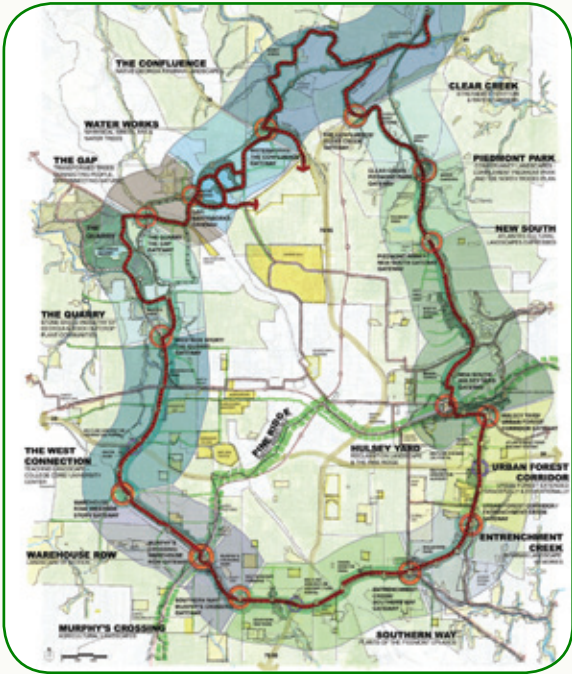


What is the Atlanta BeltLine and Arboretum?



The Atlanta BeltLine is being implemented to connect 45 Atlanta neighborhoods and 40 city parks with transit, trails, greenspace, and new development along 22 miles of historic rail segments that encircle the city’s urban core. The BeltLine is attracting and organizing some of the region’s future growth around transit, trails, and parks, helping to change the pattern of regional sprawl and leading to a vibrant and livable Atlanta with an enhanced quality of life. The Atlanta BeltLine Arboretum is an outdoor, living tree museum following the path of the BeltLine around Atlanta’s city center. The BeltLine Arboretum will include planting and care of fourteen unique tree collections; provide educational programming to all neighborhoods and constituents; and serve as a corridor of scientific research and education. The first section of BeltLine Arboretum is open in Atlanta’s West End; the balance will be built over the next twenty years. The BeltLine Arboretum will be a success when everyone in Atlanta can identify their neighborhood by the trees that surround them, and therefore understand the value of trees in an urban environment.

www.beltline.org



Atlanta Audubon Society

Atlanta Audubon Society is the region’s primary education and conservation group dedicated to birds. Educational programs, conservation initiatives and community outreach are at the heart of the organization. Atlanta Audubon provides the community with important educational opportunities including field trips, workshops, the exclusive

Master Birder Program, birding camps for young people and scholarship programs. Individuals and communities are engaged in unique ways to directly impact the conservation of birds. Atlanta Audubon’s conservation work focuses on “Creating, Promoting and Preserving Bird-Friendly Habitat,” and includes overseeing the Georgia Important Bird Areas program, monitoring eastern hemlock trees to combat the hemlock woolly adelgid in the North Georgia Mountains, managing the Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary Certification program, and serving as the steward for a 183-acre wildlife sanctuary. Protecting the birds that we love is the most important thing we do. www.atlantaaudubon.org

Answers: Wildlife in Your Neighborhood

1. Eastern Gray Squirrel (often raids the nests of many types of birds)
2. Virginia Opossum (nocturnal and North America’s only marsupial—mammals of which the females have a pouch)
3. Green Tree Frog (females can lay up to 400 eggs in shallow water)
4. Eastern Chipmunk (its diet consists of grains, nuts, birds’ eggs, small frogs, fungi, worms and insects)
5. Raccoon (walking on all four feet with an arch in its back and non-retractable claws, it uses the whole sole of the foot “heel to toe” as it walks, like humans)

