



Enhancing Oak Woodland Habitat for Birds at Your Home or Ranch



One of the most well-known and beloved landscapes of California is our oak woodlands. Oak woodlands have the most wildlife species of any environment in California, more than **330** different species depend on oak woodlands to survive! Birds like Acorn Woodpeckers, Western Scrub-Jays, and Yellow-billed Magpies store acorns to eat later - uneaten acorns grow into new trees. Oak trees also provide shelter for cavity-nesting birds, such as woodpeckers and bluebirds. Three key problems seriously threaten oak woodlands: loss of habitat to various forms of development, low survival of oak seedlings, and Sudden Oak Death. Fortunately, YOU can help preserve this threatened habitat by wisely managing the oak woodlands on your property.



Birds of Oak Woodlands

- Acorn Woodpecker
- Western Scrub-Jay
- Lark Sparrow
- Yellow-Billed Magpie
- Nuttall's Woodpecker
- Oak Titmouse
- Western Bluebird
- White-breasted Nuthatch
- California Quail
- Hutton's Vireo
- Bushtit
- Blue-Gray Gnatcatcher
- American Kestrel
- Northern Pygmy Owl
- Red-shouldered Hawk
- Wood Duck

Creating or Enhancing Oak Woodland Habitat

Maintaining the oak trees on your property and planting oak seedlings and acorns will provide birds with the environment they need to survive and nest. Here's how you can maintain native oak woodland habitat on your property, and create new habitat to support breeding birds:

1. **Plant acorns and oak seedlings.** Plant a diversity of oak species that are native to your area to benefit a diversity of birds.
2. **Do not cut down large, old oak trees.** Trimming oaks by removing large, possibly dangerous branches is an acceptable alternative to the complete removal of oak trees.
3. **Keep dead oak trees.** These are important habitat elements for birds! They find food and safety here. Try to leave at least ONE dead tree per acre.
4. **Protect young oaks,** especially from grazing animals. This is easily accomplished with plastic tubing or fencing.
5. **Maintain and restore oak understory.** Keep native plants and shrubs that grow under oak trees. Remove non-native plants as they can out-compete young oaks.
6. **Do not water native oaks.** Our oaks receive no summer water in their natural environment.

Key Oak Woodland Plants

- California black oak
- Blue oak
- Coast live oak
- Interior live oak
- Oregon white oak
- Canyon live oak
- Tanoak
- Valley oak
- California blackberry
- Poison-oak



www.prbo.org/calpif
Read California Partners in Flight Oak Woodland Bird Conservation Plan for more recommendations!

Reduce Predators

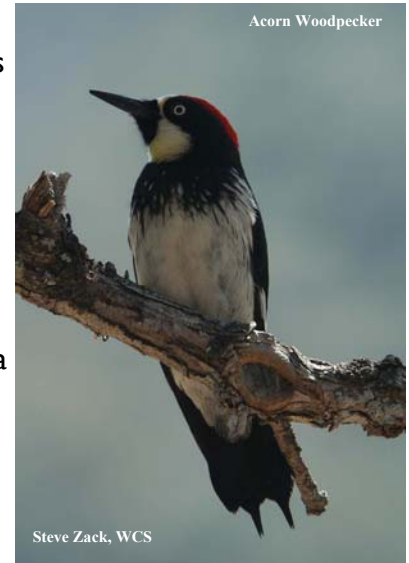
The most common neighborhood predator is the domestic cat. Native predators (raccoons, skunks, and jays) also negatively affect nesting songbirds, especially when human activities inadvertently increase their populations. You can help with these simple actions:

- **Keep cats indoors!** Especially during the breeding season when young birds are vulnerable. Bells don't work! See the Cats Indoors Program at www.abcbirds.org/cats/catsindoors.htm
- **Eliminate outdoor food sources** such as pet food dishes, compost piles, uncovered garbage cans.
- **Cover compost piles** or use covered worm bins

Mow Early & Often

Many songbirds nest very close to the ground in grasses and 'weedy' areas. If you have to mow, mow early (beginning in February) and often, as this will prevent birds from nesting where you wish to mow.

- **Set aside "no mow" areas** of your land: this will provide nest sites and shelter for birds, especially goldfinches, buntings, quail, and towhees.
- **Avoid clearing brush** in the breeding and nesting season (February-August)
- **Do not mow native tree saplings and shrubs.** Even poison-oak, a native shrub, has high value for birds and other wildlife.
- **Leave brush piles and grass clippings.** Brush and grass clippings of native plants can provide shelter, nesting material, foraging grounds and even nesting sites for birds.



Declare Your Land a Bird Sanctuary

Designate areas of your land "bird-friendly" with these actions:

- **Minimize human disturbance** during the breeding season (mid-March through August). Some common disturbances may include construction, spraying, and pet activity.
- **Create networks of suitable habitat.** Connecting habitat patches is valuable to all wildlife. Work with neighbors and local groups to create a network of "bird sanctuaries" in your community.
- **Do not use pesticides,** which can harm birds. Allow insect- and pest-eating birds, like swallows, woodpeckers, bluebirds and owls to eat the pests in your backyard!
- **Learn the birds on your land!** Study their behaviors, learn their names, watch them build nests and return year after year.

Resources

Many resources are available to help you acquire native plants, make your land wildlife friendly, and provide more information on oaks and wildlife:

- California Partners in Flight Bird Conservation Plans ♦ <http://www.prbo.org/calpif>
- The California Oak Foundation ♦ <http://www.californiaoaks.org> ♦ (510) 763-0282
- PRBO Conservation Science ♦ <http://www.prbo.org/birdinfo> ♦ (415) 868-1221
- National Audubon Society ♦ www.audubon.org
- California Native Plant Society ♦ www.cnps.org
- Wildlife Conservation Society ♦ www.wcs.org/pacificwest
- California Oak Mortality Task Force (COMTF) ♦ www.suddenoakdeath.org