



# Hennepin County Landowner Guide

for  
Conserving  
Natural  
Resources

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This guide is intended to help landowners care for their land and the natural resources on their property. The guide recommends practices that can be implemented to protect and enhance natural systems. Each section also suggests resources and publications that offer additional, more specific information for each subject area.

This guide provides information regarding natural areas such as prairies, wetlands, water resources and woodlands. Information about the control of noxious weeds and invasive plants, management of pastures and livestock, maintenance of private wells and septic systems, care of wildlife habitat, and management of household wastes is also included. By promoting environmental stewardship, we hope to preserve and enhance the environment in Hennepin County for current and future generations.

This resource was produced by Hennepin County Environmental Services in partnership with the University of Minnesota Extension Service of Hennepin County.



**Hennepin County**  
Environmental Services  
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# Providing Habitat for Wildlife

By preserving natural areas and establishing certain plant species, landowners can provide habitats that will attract a variety of wildlife species ranging from songbirds and butterflies to squirrels and white-tailed deer. Providing wildlife habitat will allow you to enjoy viewing animals in their natural setting right in your backyard. Some wildlife species can also control pests. Birds and bats can reduce populations of mosquitoes and other pesky insects and raptors such as hawks, eagles and owls can control rodents.

Wildlife habitat is a combination of food, water, shelter and space. Any size area of land can be managed to attract wildlife. Small yards can be landscaped to attract birds, butterflies, beneficial insects and small animals, and larger tracts of land can be managed to attract larger mammals and birds.



## Provide food

Providing the food necessary for desired species can attract them to an area.

Think about what species you would like to attract, and research what food they need. Some animals will eat a wide variety of food, while others have very specific food requirements.

Provide food for wildlife year round by planting trees and shrubs that provide berries, nuts and acorns. *The Quick Reference Guide for Earth-Friendly Home Landscaping* has a list of trees, shrubs and wildflowers that will attract wildlife.

## Provide a water source

A water source is an essential component of wildlife habitat. Abundant water in an accessible form can mean the difference in survival for some animals.

Preserving natural bodies of waters, such as lakes, ponds, wetlands and streams, and protecting water quality will ensure that wildlife have access to clean water. You can improve water quality by maintaining healthy shorelines, preventing the spread of invasive aquatic species, and reducing runoff and pollution.

*(See Protecting Water Resources, pg. 22 and Preserving Wetlands, pg. 27)*

If you do not have a natural body of water on your property, you can provide water for wildlife by including a water feature, such as a bird bath or landscaping pool, in your landscaping plan.

## Provide shelter

As with people, animals, birds and insects need a place to sleep, escape the elements, and raise their young or lay eggs. Some wildlife species require a very specific environment, while others are more flexible in their living arrangements. For example, bird species tend to only use birdhouses of specific shapes and sizes that are placed in the correct location. The following are steps you can take to provide shelter for wildlife.

**Maintain a buffer of vegetation along shorelines** to provide nesting cover for birds. *(See Take Care of your Shoreline, pg. 24)*

**Manage grassy areas to provide habitat for ground nesting birds** such as meadowlarks, killdeer and bobolinks. Correctly timing when you mow is critical for allowing nesting birds to hatch their broods. Only mow or burn established prairies from April 15 to May 15 or after Aug. 1 to avoid disturbing the nesting habitat.

**Place bird and bat houses on your property.** Songbirds and bats will help control flying insect populations.

**Provide nesting boxes for waterfowl where appropriate.** It is important to investigate the shelter requirements of each type of bird desired to ensure that nesting boxes are the correct shape and in the correct location at the right time of year.

*Provide shelter, continued on next page*

**Leave standing snags (dead trees with cavities)** in your woodland areas. Snags provide food and shelter to a wide variety of wildlife species. Leave about six snags per acre.

## Preserve open space

Wildlife of all types require space to move from area to area and to forage for food. Different species will require different amounts of space, and some are less willing to live in close proximity to people than others. Take the following steps to preserve space for wildlife on your property.

**Preserve any existing natural areas on your property**, including forests, prairies and wetlands.

**Preserve corridors and travel lanes that facilitate the movement of wildlife** between natural areas.

Shelterbelts (groups of trees and shrubs that provide food and shelter) and fence rows (unmowed areas of tall grass along a fence line) provide cover, travel lanes and food for wildlife.

