

Short Term Wildlife Attraction Tactics

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Planting a landscape with appropriate food and cover plants is the best way to increase the wildlife over the long-term that resides in your landscape but it is hard to launch a major planting project when the weather is so hot. There are, however, some small-scale actions that are easy to implement and will bring in the birds and butterflies for observation during this hot spell.

Setting up a birdbath is one of the easiest activities. Obtain one or more bird baths from your favorite nursery or bird supply store and fill it with water every morning or evening and you can expect to attract a high number of individuals from 8 to 10 species of birds.

The best baths for accommodating the birds seem to be those constructed of cement that start very shallow and gradually reach a 3-inch depth. The masonry surface provides good footing for the birds and the shallow depth suits their needs in terms of bathing.

Other materials that work include ceramics, plastic, and even metal. I have a garbage can cover that has been popular for over 10 years now.

The shallow water means that the birds readily enter the water. If it were deeper there might be more time between splashing and evaporating dry but the smaller birds would not enter the bath. Another advantage of the shallow birdbaths that must be refilled every day is that they are not providing water for mosquito hatching.

Place your birdbaths in relatively open areas at least 6 feet from cover such as shrubs. The 6 feet distance is close enough for birds to escape from hawks, but it is not close enough for cats to launch attacks on bathing birds.

To make your birdbath even more attractive to area birds install a recirculating or dripper apparatus. They work well and are inexpensive, some at \$30 or less. They can be operated with electricity, running water, or even solar power.

Enhance the interest in the project for children, grandchildren, and yourself by keeping a list of the species that visit. Depending on the setting you can often get pictures of the birds splashing in the birdbath. Hummingbirds, honeybees, and butterflies will sit around the edge of the water.

Hummingbirds will visit birdbaths for a drink, but it is even easier to get them to come for sugar water at a hummingbird feeder. There are many models to choose from. Some are very artistic, which is fine if they are easy to refill and rinse clean. One of my favorites is the Best 1 Feeder manufactured in Poteet Texas.

Hummingbird feeders are for sale at plant nurseries, hardware stores, bird supply retailers, and even HEB.

Hang the feeder on the house eaves or a trellis where it can be observed from the house or chairs on the patio. The sugar is mixed at one part to four parts water by volume. It is easiest to mix up gallon size batches and store the extra solution in the refrigerator. Red food coloring has traditionally been added to the mix but does not seem to be necessary because the feeders are brightly colored, and the hummingbirds recognize feeders after generations of use.

Empty, rinse and refill the feeder each week. Pour the leftover sugar water each rinsing into a saucer for the bees and butterflies to use.

Having one or more hummingbird feeder in place is rewarding at any time, but it is especially exciting as we move into the fall. The migrating black-chinned, ruby-throated, and rufous hummingbirds compete for access to the feeders. You can create even more action by having a container of nectar rich firebush or porterweed growing in the sun on the patio for the birds. The competition will translate into aerial dogfights. If your patio is shady use firespike or penta as the special plant.