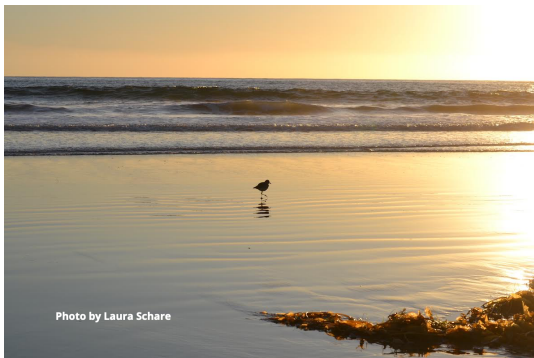


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IT'S ALL CONNECTED

Inspiring ↔ Informative ↔ Actionable

presented by



What Goes Around, Comes Around

If it harms them, it harms us too. Beyond the din of our sensationalized news cycle, perhaps you've heard about the rapid and concerning decline of birds? It's real, and more importantly, the proverbial canary in a coal mine adage rings very true in the present day. Population loss of birds may be directly tied to human activities, many of which are actually harming ourselves as well.

Continuing the thread of "it's all connected" from our last issue, we can easily illustrate this concept using examples from the plight of our bird neighbors. Many factors contribute to the loss of birds, such as: pesticides, light pollution, noise pollution, lead ammunition, DDT, discarded plastic items, clearing leaves, too much lawn space, and even outdoor cats. Interestingly, all of these can be shown to have negative consequences to people as well.

- Large expanses of **lawn** look attractive, but do [little to promote wildlife](#). Lawns require a lot of maintenance and chemicals help to keep looking good. Whereas, birds need habitat that consists of trees and shrubs for shelter, and flowers or ground cover for food. Keep in mind too, that pruning trees and shrubs too heavily and at the wrong time can be bad for birds. And, ***if you have a snag, let it remain in place*** if at all possible because that is an apartment house of life for untold life forms, including birds. Oh, and [trees provide huge benefits](#) for us as well.

- [Leaving the leaves](#) provides important shelter for insects to nest and raise their young as well as nourishing foraging space for birds. Leaf litter also decays and gets reabsorbed into the soil providing organic nutrients much needed by your plants. This translates to less need for store bought fertilizer as well as less electric blower use which contributes to [exorbitant air pollution](#).
- Some topics can really set off an animated debate, and one such topic is **indoor vs. outdoor cats**. Keep in mind that domestic cats are pets who still have a hunting instinct despite being well-fed, whereas their wild cousins do not hunt for the “fun” of it. [Outdoor cats](#) have shorter life spans due to a number of dangers and are responsible for significant bird deaths as well as the demise of other wild creatures. Cats can also bring diseases and parasites into your home posing health risks to people, such as ticks, fleas, ringworm, and [toxoplasmosis](#).
- **Lead ammunition** may not be something you ever think about unless you are a hunter, but it is worth mentioning. Lead has been known as a human carcinogen for decades and is no longer used in paint, gasoline, etc. What you may not know is that lead ammunition actually fragments into microscopic pieces and is left behind in the game animals that people hunt and eat (check out some x-ray images of [game with lead fragments](#)). Scavengers, such as vultures, condors and other birds, find hunted carcasses and ingest this lead with detrimental effects on their health too.
- **DDT**, though now banned in the US and many other countries, is still out there in the environment wreaking havoc. History is repeating itself with a different and dangerous pesticide family known as **neonicotinoids**. This systemic pesticide is even more deadly to insects than DDT. Neonicotins are widely used in agriculture and even by nurseries who sell us plants treated with the chemical without disclosing it. What is really in that pesticide? Did you know that the [manufacturer doesn't have to list](#) all of the ingredients? Pesticides are designed to kill, and do so indiscriminately...killing insects and even birds or other smaller animals that ingest them. They build up in bodies of larger creatures, including people, and can have long term effects. **Listen to Sophie Osborn discuss DDT, lead ammunition, neonicotinoids, outdoor cats, and many other factors** that affect some highly threatened, and magnificent, bird populations on our [recent Nature's Archive](#) podcast.
- Birds use the stars to navigate during migration and our use of excessive light is disorienting for them. Even away from cities, skyglow is a pervasive form of **light pollution** that affects animals, plants (yes, plants), and humans alike, by [disrupting the natural patterns and circadian rhythms](#) we all have evolved. **You can help by turning off all unnecessary outdoor lights** and switching to motion detection lights.
- As with light, [noise pollution is pervasive and is detrimental](#) to the health of birds and people as well. Birds in noisy environments have lower life spans and birth rates. Many birds die early or will avoid such places, leaving the ecosystem without the natural pest control that many birds provide and we take for granted.
- The message is everywhere, “[our planet is choking on plastic](#).” This useful and ubiquitous product has made its way into every facet of our lives and it seems impossible to get along without it. However, **plastic** poses existential threats to us all. Birds, and all kinds of animals are dying from it, the land and ocean are being overwhelmed by it, and scientists are even finding it in human organs. Please **use reusable products at every opportunity** and refuse single use plastics.

