in borders.

Cherries: Native cherries, such as Black Cherry and Common Chokecherry, provide not only food for birds but leaves that feed many types of caterpillars, from the large and striking Cecropia Moth to the abundant Eastern Tent Caterpillar. Cuckoos, orioles, and many other woodland birds feed on tent caterpillars, while gnatcatchers pull away some of the caterpillar nests' silk for their own cup nests. (Bear in mind that many commonly available ornamental cherry trees, such as Yoshino Cherry, are not native.)

Birches: The complicated, peeling bark shelters many invertebrates, while the leaves attract hundreds of butterfly and moth species. Seeds and buds of these rather small, somewhat short-lived trees attract birds and small mammals. The adaptable River Birch is one of our favorites.

Dogwoods: Insects come to the flowers, and birds to the fall berries. There are eastern and western dogwood species, and trees as well as many shrubs, including the lovely-in-all-seasons Red-twig Dogwood. (Note that Flowering Dogwood is native, but Kousa Dogwood is not.)

https://abcbirds.org/blog/native-trees-shrubs-attract-birds/



https://www.canr.msu.edu/uploads/resources/pdfs/attracting_beneficial_insects_with_native_flowering_plants_(e2973).pdf

MICHIGAN NATIVE PLANTS FOR BIRD-FRIENDLY LANDSCAPES

Wildflowers

Category	Common Name	Scientific Name	Light: Full	Light: Part	Light: Shade	Moisture: Dry	Moisture: Med	Moisture: Wet	Size	Use by Birds: C	F	H	L	N	S
Hummingbirds	Wild bergamot	*Monarda fistulosa*	x			x	x		2'-4'			x	x		
	Penstemon	*Penstemon digitalis*	x	x			x	x	3'-4'			x	x		
	Woodland phlox	*Phlox divaricata*		x	x		x		1'			x	x		
Larval host plants	Butterfly-weed	*Asclepias tuberosa*	x			x	x		1'-3'			x	x	x	
	White snakeroot	*Eupatorium rugosum*		x	x		x		2'-4'				x		
	Woodland sunflower	*Helianthus divaricatus*	x	x		x	x		3'-5'				x		x
	Bluestem goldenrod	*Solidago caesia*	x	x	x	x	x		2'-3'				x		x
	Showy goldenrod	*Solidago speciosa*	x			x	x		2'-5'				x		x
Seed	Smooth aster	*Aster laevis*	x			x	x		2'-4'				x		x
	Lanceleaf coreopsis	*Coreopsis lanceolata*	x			x	x		1'-2'						x
	Purple coneflower	*Echinacea purpurea*	x			x	x		3'-4'						x
	Black-eyed susan	*Rudbeckia hirta*	x	x		x	x		1'-3'				x		
	Prairie-dock	*Silphium terebinthinaceum*	x			x	x	x	4'-10'	x					x

Use by Birds Key: C = Cover; F = Fruit; H = Hummingbirds; L = Larval host; N = Nesting location or material; S = Seed

Invasive Wildflowers

Remove or avoid planting these species:

*bugwood.org

Garlic Mustard
Alliaria petiolata

Dame's Rocket
Hesperis matronalis

Japanese Knotweed
Polygonum cuspidatum

Spotted Knapweed
Centaurea stoebe

MICHIGAN NATIVE PLANTS FOR BIRD FRIENDLY LANDSCAPES IS AVAILABLE FOR DOWNLOAD AT

MI-Native-Plants-for-Bird-Friendly-Landscapes_Website.pdf (michiganaudubon.org)

INFORMATIONAL RESOURCES

https://thebirdisearly.com/

https://www.michiganaudubon.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/MI-Native-Plants-for-Bird-Friendly-Landscapes_Website.pdf

https://www.audubon.org/news/three-easy-important-ways-keep-your-bird-feeder-disease-free

https://www.allaboutbirds.org/news/how-to-clean-your-bird-feeder/

https://www.birdsandblooms.com/birding/birding-basics/wild-bird-diseases/

https://www.birdsandblooms.com/birding/attracting-birds/feeding-birds/can-birds-eat-bread/

https://www.fws.gov/story/feed-or-not-feed-wild-birds

Document:

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