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TREES ATLANTA

Trees Atlanta

Trees Atlanta is a nationally recognized citizens group dedicated to protecting and improving Atlanta’s urban forest by planting, conserving and educating. Trees in urban areas provide a number of economic, health and social benefits and are essential for clean air, storm water management, erosion control, noise absorption, bird and wildlife habitat, and more. Since 1985, Trees Atlanta has planted and distributed 75,000 trees. Trees Atlanta programs include *NeighborWoods*, volunteer-based planting and care of trees 6-10 feet tall; *Large Trees*, planting and care of trees 10-15 feet tall; *Forest Restoration*, a program that teaches citizens about the problems of invasive species and how to evaluate, manage and improve community green spaces; *Neighborhood Arboreta*, a program that places identifying markers next to neighborhood trees along with a self-guided walking tour map of the area; and *Education*, offering programming year round to teach citizens about the importance of trees. Trees Atlanta does not just plant trees...we plant communities.

www.treesatlanta.org

About the Photos

Cover:
Luna Moth, Monarch Caterpillar, Monarch Butterfly and Blue Grosbeak by Dan Vickers; *Bald Cypress* by Steve Sanchez

Inside Left Panel:
Sassafras and Eastern Red Cedar by Steve Sanchez; *Squirrel, Eastern Chipmunk, and Raccoon* by Dan Vickers; *Green Tree Frog* by Darlene Moore

Design by Laura Woods



Exploring YOUR Natural Neighborhood

What is Unique About the West Connection Natural Neighborhood ?

The West Connection natural neighborhood is situated near numerous colleges, universities and schools—Clark Atlanta University, Morehouse, Morris Brown, Spellman and Washington High School—that make this area special to Atlanta. It is a core center of connection for Atlanta’s citizens to the important teaching and research efforts of these institutions. Neighborhoods in the West Connection area include Hunter Hills, Washington Park, Mozley Park, Westview, West End, Ashview Heights and Harris Chiles.

This special natural neighborhood not only provides trails and an important tree canopy (see “What are the Benefits of the Trees in My Neighborhood?” inside), but it gives birds and wildlife suitable green space to thrive and flourish. Spring and fall migrant species of birds will rest and refuel here before traveling on. Birds and other wildlife that make this area their home year-round will also benefit from the West Connection natural neighborhood. You will find many common birds here including Northern Cardinals, Cedar Waxwings, Red-headed Woodpeckers and Northern Mockingbirds. Other wildlife might include deer, foxes, beavers, squirrels, chipmunks, raccoons, opossums, along with various types of reptiles and amphibians. Deer have even been seen nearby in Westview Cemetery. How do deer affect other animals and the local ecology? Take a walk at different times of the day and observe wildlife and how they share your natural neighborhood.



West Connection Symbolic Bird



Brown Thrasher

The Brown Thrasher, *Toxostoma rufum*, has a special place in Georgia’s heart. In 1970 it was officially adopted as the state’s bird.

This special thrasher is a large, rusty brown bird with white underparts with heavy black streaking and a distinctive yellow eye that helps separate it from the Wood Thrush. Males and females look alike. The Brown Thrasher is one of the mimic birds that can mimic the calls of other birds. It has a very extensive song list and usually repeats its songs in sets of two notes instead of the three notes of the Northern Mockingbird.

It is extremely secretive and most likely got its name from how it forages for food. The Brown Thrasher uses its long curved bill to thrash leaves and debris out of the way hoping to uncover its primary diet of insects. It will also eat lizards and other small vertebrates.

The breeding season for the Brown Thrasher begins in late March and the bird will usually have between two and six eggs. The cup-shaped nest is constructed out of twigs, dead leaves and other grasses. This species is also an aggressive defender of its nest. In the past, farmers believed that the breeding of the Brown Thrasher was a signal of the arrival of spring and a sign to begin planting crops.



Brown Thrasher by Dan Vickers

West Connection Symbolic Trees



Sassafras

Sassafras, *Sassafras albidum*, with thick, grey to brown deeply-furrowed bark, can grow 30 to 60 feet tall. This tree produces fantastic fall leaf color in willow, mitten or 3 lobed shapes, and has a round, blue fruit, attractive to birds. This tree is found in upland and bottom-land forests, forming thickets in abandoned fields.



