Build a foolproof nesting box
Mounting nesting boxes is an excellent way to boost schoolyard bird populations. This structure accommodates chickadees, swallows, bluebirds, titmice, wrens, and nuthatches. Invasive starlings are excluded because of the size of the entrance.
1. Start with two pine boards: 1 x 6 x 28.5" and 1 x 5 x 22".
2. Cut each board into three panels: the longer, 7.5" (top), 9" (front), and 12" (back); the shorter, 4" (bottom) and two 9" sides.
3. Assemble the panels using 2" coated flat-head screws.
4. Drill a 1.5" entrance hole 1" from the top of the front panel.
5. Drill a few drainage holes near the walls in the bottom panel and a few ventilation holes near the top of each side.
6. Mount the box 6-10 feet off the ground.
7. Unscrew one panel and clean out nesting materials each fall.

Give wildlife an edge
Many wild creatures love to “live on the edge.” They flourish in borderline areas where two or more habitats meet. Here’s how to create such focal points of productivity in your schoolyard:

- Copy nature by arranging native plants in a way that mirrors the transition from, say, woodlands to grasslands or marshes to meadows.
- Encircle trees with shrubs or climbing vines, followed by wildflowers and tall grasses, and, finally, open spaces with shorter grasses, ground cover, or lawn. Such arrangements provide different levels of habitat for different wildlife species: those that prefer high tree canopies, those that seek middle levels, and those that feed on the ground.
- Provide plant diversity. Include a wide variety of native trees, shrubs, vines, legumes, perennial wildflowers, annual wildflowers, ground covers, and native grasses to meet the needs of diverse species.
- Make the most of even the smallest space by planting edges just at the perimeter of your schoolyard.

Plant food sources
Nourish schoolyard wildlife throughout the year by planting a banquet of edibles. Be sure to choose plants, trees, and shrubs that are native to your ecozone.

- Canada plum, elderberry, thimbleberry, prickly gooseberry, raspberry, and serviceberry provide spring and summer fruits for a wide variety of wildlife species.
- Entice hummingbirds by planting day lilies, fireweed, wild geraniums, phlox,
and delphiniums, or by training vines onto arbors or trellises with brightly colored trumpet- or tube-shaped flowers such as honeysuckle and scarlet runner bean.

Autumn is the time when birds store up energy to survive the long flight south or the frigid winter. Offer fall foodstuffs with fruit-bearing shrubs such as red osier dogwood, American mountain ash, buffalo berry, and chokecherry.

The most important food plants are ones whose seeds and fruit last through winter to early spring when food is hardest to find. Provide vital nourishment with highbush cranberry, bittersweet, hawthorn, wild crabapple, white spruce, staghorn sumac, beech, Manitoba maple, black walnut, and American chestnut.

Make waves for wildlife

Introducing water to your schoolyard can have an amazing "ripple effect," benefiting a whole web of species:

Build a pond. A shallow pool in a partially shaded corner will entice birds to drink and frolic.

Offer a birdbath. An unparalleled attraction for a wide assortment of wildlife visitors, its basin should slope towards the middle and be no deeper than 6 cm (2.5”). Add fresh water daily and clean once a week.

Make a splash. A sure way to tantalize wildlife is with tumbling water. It could be as humble as a leaky faucet dripping into a trash can lid or as showy as a waterfall cascading into a luxuriant pool.

Maintain a mud hole. Phoebes, thrushes, and swallows need mud to build their nests in late spring and summer. Create a mud hole by mixing clay soil with water. Maintain it with a regular sprinkling of water.

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For information on wildlife food plants indigenous to your ecozone, visit www.wildaboutgardening.org.