## Conflicts with wildlife

Wildlife can occasionally damage crops or property. If wildlife is causing a problem on your property, there are several resources you can turn to for help.

- Minnesota Department of Natural Resources  
[www.dnr.state.mn.us/livingwith\\_wildlife](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/livingwith_wildlife)  
651-296-2316
- University of Minnesota  
Bell Museum of Natural History  
Wildlife Information Services  
[www.bellmuseum.org/wildlife\\_infocservices.html](http://www.bellmuseum.org/wildlife_infocservices.html)  
612-624-1374
- Internet Center for Wildlife  
Damage Management  
[www.icwdm.org/handbook/index.asp](http://www.icwdm.org/handbook/index.asp)



Preserving natural areas and corridors will provide shelter, food and travel lanes for wildlife.

## For more information

- Minnesota Department of Natural Resources  
Wildlife publications and reports  
[www.dnr.state.mn.us/publications/wildlife/index.html](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/publications/wildlife/index.html)  
Private lands program  
[www.mndnr.gov/privatelandsprogram](http://www.mndnr.gov/privatelandsprogram)
- National Wildlife Foundation  
[www.nwf.org/backyard](http://www.nwf.org/backyard)
- NRCS Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP)  
[www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/whip](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/whip)
- *Lakescaping for Wildlife and Water Quality*  
Henderson, Carrol L., Carolyn J. Dindorf, Fred J. Rozumalski. Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, St. Paul, Minnesota. 1998.
- *Landscaping for Wildlife*  
Henderson, Carrol L.  
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, St. Paul, Minnesota. 2002.
- *Wildlife Habitat*  
Natural Resources Conservation Service, Washington, D.C. 1998.  
[www.nrcs.usda.gov/Feature/backyard/pdf/wildlife.pdf](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/Feature/backyard/pdf/wildlife.pdf)
- *Woodworking for Wildlife*  
Henderson, Carrol L.  
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, St. Paul, Minnesota. 2009.



# Resources

## Resources

- Hennepin County Environmental Services  
[www.hennepin.us/naturalresources](http://www.hennepin.us/naturalresources)  
612-348-3777  
Hennepin County provides a variety of information and technical assistance for managing your land.
- University of Minnesota Extension – Hennepin County  
[www.extension.umn.edu/county/hennepin](http://www.extension.umn.edu/county/hennepin)  
612-596-2110  
The University of Minnesota Extension provides outreach for the University of Minnesota and delivers educational programs and technical assistance on a variety of land management topics.
- Minnesota Department of Agriculture  
[www.mda.state.mn.us](http://www.mda.state.mn.us)  
651-201-6000
- Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR)  
[www.dnr.state.mn.us](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us)  
651-296-6157
- USDA – Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)  
[www.mn.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.mn.nrcs.usda.gov)  
763-241-1150, ext. 3
- Minnesota's bookstore  
[www.minnesotasbookstore.com](http://www.minnesotasbookstore.com)  
Minnesota's bookstore sells a variety of publications from Minnesota state agencies including many of the publications listed in this guide.
- Midwest Plan Services  
[www.mwps.org](http://www.mwps.org)  
Midwest Plan Services, based out of Iowa State University, sells a variety of low-cost agricultural publications.

## Books & publications

- *A Quick Reference Guide for Earth Friendly Home Landscaping*  
Hennepin County Environmental Services.  
[www.hennepin.us/sustainablelandscaping](http://www.hennepin.us/sustainablelandscaping)
- *Beyond the suburbs – A landowner's guide to conservation management*  
Preece, Kathleen. Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, St. Paul, Minnesota. 2001.
- *Guide to Rural Living*  
University of Minnesota Extension, St. Paul, Minnesota. 2001.  
[www.extension.umn.//ruralliving](http://www.extension.umn.//ruralliving)
- *Living on Acreages*  
Carroll, Natalie and Don Jones.  
Midwest Plan Services, Ames, Iowa. 2006.
- *Small Scale/Small Field Conservation*  
NRCS, Washington, D.C.  
[landcare.sc.egov.usda.gov](http://landcare.sc.egov.usda.gov)



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