Eastern Red Cedar

In early America, the Eastern Red Cedar, *Juniperus virginiana*, probably formed extensive groves, sometimes excluding almost all other trees. Pieces of these groves can still be found in parts of eastern Tennessee and Kentucky, where the tree reaches a height of 100 feet. Today, its wood is primarily used in the making of mothproof chests and closets. Its fruit is actually a blue cone prized by people for making gin, but more importantly, it a source of food for wildlife.

What are the Benefits of the Trees in My Neighborhood?

Trees perform environmental, social, and economic services that directly benefit people and wildlife living in urban areas. They include:

- Improving air quality
- Removing chemical pollutants in the ground, water and air
- Reducing the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere
- Cooling urban areas by providing shade and retaining moisture
- Assisting in energy conservation as trees intercept radiant heat and block the wind
- Securing or increasing water supplies by recharging our watersheds
- Increasing biodiversity by providing habitats for a diverse population of birds, mammals and insects
- Helping with noise reduction by acting as an effective buffer to screen-out urban noises
- Reducing erosion and soil loss
- Providing a valuable source of both human food and animal feed for urban households
- Calming and slowing traffic
- Reducing the extremes of flooding and drought
- Increasing property values and promoting community pride

The Importance of Green Space: What Can YOU Do to Make a Difference?

Birds and wildlife need suitable green space to thrive and flourish. In the last 20 years, much of metro-Atlanta's natural tree cover (important habitat for bird and wildlife species) has been replaced with concrete and asphalt. Habitat loss and sprawl have devastated what was once Atlanta's rich heritage of urban green spaces and is the biggest culprit for the decline of bird and wildlife species. Birds like the Brown Thrasher, Common Grackle and Northern Flicker are impacted by the loss of green space. They lose important nesting sites and areas to feed. This also greatly affects migrating birds that no longer have important sites to rest and eat.



You can make a difference for birds and wildlife in your own backyard. Finding ways to provide **food, water, shelter, and nesting sites** for breeding and raising young are critical. You may think that your yard will not make a difference in the larger scheme of things, but you can help provide important individual corridors of vital green space for birds and wildlife. Consider, for instance, planting trees with Trees Atlanta (www.treesatlanta.org) or certifying your own backyard, as a wildlife sanctuary (visit www.atlantaudubon.org for more details). When requirements are met, homeowners receive a sign stating that their property is registered as a "wildlife sanctuary" with Atlanta Audubon Society. Creating a wildlife sanctuary in your backyard is an important way to conserve and protect our environment.

What Do the Birds and Wildlife in Your Neighborhood Need to Thrive?



Food

Feeders and plantings that offer seeds, flowers, and berries for wildlife

- Feeders placed near your home will give you many hours of enjoyment. Feeders also provide relief to birds during winter weather. Food can also come from trees and plants that produce fruit and seeds.



Water

Birdbaths, water gardens, or natural features with flowing water

- Water is essential. Water sources can be natural (like a stream) or man-made (birdbaths).
- Always provide clean water, replacing it in your birdbaths regularly to avoid disease.



Shelter

Active nesting areas or shelters that attract and protect birds and other wildlife

- Shelter is needed to protect birds and wildlife from inclement weather and from predators. Always try to keep your cat indoors, if possible. Four million birds are killed each day by cats (both domestic and feral).



Nesting Sites

Bird boxes, natural cavities, or wood piles and vine tangles

- You can provide many types of nesting sites, from piles of sticks to dense shrubs. Also, if you have a dead tree and it isn't a safety hazard for people or property, consider letting it stand. It can provide important nesting sites for many types of wildlife.

Get Educated! Get Involved!

Making a difference for Georgia's environment, including its birds and wildlife, means becoming educated about what is happening in your special neighborhood, in your state, across the country and around the world.

Making a difference in the world begins with just one person...YOU!

Wildlife in Your Neighborhood

Here are just a few of the many amazing creatures you can find in your neighborhood.

Can you name them? Have you seen them in your natural neighborhood and do you know where they live?

