



Enhancing Coastal Scrub and Chaparral Habitat for Birds at Your Home or Ranch



Coastal scrub and chaparral lands throughout California are characterized by a mix of short to tall shrubs and few to no trees. One type of shrubland, coastal sage scrub, supports over 100 species of plants and animals of rare, threatened, or endangered status. Dozens of bird species depend on scrub and chaparral, yet many of these special places are being lost due to development and the spread of non-native plants. Fortunately, YOU can help preserve this threatened habitat by properly managing the scrub and chaparral in your own backyard.



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Creating or Enhancing Backyard Scrub & Chaparral Habitat

Healthy native habitats provide the best protection for breeding birds. Destruction and degradation of these habitats has been shown to be the main cause of bird population decline. Here's how you can maintain native habitat on your property, and create new habitat to support breeding birds:

1. **Work with what's already there.** Identify native plants that may already exist in your yard. Also, if a native area nearby is slated for development - transplant! You can move coastal scrub seeds, plants, and even soil. Ask first...
2. **Plant a mosaic of native shrubs and herbs:** Choose native coastal scrub plants (from your local native nursery) and plant a mix of species in clumps to create a more natural "mosaic." Planting in clusters will increase the number and types of birds that use your land.
3. **Remove non-native plants,** such as Pampas grass and French broom. Non-native plants can overtake native plants, and many birds are not adapted to live with them.

Birds of Coastal Scrub & Chaparral

- California Quail
- Mountain Quail
- Greater Roadrunner
- Costa's Hummingbird
- Hutton's Vireo
- Gray Vireo
- Bewick's Wren
- Cactus Wren
- California Gnatcatcher
- California Thrasher
- Spotted Towhee
- Rufous-crowned Sparrow
- Sage Sparrow
- White-crowned Sparrow
- Wrentit

Plants of Coastal Scrub & Chaparral

- California sagebrush
- California buckwheat
- Coyote brush
- Bush monkeyflower
- California blackberry
- Chamise
- California lilac (Ceanothus)
- Manzanita
- White, black, and purple sage
- Coastal cholla



www.prbo.org/calpif
Read California Partners in Flight Coastal Scrub and Chaparral Bird Conservation Plan for more recommendations!

Reduce Predators

The most common neighborhood predator is the domestic cat. Native predators (raccoons, skunks, and jays) also negatively affect nesting songbirds, especially when human activities inadvertently increase their populations. You can help with these simple actions:

- **Keep cats indoors!** Especially during the breeding season when young birds are vulnerable. Bells don't work! See the Cats Indoors Program at www.abcbirds.org/cats/catsindoors.htm
- **Eliminate outdoor food sources** such as pet food dishes, compost piles, uncovered garbage cans.
- **Cover compost piles** or use covered worm bins
- Use **bird feeders that exclude jays and squirrels**. Many can be found at wildlife stores.

Mow Early & Often

Many songbirds nest very close to the ground in grasses and 'weedy' areas. If you have to mow, mow early (beginning in February) and often, as this will keep birds from nesting in the areas you wish to mow.

- Set aside **"no mow" areas** of your land: this will provide nest sites and shelter for birds, especially goldfinches, buntings, quail, and towhees.
- **Avoid clearing brush** in the breeding and nesting season (February-August)
- **Do not mow native tree saplings and shrubs**. Even poison oak, a native shrub, has high value for birds and other wildlife.
- **Leave brush piles and grass clippings**. Brush and grass clippings of native plants can provide shelter, nesting material, foraging grounds and even nesting sites for birds.

Declare Your Land a Bird Sanctuary

Designate areas of your land **"bird-friendly"** with these actions:

- **Minimize human disturbance** during the breeding season (mid-March through August). Some common disturbances may include construction, spraying, and pet activity.
- **Create networks of suitable habitat**. Connecting habitat patches is valuable to all wildlife. Work with neighbors and local groups to create a network of "bird sanctuaries" in your community.
- **Do not use pesticides**, which can harm birds. Allow insect- and pest-eating birds, like swallows, woodpeckers, bluebirds and owls to eat the pests in your backyard!
- **Learn the birds on your land!** Study their behaviors, learn their names, watch them build nests and return year after year.

Did you know?

The National Wildlife Federation certifies backyards, schoolyards, and workplaces as "wildlife friendly" through their Backyard Wildlife Habitat Program. www.nwf.org/backyardwildlifehabitat/

Resources

Many resources are available to help you acquire native plants and make your land wildlife friendly:

- California Partners in Flight Bird Conservation Plans ♦ <http://www.prbo.org/calpif>
- PRBO Conservation Science ♦ <http://www.prbo.org/birdinfo> ♦ (415) 868-1221
- California Native Plant Society ♦ www.cnps.org
- National Audubon Society ♦ www.audubon.org
- Larner Seeds ♦ (415) 868-9407