



Article Reprint from
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The View from Laughing Springs: Hans Reimann's ecological notes

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Native Bird Stewardship

By the time you peruse this article, the Spring and Summer of 2011 will have been fully engaged by the natural world around us. Hopefully, with broods fully raised, the Wood Thrushes and Baltimore Orioles are safely back in their winter home areas, young ones in tow. Having waited anxiously this past spring for their return to the family nursery woodlands, I now, once again, with uniquely human emotion, lament their need to migrate away. But, migrating songbirds need insects and arachnids to feed their young while living here at Laughing Springs and the greater Cooks Creek watershed. And our winters require adaptations for survival which Cardinals, Titmice, Blue Jays and others have made over the Millennia. Birds truly are the barometer of a healthy ecosystem, so when natively-biodiverse forests support native insects, the birds that depend on them have a healthy menu to choose from.

Here are some bird friendly actions you can engage in to help them feel at home and at the same time, enhance the character of our lovely watershed: 1) Reduce or eliminate pesticides and herbicide use. 2) Plant native plants to provide fruits and seeds, for native flora is home to tasty bugs and spiders. 3) Identify the invasive non-native plants in our area, and work to remove them for they create a false echo in the food chain. 4) Let your yard get a little untidy! Leave snags for nesting places and form brush piles with downed tree limbs to provide cover for birds and chipmunks when they need shelter from storm or predators. And guess what! Snags and brush piles also create another habitat for insects and spiders that birds eat! 5) Create and protect water sources in your own backyard habitat.

If you have a stream corridor on your property, let the native riparian area plants grow to shade the waters. Imagine this; if you don't cut that lawn all the way to the stream, you create more habitats for birds to live in, and yes, more insect and spider food for all! But what of the benefits of stream habitat to our human sense of consciousness? We need just to listen to the water move through its courses. Your sense of wellbeing can flow in joyful parallel to our stream's symphony of waterfall music. Perhaps a Water Thrush will dance and call at streamside, or green frogs will serenade. Many of you readers are stewards of streams on your properties, so, maybe you will find the time to listen, hear, and absorb the soothing, calming "water music". Invite family and friends to share the experience. Because the exact water volume, path, and streambed landscape naturally change from season to season, I am always curious to sense the changes in "stream sounds" as I close my eyes, listen, and hear.

Regards, Hans O. Reimann Jr.