



Support native birds, improve water quality, and update your own back yard

Tahoma Audubon Society's Healthy Backyard Habitat Program is designed to increase salmon runs in Chambers Creek and improve water quality in Steilacoom Lake. In this newsletter are ideas for changes to our yards that will attract more birds and butterflies while also improving water quality for salmon in Lake Steilacoom.

Our workshop at Lakewood Community Center on March 23 will focus on these topics:

1) **Brighten your garden:** How to attract more birds with Northwest plants, shrubs, and trees. How to provide birds with their favored foods and nesting sites naturally. Your garden can be transformed into attractive wildlife habitat right outside your door.

Tahoma Audubon Director Matt Mega will speak on planning a landscape that benefits numerous species of birds and other wildlife.

2) **Bird feeders & Nests:** Learn which feeders, nest boxes and bird houses will draw specific birds you would like to see more often. Learn how to create nesting sites for bird species that may be struggling to survive.

Kecia Cole of Wild Birds Unlimited will demonstrate feeders and nest boxes to integrate into your yard plan. Kecia can discuss the loss of pollinators and tell you how to plan for bees and butterflies to improve your flowers and give them a home.

3) **Rain Gardens:** Learn how rain gardens can reduce your mowing area and provide better water filtration than grass. Native plants in rain gardens, or in a flower bed, thrive as their roots purify rainwater naturally before it reaches nearby creeks.

Master Gardener Kelly Stave will present rain garden basics and answer questions about designing your own. Learn about efforts to restore creeks and re-establish historical salmon runs. All of us can impact water quality, for better or worse. Let's try for better!

4) **Creek restoration:** Learn about efforts to restore creeks and re-establish historical salmon runs. Join a work party cleaning and adding plants to local creeks and salmon streams. There are many places you can make a difference.

Al Schmauder of Chambers-Clover Creek Watershed Council will discuss restoration efforts throughout the watershed and upcoming stewardship opportunities.

*** Learn about birds in your neighborhood ***

Join us for a
Saturday Bird Walk

March 30, 2019 at Fort Steilacoom Park.

9.00 to 10.30 am

Meet at parking lot near Waughop Lake or

Sign up at: Tahoma Audubon Society

<https://www.tahomaaudubon.org/fieldtrips>

Landscaping for Birds



A wild bird couple searching for a safe home has more options in the yard on the left, with many low shrubs.

Water is essential for birds, bees and butterflies. It is as simple as a shallow pot or tray resting on the ground, or with a bird bath or hanging water tray.



A large portion of a hummingbird's daily nutrients come from eating spiders, fruit flies, and other insects. When zooming around the yard, they may be hunting on the wing. Hummingbirds also feed on nectar of red flowers like this lovely one to the left.

Flowering fuchsia plant

Native plants offer seeds, berries, nuts, and nectar as food for birds. They also support native insects which are eaten by birds and other wildlife. These insects are important pollinators in our gardens and forests, repaying our habitat-creation efforts.



Properly designed **nest boxes** can attract specific species. To create natural space for birds to build their own nests, add three levels of different plants, bushes, and trees.

Leave a dead tree snag and it will provide habitat for owls and attract woodpeckers.

If you have an unused corner, of the yard, build a small brush pile to make cozy nesting sites.



*Dried leaves and stalks in the flower beds over the winter create warm **cover** for local birds that stay around all year.*