Coincidentally, as I was putting the final touches on this topic, Cornell Lab sent an email addressing the same idea about helping birds. Their article not only highlights [seven](#)

[simple actions](#) to help birds, but shares resources and links to further discussion on **how helping birds help us too**.

*"We can't do all of it...anything is better than nothing. Go to the grocery store and buy organic strawberries, that is your thing for helping birds this week because it helps organic farms and reduces pesticides...and you've done something healthy for yourself too." - **Sophie Osborn***

Just like us, all animals need food, shelter, water, and a place to raise their young. By **creating and nurturing habitats that contain these four basics**, we can help promote biodiversity which equates to a healthier ecosystem that can provide wonderful benefits for people too. Most importantly, we are investing in a healthier future for all living things.

Troublesome Trees?

As we move into fall and the urge to do large scale maintenance yanks at you, take a moment to rethink your efforts and whether everything you are planning is really necessary. Just as we regularly promote **leaving the leaves** and **allowing spent flower heads to remain**, your **trees may not need removing or excessive pruning** after all.

Our friends at [Leaf & Limb](#) answer some [common questions about tree removal](#) that might save you time and money. If you do find yourself with a dead or dying tree, remember that [snags provide important habitat](#) and return precious resources to the soil as they decay. So, [keep it in place](#) if you can. These actions are simple and wildly helpful steps you can do to promote biodiversity and a healthier ecosystem.



Quick Connections

Books, websites, documentaries, podcasts, events, quotes, and more



Jumpstart Nature's own Board member, Michelle, recommends [The Lion Tracker's Guide to Life](#) by Boyd Varty. Varty deftly uses tracking a lion as a metaphor for how one can tap into their own intuition to create a more meaningful life.



*"Like winds and sunsets, wild things were taken for granted until progress began to do away with them. Now we face the question whether a still higher 'standard of living' is worth its cost in things natural, wild and free. For us of the minority, the opportunity to see geese is more important than television." - **Aldo Leopold***



The [National Wildlife Federation photography contest](#) is open for submissions until October 16, 2024.



Check out this [interactive map illustrating the extent of light pollution](#) near you or anywhere in the world.

Community Connections

We want to connect with you. What species would you choose and why if you were to share a favorite? Before you answer, [listen to our own Michael Hawk and Griff Griffith banter about this with Michelle Fullner](#), host of [Golden State Naturalist](#).

So, which one, two, or three non-human species are your top favorites?

We read each and every response and will share selected reader stories in upcoming newsletters.

Share With Us

Your feedback is important. [Tell us](#) how we are doing and what you would like to see covered in future newsletters.

Every connection counts! Please help grow our community of everyday heroes by sharing this newsletter with a friend or colleague.

Thank you,

Laura Schare, Editor

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