

Birds at Home in the Sugarbush

The sweet treats that come from Vermont's sugarbushes aren't limited to maple syrup. Dozens of species of neo-tropical migrant songbirds return to sugarbushes each spring to breed, bringing their bright colors and sweet songs to our northern hardwood forests. These birds are as characteristic of Vermont's

forests as the sugar maple, but many of them are experiencing serious, long-term declines in their global populations. Audubon Vermont is working with sugarmakers and foresters to protect and improve habitat for these birds and to ensure our sugarbushes are healthy, resilient, and able to produce syrup long into the future.



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Scarlet Tanager



American Redstart



Eastern Wood-Pewee



Wood Thrush



Yellow-bellied Sapsucker



1

Promote a diversity of native tree species. Maple monocultures support fewer birds and species than diverse, native forests. Keeping some non-maple tree species can improve bird habitat, as well as sugarbush health and resilience.

2

Promote regeneration. Most forest birds nest in small trees growing below the upper canopy. A park-like sugarbush without an understory or midstory makes for poor habitat and is at risk in the future if new trees are not available to take over when current canopy trees die.

3

Create canopy gaps. Creating gaps in the forest canopy up to 1/2 acre in size allows new trees to establish and grow and maintains nesting habitat for birds such as Wood Thrush and Black-throated Blue Warbler that have better nesting success away from forest openings and edges.

4

Grow some very big trees. Big trees (>24 inches in diameter) are important nest sites for woodland raptors, owls, and Pileated Woodpeckers.

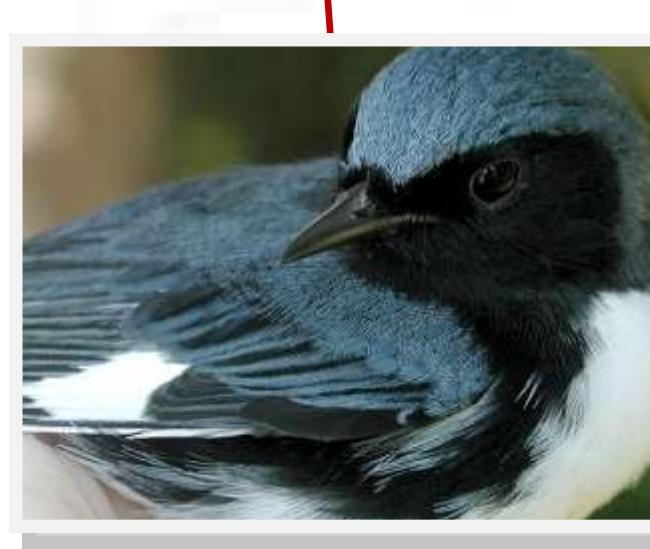
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Keep snags and downed logs in the woods. Snags and cavity trees are important for nesting and foraging. Logs of all sizes and stages of decay, branches, and brush piles are used by birds for drumming, perching, cover, and foraging.

6

Retain some softwoods. Patches of softwood trees add to the diversity of habitat conditions and attract species like Black-throated Green Warbler and Blackburnian Warbler.

Photos courtesy of the Powdermill Avian Research Center and Roy Pilcher.



Black-throated Blue Warbler



Black-throated Green Warbler



Ovenbird



Veery

Are you a sugarmaker interested in learning more about making sure your sugarbush is bird-friendly?

We can help. Contact Audubon Vermont at (802) 434-3068 or Vermont@audubon.org to learn more.

Tips for Keeping Sugarbush Habitat Sweet for Birds