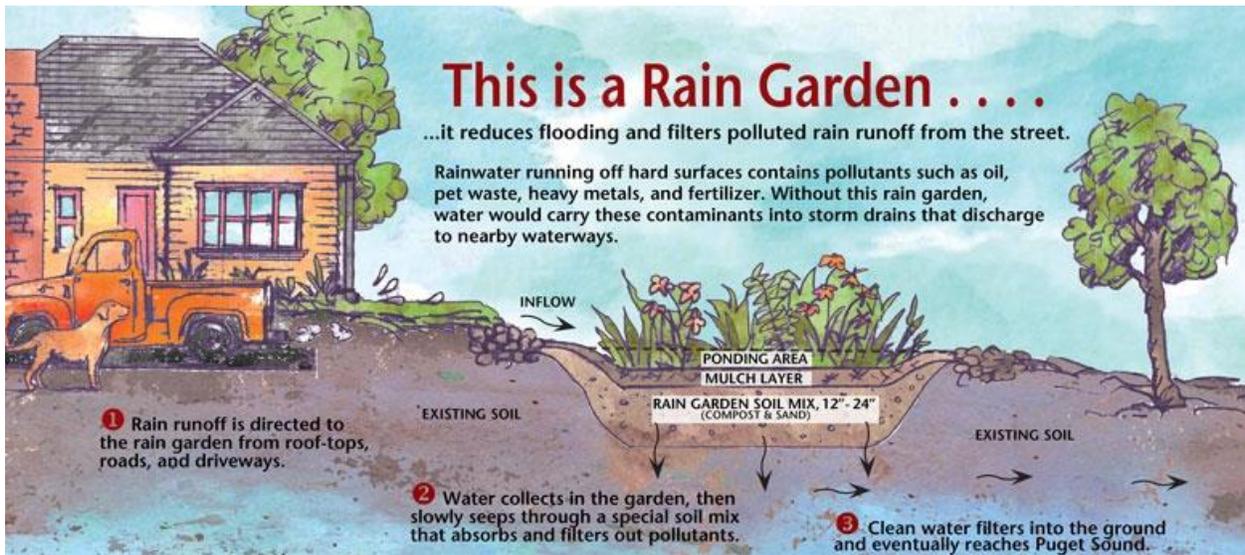
Birds, Cats, & Coyotes: We all love our pets, but cats are natural predators of birds. Keep cats indoors or add a bell on their collar when outside. In some areas coyotes have invaded suburbs. Did you know cats kept indoors live much



longer and healthier lives than outdoor cats?



Rain Gardens Filter Contaminated Runoff



At our March 23rd workshop, Kelly Stave can provide you with information on how to contact a Master Gardener who will help you design and build a rain garden in your own yard.

A **rain garden** reduces the amount of pollution that reaches our common waterways, from the rivulet running into your street and through public sewers, to direct runoff from your yard into Clover Creek or lake Steilacoom. We should all understand that improving our yards will benefit the salmon habitat downstream in Chamber's Canyon.

Pierce County provides a free all-inclusive manual with step by step process for planning and creating your own rain garden in Western Washington.

<https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/publications/publications/1310027.pdf>

Washington State University gives a more basic overview at <https://extension.wsu.edu/raingarden/>. Through the **Master Gardeners** page on WSU, a list of local public rain gardens is available to tour for ideas when improving your own garden:

<https://extension.wsu.edu/pierce/mg/demonstration-gardens/>

Pesticides and ground water.

Information on how homeowners can improve water quality is available through **PierceCounty.gov** Just a few changes in yard and lawn care can improve ground water and increase the number of fish in Steilacoom Lake and upstream. These publications can all be found at

<https://www.co.pierce.wa.us/Archive.aspx?AMID=173>

Pesticides and lawn care



Grass is thirsty, hungry, and labor intensive to maintain. It forms a solid mat that can become impervious to water, promoting unfiltered runoff. Many lawn care products are toxic to bees, birds, fish, and people. Read labels carefully to avoid pesticides. And consider swapping some of that grass for native plant beds to help out the birds and bees.

All yard runoff finds its way into storm sewers and eventually Puget Sound. Look up safe alternatives for what you add to the lawn, so what flows into Lakewood's lakes and creeks will keep these habitats healthy.



Learn how to increase birds and butterflies in your backyard:

<https://www.tahomaaudubon.org/healthy-habitat>



Healthy Backyard Habitat Workshop

March 23, Saturday

12:30 - 3 p.m.

Lakewood Community Center, Room 103

9112 Lakeview Drive, Lakewood, WA

Free Workshop Registration at

<https://www.tahomaaudubon.org/healthy-habitat>



Learn how plantings in our neighborhoods and back yards can help with salmon recovery and bring bees and bird songs back into Lakewood.

Experts at the habitat work shop will discuss:

- Plants and landscape design that attract birds and butterflies into your back yard, schoolyard & public spaces.
- How to make a rain garden that improves water quality in nearby creeks and Lake Steilacoom.
- Opportunities for Stewardship in the watershed.